

Review of Criminal Injuries Compensation

The Government officially announced its response to the report of the Review of the criminal injuries compensation scheme on 26 July.

This Review was carried out, at the Government's request, by Sir Kenneth Bloomfield. His remit was to look at whether the current criminal injuries compensation scheme fulfilled its purpose and, if not, what changes should be made to any future scheme.

Commenting on the report the Secretary of State, Mr Mandelson said: "After careful consideration of the report, I have decided to accept the majority of their 64 recommendations, with some amendments."

Mr Mandelson also paid tribute to Sir Kenneth Bloomfield and his colleagues for their most diligent and thorough review.

The most important changes are:

The introduction of a tariff scheme for all claims. This will provide victims with a faster, simpler and more straightforward service, cutting out the need for legal assistance and removing lengthy appeals to the courts. Instead, Victim Support will offer assistance to anyone making a claim, and appeals can be made to a more informal but still independent appeals panel. The tariff of awards will be based on the average value of awards in Northern Ireland.

Better bereavement support arrangements.

More generous payments will be made to a wider circle of relatives to recognise their grief and sorrow, and to acknowledge the loss of the deceased's care and guidance.

Flexibility in time limits. The current statutory time limit of three years to make a claim will be reduced to two, but will be flexible to permit claims to be made long after the incident took place. This means, for example, that children who become the victim of violent crime after the date of introduction of the proposed new legislation will be able to have a claim considered at any time in the future. At present the time limit expires at the age of 21.

Reopening cases. Claims made under the new scheme can be reopened for a limited period on certain medical grounds.

Psychiatric illness. It will no longer be necessary to witness the crime leading to the death or injury of a loved one to be able to make a claim for psychiatric damage.

Criminal record. A penalty points system will be introduced to regulate the effect of previous criminal behaviour on awards. The same provisions will also apply to convictions for terrorist offences.

None of the proposed changes will have any effect on claims already made or injuries sustained before the new legislation is introduced.

Other initiatives not within the remit of the Compensation Agency include a sum of up to £10,000 payable to the families of the disappeared. In addition, the Secretary of State has promised a further commitment of funds from next April to take forward the implementation of Sir Kenneth's report into victims of the Troubles, "We Will Remember Them."

Mr Mandelson said he believed that the proposed changes represented a better way to ensure that the criminal injuries compensation scheme fulfils its purpose. Acknowledging that it was impossible to compensate for some of the losses suffered, he said he was determined that victims of criminal violence should in the future get the best service that the Government can provide, in recognition of their suffering and to allow them to maintain their standard of life.

Full details of the Government's response can be obtained from the NIO web site at <http://www.nio.gov.uk/0007262.htm> or by ringing 028 9052 8357.

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Developing Standards for Working With Those Affected by the Troubles – A New Guide

A GUIDE is currently being prepared to help ensure that vulnerable people who seek support receive the best possible service.

In recent times more and more people affected by the Troubles in Northern Ireland have been willing to come forward for help. As a result it has become apparent that clear guidance would be useful for those providing that help.

It was in this context that a seminar, co-sponsored by the Victims Liaison Unit, the Northern Ireland Voluntary Trust and the Community Relations Council was held on 25 November 1999 to look at how standards for working in this area might be developed. Those who attended represented a wide range of interests in the area of victim support from both the community and statutory sectors, and in the professional counselling/therapeutic field.

This work is not always easy. However, a key message which came out of the seminar was that, if groups are working with vulnerable people, it is important that they recognise the need to try to support

those people to move beyond victimhood and to affirm their own natural ability to cope.

As a result of the discussions and workshops on that day, as well as subsequent consultations with interested parties, a guide is currently being prepared which is designed to be a resource for groups when developing standards and codes of practice specific to their organisations.

There are now many groups working with people who have experienced trauma as a result of the Troubles. This new document, which will be available in early autumn, looks at the available range of services and at why there is a need for standards.

It also examines the core values which should underline each service and at some of the processes involved, such as referral and the need to provide adequate supervision and support for workers in this area.

Anyone wishing to register an interest in obtaining a copy of this document should contact:

Mary Butcher in VLU (028 90 527090) or Norma Patterson in NIVT (028 90 245927).

CORE FUNDING FOR VICTIMS/SURVIVORS GROUPS

The launch of the Core Funding Grants Scheme in January has attracted applications from established victims/survivors groups across the Province.

Avril Craig, Community Projects Officer with the Northern Ireland Voluntary Trust, is now assessing the second batch of applications.

Several groups have received offers of awards for Core Funding and others have been awarded funding for seeding costs and development projects.

Core funding is for 2 years and is available for salaries, worker-related costs, overheads, programme costs and small items of equipment. Further information is available from Avril on 028 9024 5927.

Social Exclusion of Victims - Consultation Exercise Launched by the Social Security Agency

In recognition of the fact that people affected by the Troubles can suffer from social exclusion, the Social Security Agency is undertaking a project to review the services it provides to those affected by the Troubles, and to consider how these might be improved. This is in response to the New Targeting Social Needs initiative.

An initial meeting took place in July with a number of representatives from victim support groups, when it was agreed that the Agency would hold workshops to discuss Social Security issues. The first of these workshops took place on 15 September in Londonderry. The second will take place on 22 September in Belfast, and will last approximately 3 hours. It will be informal and will provide an opportunity for consultation.

Victims groups and their representatives will be encouraged to give their views of the Social Security Agency's services and to discuss how Agency services could be improved.

The Victims Liaison Unit, and the recently established Victims Unit within the Office of the First Minister/Deputy First Minister, will also attend the workshops.

If you would like to attend the workshop or complete a questionnaire giving your views on the Social Security Agency's services; or if you would like further information on the project, please contact either Margaret Boyle or Noreen Tierney on 028 9056 9166 or 028 9056 9194.

Colin Parry, whose son Tim was killed in the Warrington bomb, along with 3 year old Johnathan Ball writes here of the new hope focused on a young people's centre opened in Tim and Johnathan's name.

The Warrington Peace Centre

Seven years to the day after the bomb in Warrington killed my 12 year old son Tim and 3 year old Johnathan Ball, the charity that my wife Wendy and I set up in the names of the two boys, opened 'The Tim Parry Johnathan Ball Young People's Centre' [aka The Peace Centre].

From very soon after the loss of Tim, our dream was to create in Warrington a safe place for young people of all nationalities, religions, races, political opinions etc to come together in a spirit of wanting to learn to live in harmony regardless of their differences. This we are on the way to achieving through the Centre.

We are the only community-based organisation in England born out of the Northern Ireland Troubles which has the moral imperative and leadership to mount a sustained campaign focussed on contributing to the breakdown of mutual fear and distrust of the kind which led to the deaths of over 3000 people and so many innocent children.

Since moving into the Centre in May, we have been busy setting up working relationships with our two partners, the NSPCC and Warrington Youth Club. We have also been furnishing the rooms so that we can open for business late in September or early in October.

We are now in the process of appointing personnel to key positions, amongst which the Chief Executive and Programme Manager are vital to our future strategy.

The past two years have been especially exciting and rewarding but, by comparison, we expect the next two years to be even more challenging.

By 2002-3, we will have seen the benefits of young people from our town and region sharing their hopes, fears, beliefs and prejudices, with their contemporaries from Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. This is at the heart of our Centre and of the work for which the Trust was formed.

Through this article, I would like to invite any organisation interested in participating in programmes to be run from the Centre to let us know. Our conventional and e-mail addresses are shown below.

Warrington Peace Centre
Peace Drive
Great Sankey
Warrington
Cheshire WA5 1HQ
Tel: 01925 581231
Fax: 01925 581233
E-mail: info@childrenforpeace.org
Web Site: www.childrenforpeace.org

THE DISAPPEARED

In the May issue of the Newsletter we reported that the Independent Commission for the Location of Victims Remains had announced the resumption of searches for the remains of the disappeared.

Sadly, no further remains were discovered and the Commission, believing that the understandable distress of relatives could only be compounded by further searching with little hope of success, halted the searches on the 20th of May.

Following the Government's response to the review of the Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme, it has been agreed that a sum of up to £10,000 will be payable to the families of the disappeared.

The Victims Liaison Unit is currently developing a scheme to put this in place after April 2001. Families will be contacted about details of the scheme in due course.

Recognition for Victims and Survivors at Hillsborough Garden Party

This year the Secretary of State's Garden Party at Hillsborough Castle was held in honour of those whose lives have been affected by the Troubles.

It was attended by nearly 2500 guests most of whom had been affected directly, or worked with those who had been affected by the Troubles of the past 30 years.

The chief guest at the party was HRH The Prince of Wales and, after planting a tree in the garden, he spent over 2 hours chatting to many of the assembled guests.

Seminar on The Impact of Trauma on Families

The Family Trauma Centre, based in Belfast, is to host a one-day seminar on 4th October 2000 on "The Impact of Trauma on Families".

The keynote speaker will be Helen Bamber (Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture), one of the first people to work with the victims of Belsen Concentration Camp in 1945.

The seminar will be of interest to those working with families affected by trauma but particularly those working with families affected by the Troubles. A number of workshops throughout the day will address aspects of the psychological treatment of children and families affected by Troubles related trauma.

Anyone interested in attending should contact Brian Cairns at the Family Trauma Centre, Tel no. (028) 90 204700 for details. Alternatively e-mail Brian at brian.cairns@sebt.n-i.nhs.uk

Keynote speaker: Helen Bamber OBE

At only 20 years of age Helen Bamber was a member of one of the first rehabilitation teams to enter Belsen concentration camp at the end of World War Two. She remained in Germany for 2 years, working for the Relief and Rehabilitation Association of the newly established United Nations, and was responsible for the evacuation to Switzerland of children suffering from tuberculosis.

She returned to England in 1947 and was appointed to the Committee for the Care of Children from Concentration Camps, where she was responsible for the welfare of orphaned children rescued from Auschwitz concentration camp.

Her subsequent career took her to a variety of hospitals and health organisations and, in 1961, she joined Amnesty International, shortly after it was founded.

In 1985, after working for many years with survivors of torture who had fled to the United Kingdom, Helen established the Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture which now provides medical treatment and psychological and practical help to survivors of torture and their families in the United Kingdom. Helen also helps train those working in the UK and abroad with survivors of torture and aims to educate health professionals and the public about the effects of torture and its causes.

In 1993 Helen was named European Woman of Achievement, in January 1997 she was awarded an OBE and she holds Honorary doctorates from five universities. She has taken a keen interest in the effects of Troubles-related trauma in Northern Ireland and has supported the work of victim support groups in Northern Ireland including the Family Trauma Centre in Belfast.

In addition to the groups listed in the previous newsletter, below are some details of groups providing support to victims of the Troubles in Northern Ireland (please note, not all of the groups listed work exclusively with victims of the Troubles)

Homes United By Ruthless Terrorism (HURT)

Brownlow House, Windsor Avenue, Lurgan, BT67 9BJ.

Tel: 028 3834 4719

Fax: 028 3834 4719

Befriending; Counselling; Youth Work; Training; Advice/Information/Advocacy; Recording Stories; Social Activities

Institute for Counselling & Personal Development

Interpoint Centre, 20-24 York Street, Belfast

Tel: 028 9033 0996

Fax: 028 9033 0997

E-mail: chris@icpd.thegap.com

Counselling; Competent Helper Training Programme for community groups working with survivors of violence

New Life Counselling Service

25 Ardoyne Road, Belfast, BT14 7HX.

Tel: 028 9039 1630

Fax: 028 9072 9131

Counselling (1 to 1, Group, and Parenting); Child Therapy; Youth Work; Family Therapy; Training; Information/Advocacy; Creative Therapies;

In addition to Belfast other WAVE Trauma Centres are:

9 Dobbin Street, Armagh, BT61 7QQ.

Tel: 028 3751 1599

Fax: 028 3751 1599

Website: www.wavetc.clara.net

Unit 4, Old Market Building, Market Place, Omagh, BT78 1BT.

Tel: 028 8225 2522

Fax: 028 8225 9979

Website: www.wavetc.clara.net

14 Castlecroft, Main Street, Ballymoney, BT53 5TD.

Tel: 028 2766 9900

Fax: 028 2766 9900

Website: www.wavetc.clara.net

E-mail: rkirk_wave@hotmail.com

Befriending; Counselling; Youth Work; Training; Advice/Information/Advocacy; Complementary Therapies; Holidays/Respite Support; Recording Stories; Peer Group Support.

West Tyrone Voice

55 Dublin Street, Newtownstewart, Co. Tyrone, BT78 4AQ.

Tel: 028 8166 2848

Fax: 028 8166 2848

E-mail: West_Tyrone_Voice@hotmail.com

Website: www.ireland.org.uk/wtv

Befriending, Counselling, Training, Advice/Information/Advocacy, Holiday/Respite Support, Recording Stories, Social Activities.

These details are provided for information and do not constitute accreditation for the services listed