

**The Office of the First Minister
and Deputy First Minister**

Machinery of Government Division

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**Debbie Pritchard
Principal Clerk
The Committee of the Centre
Parliament Buildings
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8 February 2002

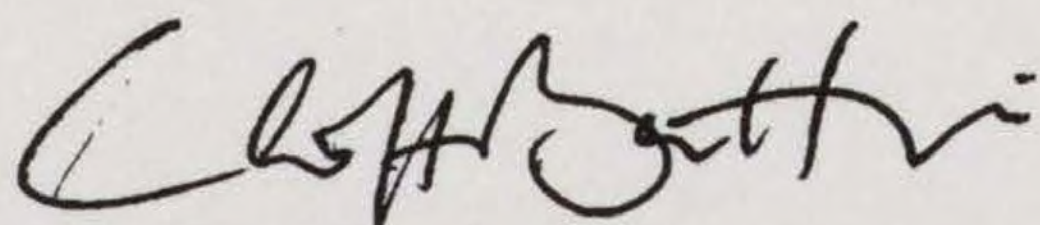
Dear Debbie

VICTIMS STRATEGY

I attach a paper which addresses the questions raised by the Committee at its meeting with Mr Haughey last Wednesday.

I would be grateful for any further views the Committee might have on the material included in this paper so that these can be reflected to the Executive.

Glad to discuss,



Geoff Beattie
Assembly Section

POTENTIAL INTEGRATION OF THE VICTIMS UNIT AND THE LIAISON UNIT

Copy List:

PS/Mr Haughey

PS/Mr Nesbitt

Mr Haire

Mrs Devlin

Mr Stewart

Mrs Bunting

Mr Devitt

Miss McCausland

Mr Uprichard

In addition, both Units will be running a series of joint seminars on funding in the coming year and examining the potential to hold joint information events on a range of issues of interest to victims. Ministers will continue to meet regularly to discuss matters of common interest and this will be supplemented, as at present, by frequent meetings between officials.

POTENTIAL INTEGRATION OF THE VICTIMS UNIT AND VICTIMS LIAISON UNIT

At this point in time it is constitutionally necessary to retain two separate Units, as some of the functions relevant to victims have not yet been transferred to the devolved administration. Both Units realize, however, that this situation can be confusing and, during the lifetime of the strategy, both will be making further efforts to clarify the issue. These efforts are likely to include a specific Action in the Action Plan of the strategy to examine how a potential transfer of the Northern Ireland Office's responsibilities for victims might be administered after the Assembly elections scheduled for 2003.

In addition, both Units will be running a series of joint seminars on funding in the coming year and examining the potential to hold joint information events on a range of issues of interest to victims. Ministers will continue to meet regularly to discuss matters of common interest and this will be supplemented, as at present, by frequent meetings between officials.

It is proposed that a small grants scheme, funded by the Northern Ireland Office, will be administered by the Community Relations Council. This scheme aims to fill a perceived gap in funding by making small amounts of money available for specific events or projects.

This mixture of funding, when taken together with the Strategy Implementation Fund of £3m over two years, represents a diversity of available sources of finance to meet a wide variety of needs.

CREATION OF A ONE-STOP SHOP FOR FUNDING

The Victims Unit is aware that funding is of key concern to victims and is likely to be including a specific Chapter on this issue in its strategy.

Different funding streams exist at present to achieve different objectives and reach different target audiences. This inevitably means that different funding bodies are involved but there are legitimate reasons for that.

The European Programme for Peace and Reconciliation (Peace II) is operated through the Special European Programme Body which was established under the Belfast Agreement. Core-funding for victims' groups is administered by the Northern Ireland Voluntary Trust on behalf of the Northern Ireland Office and that scheme is currently being evaluated. The Northern Ireland Memorial Fund is an independent charity which seeks, through a variety of schemes, to provide assistance to individual victims. It has the advantage of being independent from Government which may encourage certain people to apply for funds who would otherwise not do so. It is proposed that a small grants scheme, funded by the Northern Ireland Office, will be administered by the Community Relations Council. This scheme aims to fill a perceived gap in funding by making small amounts of money available for specific events or projects.

This mixture of funding, when taken together with the Strategy Implementation Fund of £3m over two years, represents a diversity of available sources of finance to meet a wide variety of needs.

The Victims Unit will work with the Victims Liaison Unit during the life of the NI Administration's strategy to ensure that information on the variety of funding sources is made available to groups and individuals and will run a series of information seminars on funding, including application processes and alternative sources of funding.

Funding totals £5.67m and will be targeted mainly at projects focusing on retraining, reskilling and re-employment. This specific Measure for victims is now open and applications should be made as soon as possible. A consortium led by the Northern Ireland Voluntary Trust has been appointed as an Intermediary Funding Body to administer the Measure;

Core-funding for victims' groups; the current scheme is currently being evaluated and a further scheme totaling £3m will be in place later in the year. No decisions have yet been taken about the criteria for this scheme or who will administer it; and

Small grants scheme: this scheme will total £750,000 and will provide relatively small amounts of money to enable groups or projects to carry out specific pieces of work. The Community Relations Council will be administering the scheme.

In addition, the Northern Ireland Memorial Fund provides assistance to individuals through a number of schemes.

Victims Unit

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AVAILABLE SOURCES OF FINANCE FOR VICTIMS GROUPS

The sources of funding currently available for victims' groups are:

The European Programme for Peace and Reconciliation (Peace II);

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