

The Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister

**Community Relations, Human Rights and Victims Division
Block E5.2, Castle Buildings, Stormont Estate, Belfast BT4 3SR**

Tel: 028 9052 3167 Fax: 028 9052 8354

FROM: FERGUS DEVITT

DATE: 18 JANUARY 2002

PS/MR HAUGHEY

PS/MR NESBITT

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**MEETING WITH DES BROWNE MP TO DISCUSS VICTIMS'
ISSUES.**

Summary

Issue: **Ministers meeting with Des Browne MP to discuss
issues of common interest relating to victims.**

Timescale: **A meeting between Ministers has been arranged
for 3.00pm on Thursday 24 January 2002.**

Recommendation: **That Ministers note the probable areas for
discussion.**

Background

1. Ministers met with Des Browne MP on 13 September 2001 in relation to the allocation of NIO funding for victims and reached agreement on a package of measures. Following further discussions between both ministerial offices Des Browne MP announced the allocation of £6.75 million of NIO funding on Tuesday, 11th December 2001. £3 million will be spent over the next two years to extend the Core Funding Scheme for victims groups; £1.5 million will go over three years for the development of the Northern Ireland Centre for Trauma and Transformation; £750,000 to fund the re-introduction of a Small Grants Scheme for victims groups to be administered by the Community Relations Council, and £1.5 million over the next two years to the devolved administration's Strategy Implementation Fund, matching the allocation to that Fund announced on 3 December 2001 by Mark Durkan MLA.

Detail

2. Ministers will wish to provide updates for Mr Browne MP on the following areas:

(a) RESPONSES TO CONSULTATION

The Victims Unit issued a consultation paper on a victims' strategy on 7 August 2001 which sought the views of individuals, groups and other interested parties on the strategy itself. The consultation period ended on 9 November 2001. A total of 121 responses was received, however as some of these were joint responses from a range of organisations and individuals, the number of respondents is considerably higher. A summary of the main points made in the first 117 responses has been issued recently to all those who responded to the consultation and to other interested parties. The summary is also available on the Victims Unit website at www.victimsnri.gov.uk

(b) STRATEGY DOCUMENT

Ministers are aware that work, including a consultation exercise has been progressing on the development of a victims' strategy. The timetable outlined below sets out the key steps leading up to the launch of the strategy.

The timetable is as follows:

- (c) 11 January 2002 **Deadline for Departments' comments on draft strategy issued on 18 December 2001.**
- 18 January 2002 **Amended strategy issued to Departments for final clearance.**
- 21 January 2002 **Deadline for final comments from Departments.**
- 22 January 2002 **Draft strategy to Ministers Haughey and Nesbitt for clearance**
- 24 January 2002 **Draft strategy issued to First Minister and Deputy First Minister for permission to clear by written procedure.
Draft strategy issued simultaneously to other Executive Ministers.(This process has been agreed with Executive Secretariat).**
- 14 February 2002 **Written procedure process finalised and approval received from Executive.**
- 18 February 2002 **Finalised strategy to printers.**
- 1 March 2002 **Printed strategy available.**

w/c 4 March 2002 **Strategy launched. Exact date will be determined by a number of factors including Ministerial availability and achieving maximum press coverage.**

Ministers may want to inform Mr Browne MP about the proposals to publicise the strategy including leaflets in the main papers and posters in GPs surgeries, libraries etc.

(c) VICTIMS UNIT FUNDING 2001/2002

£650,000 in total is available for this financial year, 2001/2002, of which approximately £45,000 has been spent on research and on training for psychotherapists. This leaves £605,000 to be allocated for the rest of this financial year. Approved expenditure is detailed below :-

<u>Proposal</u>	Amount (£)
Counselling/trauma work in North Belfast	105,000
Barnardo's "Parenting Matters"	30,000
Support for Trauma Advisory Panels	30,000
Computer based carers package	30,000
Directory of Services	30,000
Implementation of Strategy	40,000
Northern Ireland Memorial Fund	330,000(approximately)
Community Victim Support	
Officer in Fermanagh	8,000(Approximately)
TOTAL	£603,000

This leaves approximately £2,000 unallocated, some of which will be required to run information seminars relating to the Peace II application process and funding.

(d) PEACE II

The European Programme for Peace and Reconciliation contains a specific measure for victims with funding of £6.67 million, of which £1.6 million comes from the Executive. This is one of the largest amounts to be directed towards a single sector. Peace II will address specific needs relating to activities such as reskilling and retraining, re-assimilation into the community and counselling and befriending. Applications have now been called for and it is expected that money will start to be on the ground soon. A consortium led by the Northern Ireland Voluntary Trust(NIVT) will facilitate the allocation of this money and the first meeting of the selection panel takes place on Tuesday 22 January 2002. The panel will carry out the first stage of the selection process by reviewing any applications which have been received.

3. It is understood that Mr Browne MP will raise with Ministers his impressions gathered so far from meeting victims, the importance of dealing with individuals who do not belong to groups, the overall funding for victims and the current review of the core-funding scheme.

Recommendation

6. It is recommended that Ministers note the probable areas for discussion. A pre-brief has been arranged for 11.30am on Monday 21 January 2002.

(signed)

FERGUS DEVITT

Victims Unit

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