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Last Updated: Tuesday, January 20, 2009, 06:49

Long-term funding needed for North victims - report

Victims' groups in Northern Ireland need to be given the security of long-term funding to help them function, a report published today said.

The Commission for Victims and Survivors said in its *Initial Review of Need* that groups working with the victims of decades of violence could not function properly if they didn't know from week to week where their money was coming from.

At the same time the commission said one of its key tasks for this year was establishing for the first time, through a Comprehensive Needs Assessment, the numbers and needs of victims.

Commissioner Mike Nesbitt, speaking on behalf of the four-member commission, said a fundamental problem which impacted on identifying and servicing need, was the nature of the short-term funding arrangement for victims groups.

He said groups were far too dependent on the annual funding round, which made the difference between survival and closure.

"This leads to unnecessary competition, duplication, negativity, instability, poor planning and a lack of strategic thinking.

"How can you focus on your long-term sustainability, when you don't know if you are going to be able to pay staff to deliver essential services next week," said Mr Nesbitt.

The commission, he said, was committed to working with the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister to ensure 2009 saw a transition to longer-term funding arrangements for groups.

"What we need for victims and survivors is a mechanism which maximises our ability to assess and monitor how the policies and actions of Stormont impact on victims and survivors."

Getting to where they had involved researchers taking in 150 documents, writing to over 100 organisations and interviewing 28 groups by telephone, Mr Nesbitt said.

"The result is a highly fragmented picture which makes our quest look a bit like the search for the Holy Grail."

PA

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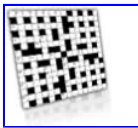
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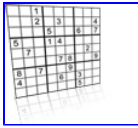
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