



## Consultation Survey

### Advice on an extension to the Strategy for Victims and Survivors 2009-2019 and Programme Funding

Dear Consultee,

The Executive Office has asked the Commission for Victims and Survivors to provide advice on:

- An extension to the Strategy for Victims and Survivors 2009-2019; and
- An extension to Programme Funding to inform how services are delivered up to March 2022.

In order to inform my advice, I am seeking your views.

I would be extremely grateful if you would complete this survey, which should take no longer than 10 minutes.

If you have any questions about the survey, or would like to meet to discuss any aspects of this advice, please contact Neil Foster or Peter Mann at the Commission on 028 9031 1000.

All completed questionnaires should be sent to the following email address: [commission@cvsni.org](mailto:commission@cvsni.org)

Alternatively, you can complete it online: <https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/FFJK8/>

Or by post: Commission for Victims and Survivors, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor, Equality House, 7-9 Shaftesbury Square, Belfast, BT2 7DP

The closing date for responses is **6<sup>th</sup> September 2019 at 4pm.**

Please note that no individual or organisation will be identifiable through their response to this survey. Although the information you provide may be reflected in my advice, it will be combined and presented with other feedback in an overall summary of findings.

Your help and input is very much appreciated.

Judith Thompson  
Commissioner for Victims and Survivors

# Survey Questions

## 1. Are you?

*Please tick all that apply*

- A victim/survivor
  - I have been injured (physically or psychologically)
  - I have been bereaved
  - I am a carer
  - I have witnessed a conflict-related incident
  - I have provided medical/emergency assistance to an individual in connection with a conflict-related incident

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**Representative of a Victims and Survivors Service (VSS) funded organisation**

- Representative of a third sector/civic society organisation
- Representative of a Government body
- An academic
- Other (please specify):

## 2. In what capacity are you completing this survey?

- A victim/survivor

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**Representative of a Victims and Survivors Service (VSS) funded organisation**

- Representative of a third sector/civic society organisation
- Representative of a Government body
- An academic
- Other (please specify):

### 3. About you

Postal district (BT1, BT2 for example)

BT67 9BJ

#### Age

18-25

26-35

36-45

46-55

**56-65** ✓

66-74

75+

Gender (please specify)

Male

#### 4. Extension to the Strategy for Victims and Survivors

The aims of the Strategy for Victims and Survivors are to:

- Put in place comprehensive arrangements to ensure that the voice of victims and survivors is represented and acted upon at governmental and policy level;
- Secure through the provision of an appropriate range of support services and other initiatives a measurable improvement in the wellbeing of victims and survivors;
- Assist victims and survivors, where this is consistent with their wishes and wellbeing, to play a central role, as part of wider society in addressing the legacy of the past; and
- Assist victims and survivors to contribute to building a shared and better future.

The Strategy established a new approach for victims and survivors work, focusing on three key areas: dealing with the past, building for the future and services. This work has been taken forward by the Commission for Victims and Survivors, the Victims and Survivors Service and the Victims and Survivors Forum, in partnership with The Executive Office.

You can read the Strategy here: <https://bit.ly/2YKuoBL>

As the Strategy is coming to the end of its ten-year timeframe, The Executive Office plans to commission an independent evaluation to:

- Assess the impact and extent to which the current Strategy has delivered on its overall aims and principles; and
- Inform the development of any new Strategy.

A formal evaluation of this strategy was a key recommendation from the Mid-Term Review of the Strategy in March 2017. A formal evaluation is expected to commence later this year and any new Strategy will be developed in partnership and collaboration with victims and survivors through a co-design process.

It is planned to extend the current Strategy to allow time for it to be evaluated and any new Strategy developed. The extension will enable the continuation of support services, and the coordination of issues relating to victims and survivors including outcomes from the Commission's PEACE IV Victims and Survivors Research Programme.

**For the duration of the extension period, are there any aspects of the current Strategy that could be improved?**

Yes

No

*If you answered 'yes', please comment below:*

The strategy should address the fundamental issue of the definition of victim and should focus on the necessary review of the interpretation provided in the Victims and Survivors (Northern Ireland) Order 2006 so as to exclude perpetrators of acts of terrorism.

This would have a significant positive impact on the development of services that address the needs of victims of terrorism, civilians and security forces personnel.

The definition of victim should apply to members of the Victims and Survivors Forum for who should all be genuine victims of terrorism.

## 5. Delivering services

The Victims and Survivors Service (VSS) provides practical day-to-day support and services with a focus on improving the health and wellbeing of victims and survivors.

A new way of delivering services was introduced in 2017, moving away from a grant-led approach to a needs-based approach for victims and survivors to take into account changing needs and the unique circumstances of each individual.

A three year funding programme (April 2017 to March 2020) was secured and we are providing advice to extend this for a further two years to allow the evaluation of the Strategy to be undertaken and a new Strategy developed.

The VSS provides support directly to 6,000 individuals per year and includes financial support for eligible individuals, and access to services to meet needs in relation to Psychological Therapies, Persistent Pain, Disability Support, Education and Training, or Advocacy.

Through a community network of over 50 funded organisations further support is delivered at a local level to 12,000 individuals per year. This includes: Befriending, Complementary Therapies, Personal/Professional Development Programmes, Social Support Activities, Talking Therapies (counselling, psychological therapies, life coaching), Transgenerational Activities (activities for young people), Truth, Justice and Acknowledgement (including Advocacy Support, and Remembrance and Commemoration Activities), and Welfare Support.

You can find out more about services here: <https://bit.ly/2YnbPav>

### Does the current approach meet the needs of victims and survivors?

Yes

No

*If you answered 'no', please comment below:*

Due to the “interpretation” of victim and survivor provided in the Victims and Survivors (Northern Ireland) Order 2006, the Commission for Victims and Survivors, the Victims and

Survivors Forum and the Victims and Survivors Service have not been able to provide services that would meet the needs of victims of terrorism to the standard that is required.

As a result of the “interpretation” of victim and survivor which include genuine victims of terrorism as well as perpetrators of acts of terrorism, many real victims of terrorism would be reluctant to engage with or benefit from the services that are available.

A proper definition of victim and survivor that would comply with the definition of “victim” provided in the Directive 2012/29/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 October 2012 and already implemented in the Justice (Northern Ireland) Act 2015 would make it possible to deliver appropriate services for victims of terrorism in Northern Ireland and the rest of the United Kingdom.

Perpetrators of acts of terrorism, who may have health and wellbeing issues should be dealt with separately from their victims.

### **Are there any gaps in services?**

Yes

No

*If you answered ‘yes’, please comment below:*

There are no services dedicated to providing for the needs of victims of terrorism only. As a result victims of terrorism are reluctant to use services that may be available to them because of the absence of confidentiality and the risk of being identified by perpetrators of acts of terrorism.

### **6. Other comments**

If there are any further comments you wish to make, please comment below.

A comprehensive needs assessment for victims of terrorism is still required and should be made.

The lack of a proper definition of victim that would apply to victims of crime including victims of terrorism in compliance with Directive 2012/29/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 October 2012, in line with the Justice Northern Ireland Act 2015, has made it impossible to deal with the legacy of the past in a satisfactory way.

The reluctance to provide a definition of victim that would exclude perpetrators of acts of terrorism has been a stumbling block in building for the future to the benefit of society as a whole and for future generations.

## **7. Keep informed**

The Executive Office plans to commission an evaluation later this year, in order to inform the development of any new Strategy for Victims and Survivors. This will involve a process of consultation and engagement.

If you would like to be kept informed of the evaluation or the development of any new Strategy for Victims and Survivors, please provide your details:

Name: Axel Schmidt

Organisation (if applicable): Ulster Human Rights Watch (UHRW)

Email: [info@uhrw.org.uk](mailto:info@uhrw.org.uk)

Address: The Victoria Suite, Brownlow House, Windsor Avenue, Lurgan, Craigavon, BT67 9BJ

**Thank you for taking time to complete this survey.**