



**The Commission For
Victims & Survivors**

Draft

Initial Work Programme
June 2008 – March 2009

Foreword

Thank you for taking the time to pick up this document. We hope you will go on to take the next steps and read it, reflect on its contents and give us your reaction. May we also stress that you do not need to think of yourself as a victim or survivor to have an interest; we welcome comments from all individuals, groups and organisations.

In the pages that follow you will find a broad outline of our initial thinking. It is not set in stone, nor can it be, until we hear the views of victims and survivors and those who serve them. We intend to begin this new Commission's work by listening.

As you read through, you will find we have split our proposed work programme into six sections, each aligned to one of our Duties, as defined in legislation; a seventh section is devoted to how we intend to set up our office, but, of course, we need to finalise our Work Programme before we seek adequate resources to get the job done.

Each section explains:

- What tasks we believe we need to undertake.
- The indicative timelines.
- How we think undertaking these tasks may impact positively on the lives of victims and survivors.

It is that last point – making a positive difference – which will inform our thinking. We want to support victims in ways which make their lives better: by trying to address the issues which create difficulties for them; by giving them platforms where they can give direct responses to the issues affecting their day to day lives; by ensuring their voices are heard in the heart of government.

We are also conscious that we do not need to re-invent the wheel. Many individuals and groups continue to lay the foundations for a cohesive way forward; we see our role as complementing that work, not supplanting it. We intend to use our statutory authority to improve coherence and encourage the sharing of best practice and the best use of all resources.

Some people think we hold the purse strings to a large sum of money. While it is true the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister has ring-fenced £36 million over the next three years for victims and survivors, this is not ours to disburse; our role will be to take a view on how that funding should be allocated to best effect.

Time is pressing; we want and need to move forward, and present our programme of work to the First Minister and deputy First Minister as soon as possible. We already know victims and survivors want action. So, please give us your reaction as soon as you can. **Our deadline is 30 June and our contact details are on the back of this document.** Again, we stress this work programme will develop as the victims and survivors' environment changes, not least with the publication and implementation of the OFMDFM strategy which is due for publication presently.

Finally, as we publish this, our first document, we look forward to the day when we publish our last – a day when we will all have moved on to the point where there is no longer the need for a Commission for Victims and Survivors.



Patricia MacBride, Brendan McAllister, Bertha McDougall, Mike Nesbitt
Commissioners

Introduction

The announcement of four Commissioners for victims and survivors was made by the First Minister and the deputy First Minister on 28th January 2008, with enacting legislation passed by the Northern Ireland Assembly on 27th May 2008. We are Patricia MacBride, Brendan McAllister, Bertha McDougall and Michael Nesbitt; collectively, the Commission for Victims and Survivors.

This document, which we describe as our Initial Work Programme, sets out our current views on how we will pursue our roles and responsibilities in the Commission's current financial year until March 2009. During that period, we intend to listen to victims and survivors and other key stakeholders about the challenges to be faced and the issues to be addressed. This understanding will, in turn, inform the development of a more strategic approach to our functions which we will express in the form of a Corporate Plan to cover the period April 2009 – March 2012. A Work Programme will also be published for each year.

In effect, therefore, this document represents the Commission's first Work Programme, which, following consultation, we will submit for approval to the First Minister and deputy First Minister.

Our Approach

We intend to take a three-step approach to the development of our Work Programme: to listen to victims and survivors, to review their needs and aspirations and how they are being met, and to promote their interests.

In the first instance it is our responsibility and desire to listen to:

- o those most directly impacted by the conflict;
- o the relevant services and authorities.

Our initial thoughts in this Draft Work Programme are presented as the commencement of that listening process.

The Commission for Victims and Survivors has six areas of statutory responsibility where it must act, as listed under "Our Duties". These are the areas that we intend to focus on below in the short-term of this Initial Work Programme, encompassing, where appropriate, other activities. Under each area, we have listed specific tasks we would propose to undertake during the period of the Initial Work Programme and, where appropriate, beyond. These are areas in which we would like to focus initial discussions.

We have additionally listed some items for action under the heading of "Developing the Office of the Commission" which are necessary to complete in order for us to function properly.

Our Duties

The Victims and Survivors (Northern Ireland) Order 2006, together with the Commission for Victims and Survivors Act (Northern Ireland) 2008, defines the principal aim of the Commission as to “promote the interests of victims and survivors”. The legislation states that the Commission shall:

1. Promote an awareness of matters relating to the interests of victims and survivors and of the need to safeguard those interests.
2. Keep under review the adequacy and effectiveness of law and practice affecting the interests of victims and survivors.
3. Keep under review the adequacy and effectiveness of services provided for victims and survivors by bodies or persons.
4. Advise the Secretary of State, the Executive Committee of the Assembly and any body or person providing services for victims and survivors on matters concerning the interests of victims and survivors:
 - o as soon as reasonably practicable after receipt of a request for advice; and
 - o on such other occasions as the Commission thinks appropriate.
5. Take reasonable steps to ensure that the views of victims and survivors are sought concerning the exercise by the Commission of its functions.
6. Make arrangements for a forum for consultation and discussion with victims and survivors.

Other Activities

In pursuing these duties, the legislation also provides that we may:

- Undertake, commission or provide financial or other assistance for research or educational activities concerning the interests of victims and survivors and the exercise of its functions.
- After consultation with such bodies or persons as it thinks fit, issue guidance on best practice in relation to any matter concerning the interests of victims and survivors.
- Compile information concerning the interests of victims and survivors.
- Provide advice or information on any matter concerning the interests of victims and survivors.
- Publish any matter concerning the interests of victims and survivors, including:
 - a) the outcome of any research or activities mentioned above.
 - b) any advice provided by the Commission.

In addition to the above, we are obliged to prepare a work programme, which must include:

- a) An estimate of expenditure and receipts in respect of each activity outlined in the programme;
- b) Such other matters as the First Minister and the deputy First Minister may direct.

We must consult on the work programme before submitting it to the First Minister and the deputy First Minister. The first Annual Report will be published as soon as practicable after the end of the financial year 2008/2009.

Definition of Victim and Survivor

The legislation defines victims and survivors as follows:

- a) someone who is, or has been physically or psychologically injured as a result of or in consequence of a conflict-related incident;
- b) someone who provides a substantial amount of care on a regular basis for an individual mentioned in (a), or
- c) someone who has been bereaved as a result of or in consequence of a conflict-related incident.

An individual may be psychologically injured as a result of or in consequence of:

- a) witnessing a conflict-related incident or the consequences of such an incident; or
- b) providing medical or other emergency assistance to an individual in connection with a conflict-related incident.

The Order defines "conflict-related incident" as an incident "appearing to the Commission to be a violent incident occurring in or after 1966 in connection with the affairs of Northern Ireland."

Promote Awareness

1. Promote an awareness of matters relating to the interests of victims and survivors and of the need to safeguard those interests.

Task	Timeline	Impact
<p>1.1 We will explore the value of developing a Commission website in three distinct phases:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Basic information (ii) A one-stop shop with information on all existing groups and support services (iii) A Living History space where victims and survivors can be heard and acknowledged in association with other existing and planned websites 	<p>July 2008 - Feb 2009</p> <p>Commences March 2009</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Victims and survivors will be afforded unprecedented ease of access to information b) Victim and survivor groups will be able to study and share best practice c) Victims and survivors will be acknowledged in a central, neutral space d) A central information source for all
<p>1.2 We will take a proactive approach to media relations to raise issues relating to victims and survivors</p>	<p>On-going</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Victims and survivors will have a stronger voice b) Development of greater public awareness of issues relating to victims and survivors
<p>1.3 We will seek to engage the business community for the benefit of individual victims and survivors and their groups by providing practical support, services and encouraging business initiatives for mutual advantage</p>	<p>Commences Sept 2008</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) The creation of business opportunities for individual victims and survivors b) The creation of a source of financial, management and development services, helping promote best practice by victims and survivors groups c) The provision of mentoring assistance and strategic vision to maximise the value of the social economy, thus minimising grant dependency

<p>1.4 We will meet with Ministers, Assembly members, Secretary of State, Government Departments and Agencies regarding victims and survivors issues</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>a) Victims and survivors issues are taken to the heart of government b) Develop a mutually raised awareness of issues relating to victims and survivors</p>
<p>1.5 We will meet with individuals, Ministers, Public Representatives, Government Departments and agencies regarding victims and survivors outside Northern Ireland</p>	<p>On-going</p>	<p>Ensure victims and survivors of the conflict living outside Northern Ireland have their voice heard</p>

Review Law and Practice

2. Keep under review the adequacy and effectiveness of law and practice affecting the interests of victims and survivors.

Task	Timeline	Impact
2.1 We will identify legislation which has a particular relevance to victims and survivors	Sept – November 2008	a) The Commission develops a deeper understanding of legislative provision
2.2 We will establish the main provisions of relevant legislation and determine, through consultation with victims and survivors and relevant authorities, the limitations and weaknesses in current provisions with a view to proposing change where appropriate	October 2008 – March 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Victims and survivors have an opportunity to express how law and practice impacts on their lives b) Develop an understanding of the scope of existing provision c) Develop an understanding of the weaknesses in existing provision d) Propose improvement in legislative provision where necessary
2.3 We will carry out an audit of ongoing justice issues relevant to victims and survivors by consulting with individuals, agencies and groups involved in these processes	August 2008 – March 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Victims and survivors have an opportunity to inform our thinking b) Development of an understanding of the issues relating to civil actions, and to the “Disappeared,” Historical Enquiries Team, inquests, Inquiries, miscarriages of justice, ongoing violence, the Police Ombudsman and other significant matters c) An informed analysis is developed of areas where legal provision and/or support are lacking with a view to recommending change where necessary
2.4 We will produce information materials about the above (2.3)	March 2009	Victims and survivors and the public are better informed about the scope and limitations of each process
2.5 We will develop proposals for dealing with the past, with reference to the work	Sept 2008 – March 2009	a) The development of an understanding of the needs and aspirations within the community in respect of

<p>of the Consultative Group on the Past and in consultation with victims and survivors and other relevant bodies.</p>		<p>dealing with the past b) Enabling the Commission to advise Ministers, Assembly members and the Secretary of State on matters of importance to victims and survivors in terms of dealing with the past</p>
<p>2.6 We will commission research to identify how the benefits system impacts on victims and survivors, with a view to identifying (i) how effective the system is and (ii) proposing positive change</p>	<p>By March 2009</p>	<p>a) Victims and survivors opinions are carried to the policy makers b) Victims and survivors have an opportunity to suggest a better way forward</p>
<p>2.7 We will advise, in collaboration with our stakeholders, future consultations on new legislation</p>	<p>By March 2009</p>	<p>Ensuring victims and survivors are recognised and acknowledged</p>
<p>2.8 We will examine links and cross-cutting themes that complement the work of other public bodies such as the Human Rights Commission, the Commissioner for Children and Young People and the Equality Commission</p>	<p>Commencing Autumn 2008</p>	<p>Promotion of a joined up approach, sharing of services, minimising duplication maximising Value For Money and setting new standards in best practice</p>

Review Services

3. Keep under review the adequacy and effectiveness of services provided for victims and survivors by bodies or persons.

Task	Timeline	Impact
<p>3.1 We will consult funders, groups and individuals regarding</p> <p>(i) funding arrangements for groups working with victims and survivors</p> <p>(ii) support provided for individuals</p> <p>(iii) EU Peace III funding</p>	<p>Sept - Dec 2008</p> <p>By the end Dec 2008</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<p>a) Give a voice to victims and survivors about funding</p> <p>b) Advise funders on funding issues</p> <p>c) Advise funders on their proposed funding regimes</p>
<p>3.2 We will commence a programme of consultation with the education sector, the Commissioner for Children and Young People (NICCY) and others with a view to developing ideas in three areas</p> <p>(i) ways to re-engage victims and survivors with the education system</p> <p>(ii) tackling inter and trans-generational issues</p> <p>(iii) the study of the conflict in the curriculum with an emphasis on the human impact, for use in schools, colleges and universities</p>	<p>Commence Nov 2008</p>	<p>a) Victims and survivors experiences are recognised and valued</p> <p>b) Agree on how to develop ways to maximise the opportunities for self-development and self-esteem from education</p> <p>c) Agree on how to devise programmes to address inter and transgenerational problems</p> <p>d) Agree on the process which will identify how to ensure future generations understand and acknowledge the conflict and its legacy</p>

<p>3.3 In preparation for carrying out a comprehensive Needs Assessment, the Commission will review current Needs Assessment studies from victim/survivor and community groups, Statutory Bodies, Trauma Advisory Panels, OFMDFM, Community Relations Council, Border Action and other relevant Bodies.</p>	<p>July – Oct 2008</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Recognises the value of work already undertaken b) Ensures accumulated experience and knowledge is carried forward c) A first step in achieving a comprehensive needs assessment d) The Commission is active in collating and centralising information and not consulting further where work is already done e) It provides a base line assessment of needs
<p>3.4 We will carry out an Initial Assessment of Primary and Secondary Health and Social Care provision including the implications of the Bamford Review</p>	<p>Sept – Dec 2008</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Victims and survivors identify their concerns b) The Commission is informed of strategic issues affecting the health needs of victims and survivors
<p>3.5 We will examine how the expertise and knowledge within the Trauma Advisory Panels is utilised following on from the implementation of the Review of Public Administration</p>	<p>Sept 2008 – March 2009</p>	<p>Ensure that the competence and skills of the sector are retained</p>

Advise

4. Advise the Secretary of State, the Executive Committee of the Assembly and any body or person providing services for victims and survivors on matters concerning the interests of victims and survivors:

- As soon as reasonably practicable after receipt of a request for advice; and
- On such other occasions as the Commission thinks appropriate.

Task	Timeline	Impact
4.1 We will, following consultation with victims and survivors, submit to the First Minister and deputy First Minister our programme of work	July 2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Listen to victims and survivors b) Ensures the final draft of the Work Programme is informed by our consultation with victims and survivors c) Ensures the First Minister and deputy First Minister are informed of our plans d) Ensure adequate resources are available to implement the work programme
4.2 We will meet with Ministers, Assembly members, Secretary of State, Government Departments and Agencies regarding Victims and Survivors issues	On-going	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Taking the views of victims and survivors directly to decision makers b) Develop a raised awareness in government of actual needs and how they must be prioritised
4.3 We will, following consultation with victims and survivors, submit to the First Minister and deputy First Minister a Corporate Plan	Feb 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Victims and survivors influence the longer term strategic direction of the Commission b) Stakeholders have confidence in our strategic direction c) Government is aware of our strategic plans
4.4 We will ensure that First Minister and deputy First Minister, Secretary of State, Assembly Committees, government departments and relevant bodies are kept informed of issues arising in the course of our work	On-going	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Development of broader understanding in government of the role and responsibility of the Commission b) Development of better co-ordination of services and policy direction across government and the public sector

<p>4.5 We will set target times, where statutory times do not exist, for the provision of responses to requests for information and advice, and monitor that they are adhered to, taking remedial action where necessary</p>	<p>Nov 2008</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) The Commission provides an efficient response to enquiries b) The Commission will endeavour to set benchmarks for communications standards
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Consulting Victims and Survivors

5. Take reasonable steps to ensure that the views of victims and survivors are sought concerning the exercise by the Commission of its functions.

Task	Timeline	Impact
5.1 We will hold a series of public and private consultations to inform the development of our programme of work	June/July 2008	Places victims and survivors and service providers who have detailed knowledge of issues at the heart of the process, ensuring that the process and its outcomes are victim centred.
5.2 We will commission research to establish the best way to reach out to individual victims and survivors including those not living in Northern Ireland	Oct 2008	Ensure as many victims and survivors as possible are engaged with the Commission in its work
5.3 We will take a proactive approach to media relations to raise issues relating to and elicit the views of victims and survivors	On-going	Development of greater public awareness of issues relating to victims and survivors
5.4 We will develop and implement a public information campaign regarding our work programme and ensure that we reach out to individuals as well as those belonging to groups	On-going	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Places victims and survivors at the heart of the process b) Improves visibility of the Commission and understanding of our role and responsibilities c) Ensures opportunities for individuals to participate
5.5 We will develop our website, and other communication channels, to provide resources for individuals and groups, with information on available services and how to access them	Sept - March 2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Places an additional resource in the hands of individuals and groups b) Collates information on type and spread of services available c) Facilitates the sharing of best practice d) Gives Victims and Survivors a direct means of providing feedback and forwarding ideas
5.6 We will collate a detailed contact list of groups providing services to victims and survivors	On-going	Provides a database to allow for comprehensive outreach to all relevant groups moving forward in our work programme development

5.7 Prior to the establishment of the Forum, we will use a variety of approaches, including Focus Groups, to elicit the views and opinions of victims and survivors	Oct 2008 – Jan 2009	Places victims and survivors at the core of developing our work programme
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The Forum

6. Make arrangements for a forum for consultation and discussion with victims and survivors.

The process of establishing a Forum will be based on collaboration with stakeholders at each of the seven stages of development. We will begin each stage only when stakeholders are ready and progress to the next development stage only when there is sufficient consensus to move forward. Below are listed the seven stages, together with our proposal for quality assurance.

Task	Timeline	Impact
6.1 Exploration. We will explore the development of the Forum and how that will be achieved	By end Oct 2008.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Build confidence with stakeholders b) Give us insight about the current environment in the victims and survivors sector
6.2 Assessment. We will assess the issues arising from the exploration that must be addressed in order to make the Forum work	By January 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Identify the key strategic issues that need to be addressed b) Collaboration with stakeholders is initiated
6.3 Design. We will design the ground rules, operating procedures and work programme for the Forum	Dependent on progress above	Collaboration with stakeholders is developed
6.4 Delivery. We will facilitate the Forum		Agreement between Commissioners and stakeholders
6.5 Appraisal. We will appraise the work of the Forum after a period of six months, in order to assess its efficiency and effectiveness		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Stakeholders participate in the appraisal b) Areas of dysfunction are addressed c) The design of the Forum is refined
6.6 Consolidation. We will consolidate the operation of the Forum, by strengthening its positive aspects and re-working those less effective or efficient parts		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Stakeholders contribute to consolidating the operation of the Forum b) Design and development needs are tested

<p>6.7 Development. We will consider the longer term life of the Forum</p>		<p>A longer term strategy is agreed</p>
<p>6.8 We will appoint an external evaluator for the Forum Project</p>		<p>The project is run on a sound evidence base.</p>

The Commission

7. Developing the Office of the Commission

Task	Target Date	Impact
7.1 We will establish the structure and processes of the Commission	Autumn 2008	Ensuring efficiency, value for money and best practice are delivered
7.2 We will identify staffing requirements	Autumn 2008	Ensuring that the Commission is adequately resourced in terms of its administration, casework and research needs
7.3 We will recruit key staff	Autumn 2008	Ensures priority areas of work can be progressed

Please let us know what you think.
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