

CONSULTATION ON VICTIMS SERVICES

The Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS) is conducting a widespread consultation exercise on the recently published report, "Evaluation of Health and Social Services for Victims of the Conflict."

The report was commissioned by DHSSPS to ascertain, evaluate and make recommendations for improvements to the services provided to victims of the 'Troubles'.

Referring to the report, the then Minister for Health, and for victims Des Browne said, "Many of our services for victims have grown locally in each of the Health and Social Service Board areas.

"This consultation exercise is to give service users and other interested parties an opportunity to have their say in the future development of services."

The consultation period ends on 3 October 2003 and the report is available on the DHSSPS website www.dhsspsni.gov.uk



VICTIMS UNIT WEBSITE UNDER REVIEW

Victims Unit is currently reviewing the content of its dedicated internet website, www.victimsnri.gov.uk. We want it to be useful and informative and your views and comments on its format and content would be very welcome. Please let us know by writing to the Victims Unit directly or using the feedback facility contained on the website.

Towards a better future...

building healthy communities - international conference

A 3 day international conference, "towards a better future...building healthy communities" is being held in the Stormont Hotel, Belfast on 1 - 3 October 2003.

The conference aims to raise awareness of the impact of the conflict on the health and well being of people throughout Northern Ireland and develop a long term strategy for dealing with the consequences of more than thirty years of violence. It will also highlight the significant role of the voluntary/community sector and explore best practice regionally and internationally.

The North and West Belfast, and Eastern Health and Social Services Boards are hosting the conference which is part-funded by the OFMDFM Victims Unit.

- Cost £250 per delegate which includes conference dinner
- Concessionary places available

Places can be booked now - for further information contact Eunice Heelham 028 9082 1307 email: heelhame@nwb.n-i.nhs.uk

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COMPLEMENTARY THERAPY TASTER DAYS

A series of complementary therapy taster days took place during the period February to May, spanning the Western, Southern and Eastern Health Board and Sperrin and Lakeland areas.

The events were organised and funded by Victims Unit, in partnership with the four Trauma Advisory Panel Co-ordinators and the Community Victim Support Worker, Sperrin Lakeland Health and Social Care Trust.

Therapists who took part in the events demonstrated and advised on a range of complementary therapy techniques, including massage, aromatherapy, Tai Chi, relexology, yoga and reiki.

All the sessions were well attended and well received. A further event is planned for the Northern Health & Social Services Board in the near future.



Following the recent reshuffle of ministerial responsibilities, Des Browne has now concluded a 2-year stint as Victims' Minister in Northern Ireland. Des has been promoted to Minister of State for Work at the Department for Work and Pensions and our very best wishes follow him there. Des has been replaced by Angela Smith, M.P. for Basildon and East Thurrock and Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at the NIO since October 2002.

I talked to Angela about her new role as Victims' Minister.....

The Editor

What are your initial thoughts on your appointment as Victims' Minister?

"I consider it a great privilege to have been appointed to the position of Victims' Minister but I don't underestimate the challenges we face. A lot of good work has been done. But more needs to be done and it will be part of my job to ensure that victims' voices are heard as we develop the next generation of victims' policy."

How will you go about doing that?

"Well for a start I want to meet as many

victims and survivors as I can. And as many readers will know, I hosted a reception in Hillsborough last month when I met a number of victims and victims' groups' workers. I found this an emotional yet inspiring experience, hearing the stories of those whose lives have been marked by the conflict. I was touched by the dignity and spirit of so many there. But that was only a first step in the process. Soon I shall start a programme of visits to victims' groups, to see at first hand the facilities groups offer and to hear from victims their stories and their needs. I shall also be consulting widely with groups and with victims and survivors."

What else will you be doing?

"Well, in terms of developing the next generation of victims' policy, I am committed – along with colleagues in the Irish Government – to work also with the political parties. I know there are difficult areas to be dealt with, areas of deep concern to victims. I need to find out more about them and how victims would like to see them addressed. I can't promise to find all the solutions or to always give people the answers they want or deserve but victims' views will be at the forefront of my thinking as the next generation of policy is developed."

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Youth trip to Alton Towers

In April 150 children, parents and guardians set off on a trip to Alton Towers Fun Park, courtesy of the Northern Ireland Memorial Fund. It was a weekend of ups and downs – but that was only on the rides! Judging from some of the letters we received afterwards, everybody had a great time.

"The trip was very worthwhile, enjoyable and an absolute treat for the children - the children old and young! Many thanks to one and all."

"An experience not be forgotten for a long time, an uplifting time to see some joy in my partners and children's faces again. Extremely grateful for a great trip."

"It was a fun filled exciting trip, for all of the family. I personally felt it was absolutely outstanding."

"A very exciting fun filled weekend, all age groups were catered for and an opportunity to spend quality family time together in such a friendly and welcoming environment."

"I thought the trip was brilliant from start to finish, it helped me meet new people from different religions."

"Trip of a lifetime for the kids, something they will never forget."



"On behalf of my friend and myself I would like to thank you most sincerely for a very enjoyable weekend down at Westport, The hotel was great and it was nice to make new friends. Thank you again for your continued support."



"Please accept, on behalf of my friend and myself, sincere thanks for a lovely weekend in Westport. Everything had been thought about to ensure our comfort. The crowd were just like old friends by Sunday and girls on our bus from the Fund were brilliant. Once again thank you."

"We really enjoyed our break away, being pampered with having beautiful meals provided for us, relaxing in a friendly atmosphere, enjoying the fun and craic with the leaders and others on the trip, especially on the evening of the dinner and dance. Again, many thanks for providing us with such an enjoyable weekend."

Trip to Westport

Then at the end of May a group of 150 pre - 1991 widows set off for the weekend to Westport, Co. Mayo, again courtesy of the Fund. It was a chance for everyone to relax, enjoy themselves and get to know each other in the lovely surroundings of the Westport Woods hotel. Even the weather was on our side!

Back to School Scheme relaunched

The Northern Ireland Memorial Fund has re-launched its Back to School Scheme which helps with the purchase of school uniforms or other costs associated with the beginning of the school year.

It is open to the parents or guardians of children aged 18 or under who are in full time education, are living at home and who have either:

- lost a parent, partner or child
- have themselves been injured or

- have become the primary carer of a family member who has been physically injured.

The maximum award is £75 for each primary school child and £150 for each secondary school child. Closing date for applications is 2 September 2003. **Please note the scheme is no longer restricted to low income families in receipt of benefits.**

Please contact the Grants Office on 02890 245949 for an application form.

Northern Ireland Memorial Fund poised to introduce new Discretionary Hardship Fund

The Memorial Fund plans to introduce a new discretionary hardship fund on a pilot basis from 1 September to help those who are suffering real financial hardship.

This Fund can be accessed only by those who have lost the main breadwinner of the family or those who have suffered severe physical injuries.

For further information contact NIMF Secretariat on 028 9052 7939.

Applications will not be considered before 1 September 2003

NORTHERN IRELAND MEMORIAL FUND GALA DINNER



Below - A selection of guests at the dinner.



Above: (L to R) Colin and Wendy Parry, John and Pat Hume, and Dennis and Dorothy Licence at the Gala Dinner.



(L to R) Jane Wells, Des Browne and Carolyn Mc Cormick

Speaking after the Northern Ireland Memorial Fund's fourth gala dinner, held in May at the Ramada Hotel, Belfast, the then Victims' Minister, Des Browne, urged his audience to support this most worthy of causes. He said: "When I reflect on this evening please don't let me say, as the Great Oscar Wilde once said- 'the speech was a great success. But the audience were a total failure' " It seems the Minister's appeal was well received - £50,000 was raised on the night!

Lynda Bryans and Mike Nesbitt compered the evening and local singer Peter Corry provided the musical entertainment. We would like to thank them for generously donating their time. Their contribution made the evening a great success.



(L to R) Gary & Donna Marie Mc Gillion, Dennis Licence, Lynda Bryans & Mike Nesbitt.



(L to R) Sir Kenneth & Lady Bloomfield, Des Browne, Daphne & David Trimble and Dorothy & Dennis Licence.

Victims reception at HILLSBOROUGH



Pictured with Victims Minister Angela Smith are (l-r) Alistair Hall, Omagh, Jeanette Warke, Vincent McCloskey, Anne Bradley, Claudy and Gwen Hall, Omagh.



Victims/survivors from across Northern Ireland gathered at Hillsborough Castle on 28 July to meet with newly appointed Victims' Minister, Angela Smith. Here (above) is a small selection of those present. Speaking at the event the Minister said:

" I find myself now occupying a very special and privileged position- that of Victims' Minister. This is in acknowledgement of the legacy of suffering that still exists following more than 30 years of conflict"



Ballymoney WAVE group members (l-r) Betty Murphy, Mark Elliott, Jane McKay, Pat McCann and Jack Murphy (seated) pictured with Minister Angela Smith.



Maggie Taggart and Dominica McGeown from Nexus chat with Minister Angela Smith.



Sean Hughes (seated) holds court as the Minister listens. He was accompanied by members of the Disabled Police Officers Association.

Human Rights for Victims

The Human Rights Commission recently published a report "Human Rights and Victims of Violence" which examines the following issues:

- a victims right to information about the incident of violence in question
- a victims right to adequate compensation
- a victims right to have someone held to account for the violence inflicted on them; and
- a victims right to be treated equally with other victims of violence
- the relationship between victims rights that are protected within international standards and the experiences of victims and survivors in Northern Ireland.

Copies are available from The Human Rights Commission, Temple Court, 39 North Street, Belfast BT1 1NA. Tele 028 90243987. Website: www.nihrc.org

The HRC will be holding a number of seminars to discuss the content of this report in September. Details will be published on their website.



CRC opens Mid Ulster Office

Since we last went to press, the Community Relations Council has opened its mid Ulster Office. The Council recognises the additional difficulties of accessibility, isolation, lack of facilities etc faced by Groups that are located West of the Bann and has established an Office based in: The Bleach House, 8 Linen Green, Moygashel, Dungannon, Co Tyrone. The office is staffed by Derrick Mathews, Joan Clements and Roisin Maguire. For further information call 028 8772 0430.

RESEARCH REPORT PUBLISHED

"Who are the Victims? Self-assessed victimhood and the Northern Irish conflict" was recently published by the NIO. The report presents findings from a research project, which examined various aspects of victimhood in Northern Ireland in relation to political violence, and in particular examined the current psychological well-being of those who consider themselves to be victims.

This Research and Statistical Report is available for downloading from the Internet at <http://www.nio.gov.uk>. It can also be obtained from NIO Statistics and Research Branch, Massey House, Stormont Estate, Belfast BT4 3SX (Telephone 028 9052 7534).

Protocols set for Research with victims

Following views expressed during the consultation exercise on the victims' strategy, "Reshape, Rebuild, Achieve", a number of recipients expressed the view that there should be agreed criteria and ethical standards of practice for researchers working with victims.

Research Branch of the OFMDFM Equality Directorate commissioned Paul Connolly of the University of Ulster to produce protocols and ethical standards for researching vulnerable groups including victims.

If you would like a copy of the report you can either contact the Equality Unit – Research on 028 9052 3254 or the Victims Unit on Freephone 0808 127 3333, Text phone 9052 2343 or e-mail info@victimsni.gov.uk

Alternatively you can view the report at www.victimsni.gov.uk

'TOP UP' DIPLOMA IN TRAUMA STUDIES

The School of Nursing & Midwifery, Queen's University, Belfast in partnership with WAVE Trauma Centre will offer a one year programme of study leading to the award of a 'Top Up' Diploma in Trauma Studies.

The Diploma Programme which is multidisciplinary is the first of its kind which focuses solely on "The Troubles" related Trauma. The aim is to increase the efficacy of practitioners who work directly or indirectly with victims/survivors of the "The Troubles" by further developing their skills and knowledge in this specialised area.

The cost (2003-2004) will be £1,125. WAVE will however sponsor 12 of the 25 places available through a scholarship scheme, details of which will be forwarded with application packs. For an application pack or further information contact:

Margaret Riddels, Training Co-ordinator, WAVE Trauma Centre, 5 Chichester Park South, Belfast BT15 5DW. Telephone 028 9077 9922.

The closing date for applications Tuesday 2 September 2003

Verification visits by Victims Liaison Unit and Victims Unit

In Issue 10 we reminded groups of the need to implement the Key Best Practice Recommendations that came out of last year's Audit of Core Funded Groups.

Within the next few weeks, staff from the Victims Liaison Unit and the Victims Unit will be commencing verification visits to ensure that the recommended financial and operational management systems are in place and to verify expenditure on relevant funding schemes.

Staff will be in contact with groups to arrange suitable dates for these initial visits. Subsequent visits may be on a more adhoc basis.



Minister Des Browne signs the visitors at WAVE while Marie-Therese Fay and staff at the Derry office look on.

Continuing his round of visits to victims groups in May the then Victims Minister Des Browne dropped in at WAVE's offices in Derry and Make Your Mark's premises, also in the city, where he opened new art therapy rooms.



Pictured with Minister Des Browne at Make Your Mark are (l-r) Sean Gallagher, Development Officer, Devitt Collins and Elizabeth Fielding.

Help is at hand

After consulting a number of faith communities, the Victims Unit of the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister plans to hold one-day seminars for clergy, faith workers and pastoral care workers to help provide them with the skills and information needed to address the sadness and distress arising from the conflict and

support people on the journey towards healing.

Topics covered will include recognizing trauma; understanding the needs of those affected by violence; helping skills; dealing with anger and other emotional reactions; when and how to refer to professional help; self care; and care for colleagues. Although theological and doctrinal issues can be helpful in relation to suffering and healing, seminars will not focus on those issues.

The seminars will take place as follows:

- 22 September 2003 NICVA, Duncairn Gardens, Belfast
- 23 September 2003 Marketplace Theatre, Armagh
- 24 September 2003 Ramada Hotel, Belfast
- 25 September 2003 Glenavon Hotel, Cookstown
- 26 September 2003 Bawnacre Centre, Irvinestown

- 29 September 2003 Lodge Hotel, Coleraine
- 30 September 2003 Tullyglass Hotel, Ballymena
- 13 October 2003 Broomhill Hotel, Londonderry
- 14 October 2003 Burrendale Hotel, Newcastle



*Pictured with Minister Des Browne
(l-r) Hanora Fleming and William Galbraith*

Trauma and Transformation Centre opens in Omagh

On 4 June, Des Browne officially opened the Northern Ireland Centre for Trauma & Transformation. The Centre, based in Omagh is developing a regional treatment programme for people who have suffered psychological trauma as a result of their experiences of the Troubles and will also undertake research and provide training in relation to trauma.

The Minister also launched a leaflet developed by the Centre to reach those who have psychological trauma related needs. Entitled "Do You Know Somebody...?" the leaflet is aimed in the first instance at family and friends, colleagues and professionals who know somebody who has been adversely affected by their experiences of the Troubles and who are concerned for their well being. Speaking of the leaflet the Minister said:

"We recognise that people who have suffered trauma often feel isolated and unable to ask for help even if they know where to seek it."

The leaflet helps de-stigmatise the process of asking for help.

Copies of the leaflet can be obtained from the Centre in Omagh.

Those wishing to seek treatment or advice can contact the centre during normal working hours. Telephone 028 82251500; Email info@nictt.org or via the website www.nictt.org, or by letter to, 2 Retreat Close, Omagh, Northern Ireland BT79 0HW

