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By Mark Hookham

19 October 2006

The Government yesterday vowed to provide long term funding for victims of the Troubles.

Prime Minister Tony Blair vowed that ministers will "look positively" at recommendations for future funding from interim victims' commissioner Bertha McDougall.

Mrs McDougall has warned that funding for victims and their support groups is poised to fall sharply next year. She said that to date there was no long-term strategic plan to fund or provide adequate services to victims.

Her case was yesterday taken up with Mr Blair by Lagan Valley MP Jeffrey Donaldson.

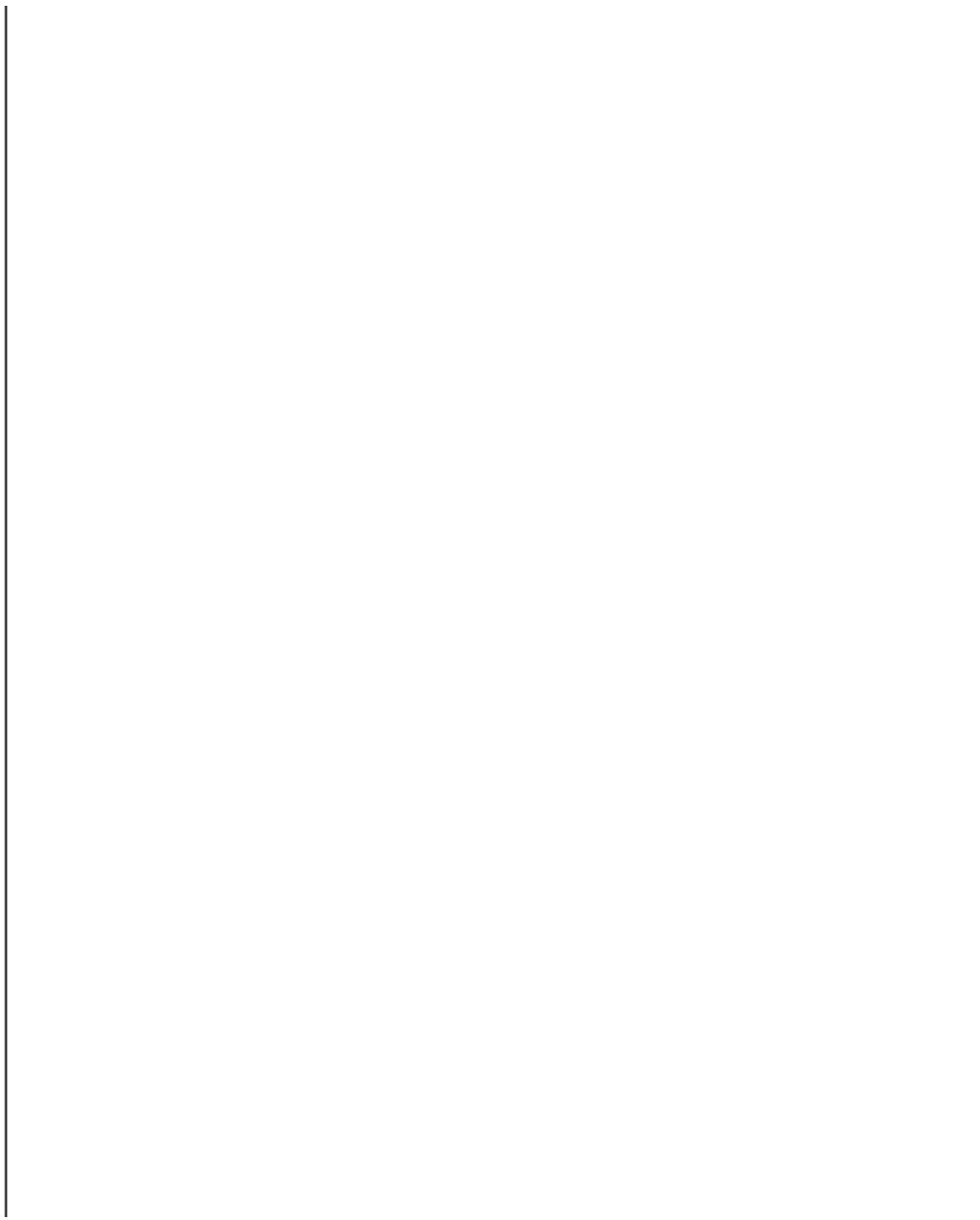
Speaking during Prime Minister's Questions, the DUP MP asked: "Will the Prime Minister give a commitment to provide that long term funding for those who have suffered so much?"

Mr Blair replied: "Yes I can give that commitment to the honourable gentleman.

"Let me just point out that we have committed some £38 million to victims groups since 1998. The current spending is at £5 million pounds a year.

"I am aware of the excellent work that is being done by Bertha McDougall as the commissioner. I look forward to her final report. We will look positively at her recommendations for future funding and her suggestions for spending the money."

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