



Victims and Survivors Service

Quarterly Review Report

July to September 2015

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Summary

1. The Office of the First and deputy First Minister (OFMDFM) has requested that the Commission for Victims and Survivors Northern Ireland (CVSNI) review the progress of the Victims and Survivors Service (VSS) and produce a report that comments on that progress.
2. This report focuses on the period from July to September 2015.
3. This reporting period has been a busy operational time for the Service, with ongoing communication relating to the Individual Needs Programme schemes, implementing monitoring and evaluation processes and managing the pilot on personalised budgets and caseworkers.
4. Communication and interaction between the Commission and the Service has remained positive and constructive during this reporting period. It is expected that the good working relationship that has been established prior to the appointment of the Commissioner and the Service's Board will continue.
5. The Quarterly Review Reports remain an important element of the Commission's responsibility to keep under review the adequacy and effectiveness of law and practice affecting the interests of victims and survivors. The reports will be used by the Commissioner, in line with her statutory duties and powers, to keep under review the adequacy and effectiveness of services provided for victims and survivors.
6. The ongoing Collaborative Design process, exploration of personalisation and the ongoing efforts of the Service to demonstrate the outcomes of the Victims Support Programme presents an opportunity to explore the shape of future service delivery to victims and survivors.
7. The Commission is committed to partnership working with OFMDFM, VSS and the wider sector to ensure that everyone delivers the best for victims and survivors, enabling a robust and effective support service to those most in need within our society.

Recommendations

8. After taking into consideration all the information contained within this report, the Commission does not propose any recommendations to the Department.

Background

9. Target 1.2 of the Commission for Victims and Survivors (CVSNI and 'the Commission') 2015/16 Business Plan requires the Commission to produce four quarterly reports on

the progress and operation of the Victims and Survivors Service (VSS and 'the Service').¹

10. This is the second Quarterly Review Report of 2015/16. Whilst building on previous reports and their recommendations, this report provides an update on the operation of the VSS during the period from July to September 2015.
11. The Commission has collated information from a range of sources. The primary source of information is that supplied to the Commission directly from the Service. The Forum Services Working Group (FSWG) has also proved to be a valuable source of information, as has information provided by individuals who have direct experience of interacting with the VSS. Finally, Commission staff collate views and issues from across the sector during the course of their work, for example, through arranged group visits and feedback from individual victims and survivors.

Individual Needs Programme

Support Schemes

12. The Individual Needs Programme was opened for 2015/16 at the end of April 2015. The Service communicated with more than 7,000 individuals to inform them of the eligibility for support schemes.
13. The schemes opened in 2015/16 mirrored the support schemes that were opened by the VSS in 2014/15. These schemes are:
 - Financial Assistance;
 - Support for the Bereaved;
 - Support for Carers;
 - Support for the Injured;
 - Support for Chronic Pain; and
 - Education and Training.
14. Due to budgetary constraints and the need for a more simplified approach, the schemes were administered on the basis of one award per person for the period of 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016.²

¹ The provision of these review reports represents a key component of the Commission's responsibility to 'keep under review the adequacy and effectiveness of services provided for victims and survivors by the Victims and Survivors Service' as outlined within the Victims and Survivors Strategy: Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister (2009) *Victims and Survivors Strategy*, Belfast: The Stationery Office, p.7.

² Individuals could also apply for and avail of Financial Assistance alongside one other support scheme.

Reporting Data

15. As of 30 September 2015 the Service has provided the following summary of award letters issued to individuals:

Scheme	Awards Issued 2014/15	Awards Issued 2015/16	Increase	Award Value	Total Committed £K
Financial Assistance	2,248	2,661	413	£820	£2,182
Support for Bereaved	2,117	2,285	168	£500	£1,143
Support for Injured High Rate Care DLA	423	524	101	£1,500	£786
Support for Injured Middle Rate Care DLA	403	466	63	£500	£233
Support for Carers	417	478	61	£500	£239
Chronic Pain Treatments	294	44	-250	£500	£22
Education and Training	167	19	-148	£500	£10
				Total	£4,615

16. The Commission welcomes the comparative data for numbers of individuals accessing support through INP. All of the schemes have seen an increase in the numbers of eligible individuals accessing INP in 2015/16. Due to the reallocation of budgetary resources from VSP to INP by the VSS Board in August, and the file review exercise that was carried out throughout August and September, further awards were issued to individuals in September. The Service has advised that it is envisaged that all schemes will formally close in October 2015.

17. As of 30 September 2015 the total budget committed for the Financial Assistance scheme was £2,182,000. During the last reporting period the Service advised that the value of the Financial Assistance award would decrease in 2015/16 as the VSS was in receipt of 1,154 new applications. The Service has reported that the total amount of awards issued in 2015/16 was 2,661. This represents an increase of 413 awards from 2014/15. The process for payments to eligible applicants was amended this year as a result of increased demand. All eligible self-declaration applicants received a first payment of £500 in July and a second payment, calculated on remaining budget, of £320 was made in August.

18. The Commission would like to recognise that the approach taken by the VSS ensured that the majority of individuals would qualify for a new award with minimal administration and within an extended application period.³
19. The VSS has advised that during this reporting period 44 awards towards Chronic Pain treatments were made to clients who do not meet the DLA criteria under the Support for Injured scheme. These individuals previously received a detailed review for experiencing on-going pain. In August 2015, the Service conducted a review of Chronic Pain payments to clients in order to identify those who are currently receiving chronic pain relief injections, the number of injections received to date, the total cost per year for clients and whether or not these treatments are available through the National Health Service. This approach is with a view to ensuring that the Service is not supplementing services where there is a statutory obligation. The Service has established contact with the Belfast Trust to assist in taking this forward and to begin discussions around formal referral routes back into statutory services.
20. During this reporting period the Service made initial contact with the Musgrave Pain Clinic to examine the potential for the clinic to assess applications and for the VSS to potentially pay for any budgetary shortfalls for aids. A meeting is planned, in conjunction with WAVE's Injured Group, for October 2015.
21. The Commission welcomes the engagement with statutory services during this period. Whilst these discussions are exploratory, there is potential they may lead to a better outcome for individuals. This approach may allow the VSS to explore this approach further and other medical interventions may be reviewed in the same way.

Personalised Budgets, Caseworker Approach and Individual Needs Consultation

22. This reporting period saw the start of the pilot on the Personalised Budgets, Caseworker Approach and Guided Conversation.
23. In July the Service's Client Assessor was appointed to undertake the role of the Caseworker and responsible for coordinating the programme for the implementation of the pilot. The Service also appointed a second Caseworker on a short-term contract. Fourteen group-based Caseworkers were also appointed during this reporting period.
24. Training and inductions for Caseworkers took place on 23 July and 13 August 2015. The training covered the following areas:
- Project Aims and Objectives;
 - Timeframe and Implementation Plan;
 - Role of the Caseworker;
 - Outcomes; and
 - Individual Needs Consultation.

³ In the April-June 2014 Quarterly Review Report the Commission stated that a 4 week period may present difficulties for a number of applicants and recommend that consideration is given to extending the time period for applications in 2015/16.

25. The Service has advised that during this reporting period VSS Caseworkers met with clients face-to-face and also by telephone for the purpose of completing Individual Needs Consultations. For those individuals who contacted the VSS and were members of groups, they were given the option of completing the process with the group's nominated Caseworker.
26. As of the 30 September 2015 the VSS advised that 277 individuals were registered to take part in the pilot within the Service and 49 individuals were currently registered to participate in the pilot project with a Caseworker within groups.
27. The Service also arranged two follow-up meetings with Caseworkers to discuss the progress of the pilot on 24 August and 14 September 2015.
28. During this period the Service engaged with RSM McClure Waters to assist with the pilot's evaluation. Further consultation between RSM McClure Waters will take place in the next reporting period to facilitate the interim evaluation report for the Commission.

Forum Services Working Group

29. There were no meetings between the FSWG and the VSS during this reporting period. It is expected that engagement will recommence in the next reporting period.

Victim Support Programme

30. The VSP provides funding for organisations that provide health and wellbeing services and social support to victims and survivors. The VSP has two funding streams: Large Grants (amounting to more than £75,000) and Small Grants (up to £75,000).
31. During this reporting period the Service extended the letters of offer issued to groups in the programme period 2013-2015 for up to one year.
32. One group has not been issued with a letter of offer for 2015/16 and one group requested that their letter of offer was issued as an exit award in order to wind up the organisation and for the advocacy elements of their workplan to be transferred to another group.
33. Since April groups were anxious regarding funding for the 2015/16 financial year. Funding featured prominently in RSM McClure Waters research on the VSP. Recommendations relating to groups contained within the report included working towards a strategic allocation of funding, including longer term funding cycles. This would lead to embedding the sustainability of the sector within programme requirements/processes.⁴ The Commission agrees with RSM McClure Waters analysis that the sustainability of future service provision should be a key objective. This would not only provide comfort for service deliverers but would also facilitate sustainable service provision to individuals through VSP.

⁴ CVSNI (2014a) *Impact of the Victim Support Programme Research Project*, Belfast: CVSNI. p.10-11.

Reporting Data

34. The Service has provided a summary of monitoring data received to date for 2015/16:

August 2015 - Reflecting data submitted to VSS by 28 September 2015	
> £75k contracts	
Number of groups issued with the finalised M&E materials	41
< £75k contracts	
Number of groups issued with the finalised M&E materials	19
Number of unique clients registered in VSS-funded organisations for period 1 April 2015 – 31 August 2015	5,804
Number of clients that we can see have exited services for period 1 April 2015 – 31 August 2015	5,955
Gender	
Males (plus as a percentage of total)	2,419 42%
Females (plus as a percentage of total)	3,365 58%
Transgender	1
Blank	19
Age	
Age range	4 to 96
Average age	53
Primary identification with Victims & Survivors (Northern Ireland) Order 2006	
Injured (physically)	4,205
Injured (psychologically)	3,964
Bereaved	1,037
Carers	184
Identifies with more than one category	93
Blank	106
Year of incident	
Range of years cited (most recent – earliest)	1966 - 2015
Most frequently cited year	Multiple
Health and welling numbers accessing Services	
Total number of clients accessing HWB services (note: not unique records, includes duplicated instances of individuals accessing multiple services)	2,450
Counselling	1,008
Complementary Therapies	1,324
CBT/EMDR	87
Other H&W services	31

Total number who have exited services	1,049
Social Support numbers exited and numbers current	
Total number of clients accessing Social Support services (note: not unique records, includes duplicated instances of individuals accessing multiple services)	8,241
Total number who have exited services	4,906

35. The Service continues to signpost individuals to support within VSP-funded organisations. The Service has advised that during this operating period they made 12 referrals in September, 13 in August and 15 in July.

Support Visits

36. VSS staff continued to meet with VSS-funded groups during this reporting period. Support Officers conducted 37 visits in September, 19 in August and 14 in July.

37. During this reporting period Support Officers provided support on monitoring and evaluation and discussed proposals relating to CORE Net (Clinical Outcomes Research and Evaluation) and MYMOP (Measure Yourself Medical Outcome Profile) for the evaluation of counselling and complementary therapies respectively. The Service has advised that feedback has been generally positive with recognition of the need to provide quality impact data to demonstrate the contribution that the VSP is making to the lives of victims and survivors.

38. Groups were also assisted by Support Officers in the completion of a midyear capacity review to establish how far along they are in meeting their targets and to establish if they have the capacity to take on additional referrals.

39. The Service has advised that a number of groups have stated concerns regarding the uncertainty of future funding. This has particularly been the case for groups that are keen to develop their projects beyond the scope of one year. The Service has also advised that many groups have registered concerns regarding the potential impact of welfare reform.

Monitoring and Evaluation

40. The RSM McClure Watters INP research recommended that a robust monitoring and evaluation framework should be established in line with the aims and objectives set in the business case with any monitoring and evaluation framework being in place and operational in time for the delivery of the 2015/16 programme.⁵ This is echoed in the VSP research, recommending the development of robust monitoring and evaluation processes/procedures in order to help to enhance the understanding of the most effective treatments for addressing conflict-related mental health conditions.⁶

41. In order to progress this important area, the Service has set up a team to develop systems for capturing more outcome focussed evaluation information. A new member of staff was appointed in September to lead this area.

⁵ CVSNI (2014b) *Impact of the Individual Needs Programme Research Project*, Belfast: CVSNI. p.92.

⁶ CVSNI (2014a), p.11.

42. For those groups delivering complementary therapies, the Service will implement MYMOP evaluation tools. The Service met with a number of groups in July in order to gain a better understanding of how they implement MYMOP before issuing all groups delivering complementary therapies with a VSP-specific version of the tool. The Service has advised that the tool has been amended to ensure that it can provide standard data from across all groups and this has been tested by two groups who already use a version of MYMOP in September and will be rolled out to all groups. Training sessions are to be delivered in October. The Service has advised that groups should be submitting this data from October in order to achieve half year reporting for 2015/16 and a significant level of impact data could be analysed.
43. Many groups delivering counselling are currently using a form of CORE monitoring and evaluation system. The introduction of CORE as a standard system across the sector will allow VSP-funded groups to use a robust, tested and automated format that would align with systems used by statutory services. The Service plans to deliver training to the sector in the next quarter.
44. The Commission recognises that the Service have taken proactive steps to engage with funded groups regarding monitoring and evaluation and looks forward to a new process being formalised.

Workforce Training Plan

45. The Service continues to develop a workforce training and development plan for therapists working within the sector.
46. Three training workshops were delivered during September. The first, a two day workshop titled 'An Introduction to Trauma, Loss and Grief' was facilitated by CRUSE and WAVE on 7 and 8 September. The second training session, delivered by the VSS and WAVE, 'Working Therapeutically with Traumatic Grief', was delivered on 22 and 23 September 2015. Part two of the Sensorimotor Psychotherapy training was delivered between 7 and 9 August 2015.
47. The Commission sees the healthy uptake within the sector and positive feedback as being reflective of the Service's commitment to ensuring that service deliverers receive quality and tailored training.

Revision of Standards

48. In October 2011 the Commission published a Minimum Practice Framework as a guide to groups providing services in the victims sector in order to identify the minimum standards expected. At the April 2015 meeting of the Victims and Survivors Practitioners Working Group members highlighted that the document required revision to reflect practice within the sector. As a result the Commission requested volunteers at the June 2015 meeting to assist with the first consultation exercise.
49. The working group met twice during this reporting period (31 July and 28 August). A number of changes have been made to the 2011 document, including the adoption of PHA standards where relevant. The Commission plans to engage with the group again in the next reporting period and once a draft is agreed it will be presented to the Commissioner and shared with the Service prior to a wider consultation exercise with the sector.

50. The Commission would like to thank Dr Jane Simms and Joan Clements from the Service for their time commitment, help and assistance with the working group.

Victims and Survivors Practitioners Working Group

51. In this reporting period the group met once (15 September 2015). At the meeting practitioners discussed the VSP pilot on personalised budgets and caseworkers and monitoring and evaluation of the Health and Wellbeing and Social Support programmes.

52. In 2014/15 the Commission recommended that the Service reviewed the pilot group and that consideration is given to ensuring the inclusion of groups from across Northern Ireland. The Commission is pleased to report that the Service has now begun that process. A survey was circulated to members of the group on the 29 June 2015 to assist the Service with evaluating the pilot and preparation for setting up groups in other parts of the region. The report is due to be published in next reporting period.

53. It is envisaged that the two new groups, covering the North West and the South/South West areas of Northern Ireland, will convene in October.

54. At the August trilateral meeting the Commission and the Department advised that they would attend the inaugural meetings of the two regional groups. Going forward, the Department and Commission registered a preference for the Service's proposal to meet the Chair and Deputy Chairs on a quarterly basis.

Information and Communication

55. The Commission is pleased to report that the strategic communication changes implemented during 2014/15 have continued. This has enabled positive and proactive interaction with the sector and other stakeholders during this reporting period.

Telephone calls and Unscheduled Client Visits

56. The Service has reported the following figures for telephone calls and unscheduled client visits (drop-ins) for this reporting period:

Month	Telephone calls	Unscheduled client visits
September	1,202	302
August	1,272	274
July	1,585	481

57. The VSS has advised that the decrease in contact towards the end of this reporting periods likely to represent the new normal numbers they should expect outside of peak periods like the opening of schemes.

Website

58. The Service continues to utilise analytical data in relation to user access to the website. Headline data for this reporting period are summarised below:

	September 2015	August 2015	July 2015
Individual visitors	1,311	1,330	3,158
New visitors	60%	59%	68%
Average number of pages	2.8	2.83	2.83
Bounce rate	50%	53.62%	49%

59. In September the Service advised that they intend to update their website. The VSS initiated a tender exercise and awarded a contract in September. They anticipate that the delivery of an improved website will be in early December.

Freedom of Information & Data Protection

60. In terms of operational issues, the Service has reported the following:

Subject access requests

The Commission has been informed that there were four subject access requests for this reporting period (three in July and one in September).

Freedom of Information requests

The Service has advised that there were three Freedom of Information requests for this period (two in July and one in August).

Breaches

The Commission has been informed that there were no Data Protection Breaches for this reporting period.

Commission and Service Engagement

Unacceptable Behaviour Policy

61. The Commission and the Service recognises the impact that unacceptable behaviour can have on staff. It is recognised that staff in both organisations should be able to conduct business in a safe and non-threatening environment and unacceptable behaviour from members of the public will not be tolerated. Since 2014 the two organisations have operated the same policy and share information regarding individuals placed on each other's register.⁷

62. Having operated the policy for just under a year, the Service have recognised that the policy does not offer clear guidance on proportionate responses to different kinds of challenging and unacceptable behaviour. In September the Service reviewed the policy and compared it with policies operated by similar bodies.

⁷ The Commission's policy was approved on the 6 June 2014 and adopted by the Service on 10 October 2014.

63. Changes to the Service's policy can be summarised as:

- Consistent tone and language;
- Acknowledgement that individuals may act differently when in difficulty or distress;
- Inclusion of examples of unacceptable behaviour and proportionate responses; and
- Inclusion of liaison with VSS and OFMDFM (re: individuals on the register).

64. In recognition of the Service's amendments the Commission plans review its policy in this context; subject to Board approval in November. The Department have indicated that they will introduce a policy to ensure consistency across the three organisations.

VSS Board

65. During this reporting period the Commissioner, Secretary to the Commission and the VSS Chair held face-to-face meetings three times in the month of September. In addition to introductions, meetings focused on accessing services and individual client queries. It should be noted that there was also frequent interaction through telephone and email communications during this period.

Trilateral Meetings

66. The Commission can report that the trilateral meetings between the Commission, the Department and the Service have continued within this reporting period. Meetings for this period took place on 22 July, 19 August and 23 September 2015.

67. The good working relationship highlighted in previous reporting periods has continued with good sharing of information and cooperation on issues emerging.

Collaborative Design

68. The commencement of the Department's Collaborative Design process began in April 2015. The process is intended to be a partnership approach with the sector in order to shape the best possible service delivery model whilst ensuring value for money.

69. The Department has identified the common design elements for the process as:

- Client centred services;
- Individual needs provision;
- Provision of services by groups; and
- Provision of trauma related services.

70. In this reporting period the Commission and Service attended two Victims Policy Design meetings (7 August and 4 September).

71. Recognising that the summer is a busy time for the sector and that a number of events and training programmes were scheduled, the Department, in conjunction CVS and VSS, decided to defer further engagement.

Queries and Complaints

72. The Service has a complaints procedure in place to answer, investigate and/or appeal feedback from individuals and groups. The Commission assists or signposts individuals and groups once the Service's process has been exhausted. In addition, the Commission also logs complaints from individuals not wishing to make a formal complaint.
73. For this reporting period, the Service has advised the Commission that they have received a total of seven complaints from individuals:

Period	No.	Identified themes
1-30 September	4	- Communication; - INP applications.
1-31 August	2	- INP application.
1-30 July	1	- INP application.

74. For this reporting period, the Commission logged a total of three complaints from individuals (an anonymous version of the log is shared at each trilateral meeting):

Period	No.	Identified themes
1-30 September	1	- Communication.
1-31 August	2	- Second stage complaint; - Treatment of individual.
1-30 July	0	- N/A.

75. The Service has advised that as of 30 September 2015, under VSP, they have not received any complaints for this reporting period. There has, however, been one appeal from a group regarding a funding application.
76. The potential Judicial Review of the administration of Financial Assistance for 2014-15 referenced in previous Quarterly Review Reports has not proceeded. The Service has provided all the information that was requested by the applicant's representatives and the court in relation to a hearing on 8 September 2015 and subsequent mention in court. On 18 September 2015 the applicant withdrew from any further proceedings.

Commission Research

77. During this reporting period the Commission initiated the Personalised Budget Pilot Evaluation Project. In July 2015, the Commission completed an Invitation to Tender Exercise and appointed RSM McClure Watters to conduct the evaluation of the VSS-led Personalised Budget Pilot. The aim of this research project is to conduct an interim evaluation of the Personalised Budget Pilot in administering services and funding to a selection of clients of the Individual Needs Programme 2015-16. The evaluation includes up to 120 pilot participants and will involve an examination of a new assessment tool and the use of a Caseworker in support of the personalised budget scheme. Also during this period initial survey questionnaires were finalised in consultation with the Commission, the VSS and the Caseworkers. These were completed by Caseworkers following clients completion of their Individual Needs Consultation. Findings from the analysis of data collected from surveys and from 20 initial one-to-one interviews will form the basis of an Interim Evaluation Report which

is due to be completed in late October 2015. A final Evaluation Report is due to be completed by mid-December 2015.

78. Secondly, the Commission worked on drafting a terms of reference and a business case in supporting an externally procured research project that will review the implementation of the Victims and Survivors Strategy 2009-19. The project will focus on the progress and impact of implementing the overall aims of the Strategy, the application of the overall principles of the Strategy and the arrangements in place to take forward victims and survivors work in the areas of service provision, dealing with the past and building for the future. The draft business case was prepared for consideration and will be discussed in the next Quarterly Review Report.

Conclusions

79. The Commission is determined to continue to develop the tripartite relationship whereby all three organisations communicate in a robust and challenging way in order to improve service delivery for victims and survivors. This liaison will continue through daily operational interaction, regular meetings and consultation with the Forum.

80. During this reporting period communication and engagement between VSS and CVSNI has continued to be productive. This has particularly been evident during the interaction between the Commission and the Acting Chief Executive and Chair, monthly trilateral meetings and daily operational work. The interaction between the Service and the Forum has also proved valuable.

81. Monitoring, evaluating and measuring outcomes has been a key focus for the Commission. The Commission would like to recognise the efforts made by the Service over the past 12 months. This has included engaging with groups to gather data and outcome measures for health and wellbeing social support. The Commission is hopeful that, by the end of 2015/16, good outcome measures will be available in order to detail impact of the VSP.

82. Key challenges remain in terms of establishing priorities for moving forward. In relation to services, the sustainability of the sector is a major issue. It is evident that demand is rising. The Commission has identified a fairly consistent trend of a 10% increase per annum in people presenting. The opening budget demonstrates a positive commitment from Ministers but, as we look ahead into further years, in the current context of efficiency savings, the need to prioritise will become greater. Further, clarity on the funding stream for 2016/17 is also important for groups and for the Service.

83. At the opening of 2015/16, the Service was in a stable starting position. Schemes under INP were consistent with decisions already implemented from August 2014; and the Collaborative Design process had begun; the process of piloting personalised budgets and caseworkers had begun; and progress has been made regarding monitoring and evaluation. The Independent Assessment detailed 70 recommendations to improve the Victims and Survivors Service. Of the 70 recommendations, 53 have been implemented with 17 recommendations remaining. These relate to two key areas which have been outlined above: monitoring, evaluation frameworks and systems and the assessment and prioritisation of individual needs.

The Commission has been working closely with Department to ensure that all of the outstanding recommendations are fully implemented. During this reporting period it was agreed that the remaining recommendations would be taken forward as part of the Collaborative Design process. Whilst there has been significant improvement to service delivery for victims and survivors since February 2014, it remains incumbent for all to ensure that the outstanding recommendations are addressed as soon as practically possible.

84. In reviewing this report's content the Commission believes the highest possible standards of service delivery for victims and survivors can be aimed for and achieved.