



Victims and Survivors Service

Quarterly Review Report

April to June 2016

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Summary

1. The Executive Office (TEO) has requested that the Commission for Victims and Survivors Northern Ireland (CVSNI) review the progress of the Victims and Survivors Service (VSS) and produce a report that comments on that progress.
2. This report focuses on the period from April to June 2016.
3. This reporting period has been a busy operational time for the Service, with the opening of schemes, ongoing work in relation to monitoring and evaluation processes and assessing the impact of pilot schemes.
4. Communication and interaction between the Commission and the Service has remained constructive during this reporting period. This productive working relationship is essential regarding the Collaborative Design Programme, finalising the Review of the Strategy for Victims and Survivors, the PEACE IV application process, ongoing work relating to eligibility and ascertaining the best way forward regarding assessing the needs of individual victims and survivors. This interaction, facilitated by Collaborative Design Programme, will prove vital during 2016/17 during conversations on defining the future of service delivery.
5. The Quarterly Review Reports remain an important element of the Commission's responsibility to keep under review the adequacy and effectiveness of law and practice affecting the interests of victims and survivors. The reports are used by the Commissioner, in line with her statutory duties, to keep under review services provided for victims and survivors. They also act as a useful reference point for other stakeholders and those with an interest in service provision to victims and survivors.
6. The Commission is committed to collaborative working with the Department, Service and the wider sector to ensure that everyone delivers the best for victims and survivors, enabling an appropriate and targeted support service.

Recommendations

7. The Commission is content that, during this reporting period, Service-related recommendations are facilitated through the Collaborative Design process. Therefore, after taking into consideration all the information contained within this report, the Commission does not propose any recommendations to the Department.

Background

8. Target 1.2 of the Commission for Victims and Survivors (CVSNI and 'the Commission') 2015/16 Business Plan requires the Commission to produce four quarterly reports on the progress and operation of the Victims and Survivors Service (VSS and 'the Service').¹
9. This is the first Quarterly Review Report of 2016/17. Whilst building on previous reports and their observations, this report provides an update on the operation of the VSS during the period from April to June 2016.
10. In order to identify these findings, the Commission has collated information from a range of sources. The primary source of information is that supplied to the Commission directly from the Service. Commission staff also collate views and issues from across the sector during the course of their work, for example, through arranged visits to organisations and feedback from individual victims and survivors.

Individual Support

Support Schemes

11. The Individual Needs Programme (INP) was opened for 2016/17 at the beginning of May 2016.² The schemes mirrored the support schemes that were opened by the VSS in 2015/16:
 - Financial Assistance;
 - Support for the Bereaved;
 - Support for Carers; and
 - Support for the Injured.
12. Replicating 2015/16 the schemes were administered on the basis of one award per person for the period of 2016/17.³
13. Prior to the opening of the schemes the VSS communicated extensively with the Commission, Department and funded organisations to ensure clarity regarding communications being issued and associated timeframes.

¹ The provision of these review reports represents a key component of the Commission's responsibility to 'keep under review the adequacy and effectiveness of services provided for victims and survivors by the Victims and Survivors Service' as outlined within the Victims and Survivors Strategy: Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister (2009) *Victims and Survivors Strategy*, Belfast: The Stationery Office, p.7.

² VSS mailout to individuals completed on 13 May 2016.

³ Individuals could also apply for and avail of Financial Assistance alongside one other support scheme.

Reporting Data

14. As of 30 June 2016 the Service has provided the following summary of award letters issued to individuals:

Scheme	Awards Issued 2015/16	Awards Issued 2016/17	Difference	Award Value	Total Committed
Financial Assistance	2,664	928	-1,736	£350	£324,800
Support for Bereaved	2,591	2,628	+37	£500	£1,314,000
Support for Injured (High Rate Care DLA)	594	594	0	£1,500	£891,000
Support for Injured (Middle Rate Care DLA)	606	674	+68	£500	£337,000
Support for Carers	510	377	-133	£500	£188,500
Chronic Pain Treatments	44	44	0	Varies	£29,000
Education and Training	23	12	-11	£500	£6,000
Disability Aids	26	0	N/A	Varies	£0
				Total	£3,090,300

15. Whilst the figures supplied are not a final reflection of INP support (particularly in relation to Financial Assistance), the increase in award letters issued by the Service once again highlights the sector-wide concern regarding sustainability as a result of increased demand.
16. During this reporting period the VSS continued to provide support for 44 individuals towards Chronic Pain treatments. The Service has advised that there is ongoing work into developing a plan to review these individuals and their needs on a case-by-case basis in 2016/17, with a view to managing a safe transition into a pain management programme within statutory services. The Service met with Belfast Health & Social Services Trust in May to initiate the development of a Chronic Pain Management Scheme, for delivery to identified individuals. A further update will be provided by the Service in the next reporting period.

Telephone calls and Unscheduled Client Visits

17. The Service has reported the following figures for telephone calls and unscheduled visits for this reporting period:

Month	Telephone calls	Unscheduled visits
June	8,969	1,063
May	5,954	1,265
April	2,353	393

18. The Service has advised that interaction with individuals during this period related to queries regarding payment dates and processing times, queries regarding Financial Assistance self-declarations and information requests relating to eligible items.

Caseworker Approach & Disability Aids Pilots

19. As of the 30 June 2016 the VSS has advised that 161 individuals were registered to participate in the Caseworker pilot project with 28 Caseworkers within 15 groups and 2 at the Service. The individuals participating are broken down as 93 Injured and 68 Bereaved.

20. In January 2016 a framework and process for accessing the Disability Awards Scheme was issued to Caseworkers who are undertaking a client support function through the Caseworker pilot programme. At the end of this reporting period 26 awards had been issued. The Service conducted an internal evaluation in May 2016 and given the positive outcomes achieved, this scheme will be rolled out again later in 2016/17.

21. The Commission welcomes the ongoing exploration of personalised approaches to assess and manage the needs of victims and survivors. This approach is a natural follow-on from the recommendations identified by the Independent Assessment and the research relating to the impact of INP and VSP.⁴ Learning from the pilots will prove valuable regarding the future of service delivery from 2017.

Forum Services Working Group

22. During this reporting period there was no interaction between the Victims and Survivors Forum and the VSS board or their senior management due to the replenishment process of the Forum. It is hoped that an initial meeting will be held between the Victims and Survivors Forum members and the VSS Board and senior management in October 2016.

Victim Support Programme

23. The Victim Support Programme (VSP) provides funding for organisations that provide health and wellbeing services and social support to victims and survivors. The VSP has two funding streams: Large Grants (amounting to more than £75,000) and Small Grants (up to £75,000).

Reporting Data

24. The Service has provided a summary of reporting data received to date for 2016/17 (at the time of compiling this report):

⁴ WKM Solutions (2014) Victims and Survivors Service Update Report. London: WKM Solutions; CIPFA (2014) Independent assessment of the Victims and Survivors Service – an update report. Belfast: CIPFA; CVSNI (2015a) Impact of the Victim Support Programme Research Project, Belfast: CVSNI; CVSNI (2015b) Impact of the Individual Needs Programme Research Project, Belfast: CVSNI.

July 2016 - Reflecting data submitted to VSS by 25 August 2016	
> £75k contracts	
Number of groups issued with the finalised M&E materials	40
Number of groups yet to be issued with the finalised M&E materials	0
< £75k contracts	
Number of groups issued with the finalised M&E materials	23
Number of groups yet to be issued with the finalised M&E materials	0
Gender	
Males (plus as a percentage of total)	2,382
Females (plus as a percentage of total)	3,416
Transgender	2
Blank	11
Age	
Age range	6 to 97
Average age	55
Primary identification with Victims & Survivors (Northern Ireland) Order 2006	
Injured (physically)	415
Injured (psychologically)	3,704
Bereaved	1,129
Carers	211
Identifies with more than one category	49
Blank	303
Health and wellbeing numbers accessing Services	
Total number of clients accessing HWB services (note: not unique records, includes duplicated instances of individuals accessing multiple services)	2,624
Counselling	1,155
Complementary Therapies	1,379
CBT/EMDR	76
Other H&W services	14
Total number who have exited services	1,173
Social Support numbers exited and numbers current	
Total number of clients accessing Social Support services (note: not unique records, includes duplicated instances of individuals accessing multiple services)	8,297
Total number who have exited services	4,979
Overall	
Number of unique clients registered in VSS-funded organisations for the period 1 April 2016-31 July 2016	5,811
Number of clients that VSS can see have exited services for the period 1 April 2016-31 July 2016	6,152

25. The Service continues to signpost and refer individuals to support within VSP-funded organisations. The VSS has advised that during this operating period they made 11 referrals in June, 8 in May and 6 in April.

Support Visits

26. VSS staff continued to meet with VSP-funded groups during this reporting period. Support Officers conducted 24 visits in June, 23 in May and 18 in April. April’s visits focused on confirmation of work plans for 2016/17. May and June’s visits concentrated on progress within the first quarter 2016/17.

Monitoring and Evaluation

27. Demonstrating the effectiveness of support services remains a matter of priority for the Commission. The RSM McClure Watters INP research recommended that a robust monitoring and evaluation framework should be established in line with the aims and objectives set in the business case with any monitoring and evaluation framework being in place and operational in time for the delivery of the 2015/16 programme.⁵ This is echoed in the VSP research, recommending the development of robust monitoring and evaluation processes/procedures in order to help to enhance the understanding of the most effective treatments for addressing conflict-related mental health conditions.⁶

28. During this reporting period the Service has advised that they continued to develop and progress monitoring and evaluation processes. As of 30 June 2016, the Service has advised of the following next steps with groups regarding formalising monitoring an evaluation implementation:

Both systems	- M&E Guidance notes issued to organisations (5 May 2016).
CORE Net	- Programme Officers trained as trainers to support implementation (18 May 2016); - Working groups established with the Greater Belfast area and North West area Practitioners Working Groups to assist with implementation issues.

29. The Commission recognises the Service’s efforts to engage with VSP-funded organisations regarding monitoring and evaluation. The need for robust evidence-based information is central to the demonstrating improvement in the lives of victims and survivors.

30. The Commission looks forward to a new process being formalised and the availability of data to demonstrate the impact of services being delivered.

Workforce Training and Development Plan

31. During this reporting period the Service finalised the 2016/17 Workforce Training and Development Plan.

⁵ CVSNI (2015b), p.92.

⁶ CVSNI (2015a), p.11.

32. Training areas to be delivered to the sector during 2016/17 will include Befriending Training and Supervision, Safe Talk, Welfare Reform, Corporate Governance, Strategic and Project Planning, Resilience and Emotional Intelligence, Trauma Focused CBT, Safeguarding, Drug and Alcohol Awareness, Introduction to Mindfulness, Legal and Ethical Issues and Trauma and the Family.

Revision of Standards

33. In July 2015 a working group, with the Greater Belfast area Victims and Survivors Practitioners Working Group and representatives from the Service and Department, was established to assist the Commission with revising standards prior to a wider sector consultation. During this reporting period the working group convened on the 29 June 2016.

Victims and Survivors Practitioners Working Groups

34. During this period the Greater Belfast area met on 7 April and 26 May, the North West area met on 25 May and the Southern area group met on the 19 May.
35. The three groups now have work programmes in place; facilitated through subgroups. The North West subgroup agreed to take forward work in relation to transgenerational trauma support with a focus on carers. This group met 20 April to progress. The Southern area subgroup plans to develop trauma-related psycho educational literature and held their introductory meeting on 27 June. Given the finalisation of the Resilience paper and research, there was not requirement for the sub-group of The Greater Belfast area to meet during this particular period.

Commission and Service Engagement

Independent Assessment

36. During this reporting period the Department requested the Commission's assessment regarding the status of the outstanding Independent Assessment recommendations. The Commissioner formally advised the Department on the 4 May 2016 that the Commission is content the remaining twelve recommendations could be signed off as 'Fully Implemented'.
37. The Commission would like to acknowledge the efforts made the Service since February 2014. The strategic and operational improvements made, in collaboration with the sector, have created the conditions for improved service delivery and ongoing conversations regarding future support for victims and survivors.

VSS Board

38. During this reporting period the Commission and the VSS Chair held face-to-face meetings once in April and twice in May. It should be noted that there was also frequent interaction through telephone and email communications during this period.

Trilateral Meetings

39. The Commission can report that trilateral meetings between the Commission, the Department and the Service continued during this reporting period. Meetings for this period took place on 27 April, 17 May and 21 June 2016.

Collaborative Design

40. The Department's Collaborative Design process began in April 2015. The process is intended to be a partnership approach with the sector in order to shape the best service delivery model for victims and survivors.
41. In this reporting period CVS and the VSS attended three Collaborative Design meetings (18 April, 10 May and 21 June).
42. Ongoing interaction between the Department, Service and the Commission has proved constructive in terms of problem solving and facilitating strategic decision making. The Commission is content that, during this reporting period, Service-related improvements are ongoing through the Collaborative Design process.

PEACE IV

43. The Department, in consultation with the Special European Union Programmes Body (SEUPB), has developed a proposal in relation to PEACE IV funding across an overarching theme of improving the health and wellbeing of victims and survivors. The Service's nomination as Lead Partner for the Victims and Survivors element of the programme was approved as part of the EU Commission's approval of the Peace IV Cooperational Programme on 30 November 2015. The support is for €17.6m.
44. Interaction between the Service, Department and Commission has been frequent and ongoing throughout this reporting period due to the intensity of the application process and necessity for collaborative working.
45. During this reporting period the Service submitted the Stage 1 application (6 April), met with the Peace Programme Manager at Belfast City Council (5 May 2016), received confirmation of the successful outcome of Stage 1 application (13 May) and submitted the Stage 2 application to SEUPB (27 June).
46. The Service also hosted engagement workshops with the sector during this reporting period. The workshops took place in Belfast (11 May), Londonderry (12 May) and Cookstown (13 May) and provided VSP-funded groups with an opportunity to learn more about potential opportunities.

Consultations

47. During this reporting period the consultation process for the draft Programme for Government Framework was opened by the Executive Office. The Commission, Service and Department were keen to ensure that organisations participated in this consultation process. A joint communication was issued to the sector on 27 June 2016 encouraging responses; directly to the Executive Office or by providing feedback to inform the Commission's consultation response.

Queries and Complaints

48. The Service has a complaints procedure in place to answer, investigate and/or appeal feedback from individuals and groups. In addition, the Commission also logs complaints from individuals not wishing to make a formal complaint.

49. For this reporting period, the Service received three formal complaints and the Commission received two queries from individuals:

	VSS	CVS
1-30 June	2	2
1-31 May	1	0
1-30 April	0	0

50. Queries received by the Commission were handled in accordance with the Service's Complaints Policy and Procedures and the Memorandum of Understanding between the VSS and CVS.

Managing Individuals

51. The Commission and the Service both recognise the impact that unacceptable behaviour can have on staff and it is accepted that staff in both organisations should be able to conduct business in a safe and non-threatening environment and unacceptable behaviour from members of the public will not be tolerated. Since 2014 the two organisations have operated an Unacceptable Behaviour Policy and share information regarding individuals placed on each other's register.

52. In recognition of a small number of individuals known to all three organisations, the Service suggested at July's trilateral the exploration of a case management approach. All agreed that a collaborative approach would be suitable. The VSS committed to looking at the most suitable process and would share potential options with CVS and the Department. An update should be available in the next reporting period.

Seminars

53. During this reporting period the Commission and Service worked collaboratively regarding issues connected to the introduction of Welfare Reform (transition from DLA to PIP). During this reporting period CVS, VSS and the Department engaged with the Department for Communities regarding the transition and the impressed the need to ensure that any assessment process is victim/survivor-centred.

54. On the 9 June 2016 a half day information session was held with Capita in order to inform their assessment and training team regarding victim and survivor issues. The format included a contextual overview by the Commission (conflict-related statistics; CVS research; need for a victim-centred approach), operational perspective from the Service (overview of INP and VSP; numbers of severely injured) and the Forum's perspective (work of the Forum; engagement with Ministers; needs of the severely injured).

55. Following from the information session the Commission held a policy seminar on 27 July 2016 at Malone House, Belfast. The seminar was aimed at those within the sector with a working knowledge of the welfare system and interest in Welfare Reform. The seminar provided an overview of Welfare Reform process and presentations were delivered by the Commission, Service, Wave, East Belfast Community Advice Centre, Department for Communities and Capita. Attendees were also provided with an opportunity to engage in a question/answer session.

Commission Research

56. There were two main research-based projects that were progressed during this reporting period. The first relates to the ongoing Review of the Victims and Survivors Strategy project and the other was the scoping and planning of three research proposals as part of the PEACE IV funded Victims and Survivors Programme.
57. PACEC were awarded the contract to undertake this six month research project to review the Strategy for Victims and Survivors 2009-19. The project is focusing on the progress and impact of implementing the overall aims of the Strategy, the application of the overall principles of the Strategy and the arrangements in place to take forward victims and survivors work in the areas of service provision, dealing with the past and building for the future. During this reporting period, PACEC continued with their consultation of stakeholders and individual victims and survivors and made preparation for the submission of a draft Final Report. Throughout April and May an online survey went live and received a total of 104 responses. Feedback from the survey and data collected from interviews with strategic and operational stakeholders and individual victims and survivors as well as feedback from the Commission's annual Conference held in March 2016 was analysed and included in the submission of a first draft of the Final Report. Further progress relating to this project will be provided in the next Quarterly Review Report.
58. During this period the Commission developed a number of research proposals for inclusion in a VSS- led application for funding from the PEACE IV Programme. Three research projects were included in the funding bid that cut across each of the three key areas identified in the Victims and Survivors Strategy, namely Dealing with the Past, Services and Building for the Future. In terms of Dealing with the Past, the proposed project will examine the effectiveness of advocacy services in Northern Ireland and the Border Region. It will focus on developing a clear understanding of the current provision of advocacy services and of the service user experiences of victims and survivors engaging with current and future historical investigative and information recovery processes. In the areas of Services, the proposed research project will aim to improve knowledge and understanding of the clinical impact of psychological therapy services in addressing the legacy of trauma-related mental health conditions among victims and survivors. Meanwhile, in the strategic area of Building for the Future, the proposed research study will investigate the trans-generational impact of the conflict's legacy on children and young people and their parents throughout Northern Ireland and the Border Region.
59. The VSS submitted the application at the end of June 2016 and is currently being assessed by the SEUPB. An update on the progress of the application, including funding for the proposed research projects will be provided in the next Quarterly Review Report.

Conclusions

60. The Commission is committed to continuing the tripartite relationship whereby the three organisations work together in a collaborative manner in order to improve service delivery. Collective approaches to sectoral issues in this reporting period included intensive interaction through Collaborative Design, engaging with the sector and other partners regarding Welfare Reform and ensuring that the interests of victims and survivors are recognised in the Commission's response to the draft Programme for Government framework. This partnership approach will continue throughout 2016/17 through operational interaction and engagement at a strategic level.
61. The Commission would note that Service-related complaints continue to remain at low levels; both complaints received directly by the VSS and feedback received by CVS.
62. Monitoring, evaluating and measuring outcomes remains a key focus for the Commission. The development of MYMOP and CORE Net, and the data generated, will be essential to enable strategic policy decisions on the provision of future resources and services. Development in this area is welcome and the Commission looks forward to the new process being formalised and robust information being made available in 2016/17.
63. There does remain challenges and priorities as the sector enters 2016/17. The sustainability of the sector remains a key priority for all partners. It is evident that demand is rising and is widely acknowledged by all working in the sector. Equally important is the necessity to continue ongoing work regarding eligibility and establishing the best way forward regarding assessing needs and targeting support to the remainder of the Strategy.
64. In reviewing this report's content the Commission believes the needs of victims and survivors can be addressed collaboratively to ensure that everyone can deliver the best for victims and survivors, enabling targeted and appropriate services for those accessing support.