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

Executive Secretariat

Room SD 07, Stormont Castle, Belfast
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**FROM: EXECUTIVE SECRETARIAT
7 MARCH 2002**

TO: EXECUTIVE

E (WP) (02) 27 – VICTIMS' STRATEGY

1. Please see attached Executive paper.
2. The Executive is asked to agree to the publication of the attached draft victims' strategy to deliver practical help and services to victims of the conflict in Northern Ireland.
3. Ministers are asked to provide their response to the Executive Secretariat.
4. Responses should be sent to the Executive Secretariat by **5.00pm on Monday 11 March 2002**, by e-mail to execomm.secretariat@ofmdfmni.gov.uk.

EXECUTIVE SECRETARIAT

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*hinda Please 40873
Geff thinks that Mr Hanley
gave a commitment to
the CAC to record their
involvement. Do you
want me to remind /
advise either Junior Ministers
or Victims Unit?*

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MEMORANDUM E (WP) (02) 27

**FROM: FIRST MINISTER
DEPUTY FIRST MINISTER**

EXECUTIVE

VICTIMS' STRATEGY

Introduction

1. The Executive is asked to agree to the publication of the attached draft victims' strategy to deliver practical help and services to victims of the conflict in Northern Ireland.

Purpose

2. There is a commitment in the Programme for Government to put a cross-departmental strategy on victims in place during the 2001/02 year. The publication of the strategy before the end of March 2002, will ensure that the commitment is met. In addition, the strategy will show that the Executive recognises the special circumstances of victims and is taking action to ensure that their day-to-day lives are made easier.

Proposals

3. The draft strategy sets out a number of themes that will be key to ensuring that practical help and services are delivered to victims of the conflict. These themes include the necessity for partnerships, the need for the strategy to be responsive to individuals as well as those in groups and the requirement for the devolved administration to continue to work closely with the Northern Ireland Office.
4. In addition, there are a range of actions which demonstrate how, across Departments and Agencies, steps will be taken to provide practical benefit to victims. It is also proposed that a wide-ranging publicity exercise will occur to coincide with the launch of the strategy and that a key contact list for government Departments and Agencies will be published along with the strategy. A freephone Helpline to the Victims Unit will also be established.

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5. The draft strategy contains information on relevant structures and other issues, addresses funding and describes what monitoring and evaluation will be carried out. This will include a yearly summary of activity, incorporating progress against the actions in the strategy.

Consultation

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6. The Victims Unit has had over 40 meetings with victims' groups, as well as meetings with individuals not associated with groups. In addition, Ministers Haughey and Nesbitt have met with representatives of around 30 victims' groups and individual victims. These rounds of meetings were held in advance of the formulation of a consultation paper on a victims' strategy which was launched on 7 August 2001. The consultation period lasted until 9 November 2001 and 121 responses were received.
 7. Several responses were actually composite responses submitted on behalf of a number of groups or individuals so the number of respondents to the consultation exercise was much higher than 121. A summary of responses was issued to all respondents and other interested parties in January 2002.
 8. An Interdepartmental Working Group on victims was re-established in 2000 and the draft victims' strategy reflects Departmental and Agency inputs, particularly in the actions. The Committee of the Centre also responded to the consultation exercise and separately questioned Minister Haughey about the draft strategy on 6 February 2002. The Committee subsequently indicated that it had concerns about how closely the two Units responsible for victims within the devolved administration and the Northern Ireland Office were able to work together and about how victims could access funding. It is felt that these issues are addressed satisfactorily in the draft strategy.
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Financial implications and Regulatory Impact Assessment

9. In order to help implement the strategy, a Strategy Implementation Fund will be established. This Fund will total £3m over two years and will be funded jointly by the devolved administration (from the Social Inclusion Executive Programme Fund) and the Northern Ireland Office. The Fund will be available to Departments and Agencies to enable innovative projects for the benefit of victims to be taken forward.

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Human rights implications

10. By putting a package of measures in place to deliver practical help and services, it is felt that the victims' strategy will enhance and secure the human rights of victims.

Equality implications

11. An Equality Impact Assessment was carried out as part of the consultation exercise and the responses received indicate that the assessments made in that exercise were correct.

Targeting Social Need

12. The decision to develop and put in place a victims' strategy reflects the New Targeting Social Need policy as some victims are among the most marginalized people in society.

North/South and East/West Co-operation implications

13. It is clear that the conflict in Northern Ireland has reached beyond this country, particularly to Great Britain and the Republic of Ireland, but also beyond into Europe. The draft strategy recognises this and makes provision for the Victims Unit to expand its knowledge in these areas and communicate ideas of best practice.

EU implications

14. The strategy will have no EU implications.

Non-Departmental Public Bodies

15. The strategy will not set up any new non-Departmental Public Bodies.

THE RT HON DAVID TRIMBLE MP MLA
First Minister

MARK DURKAN MLA
Deputy First Minister

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