

CVSNI RESPONSE TO THE CONSULTATION ON A REFORMS PACKAGE FOR THE FUTURE OPERATION OF THE OFFICE OF THE POLICE OMBUDSMAN FOR NORTHERN IRELAND (OPONI)

The Commission for Victims and Survivors for Northern Ireland (the Commission) was established in June 2008 under the *Victims and Survivors (Northern Ireland) Order 2006*, as amended by the *Commissioner for Victims and Survivors Act (2008)*.

The Commission is a Non-Departmental Public Body (NDPB) of the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister (OFMDFM). The principle aim of the Commission is to promote awareness of the interests of victims and survivors of the conflict. It has a number of statutory duties that include:

- Promoting an awareness of matters relating to the interests of victims and survivors and of the need to safeguard those interests;
- Keeping under review the adequacy and effectiveness of law and practice affecting the interests of victims and survivors;
- Keeping under review the adequacy and effectiveness of services provided for the victims and survivors by bodies or persons;
- Advising the Secretary of State, the Executive Committee of the Assembly and any Body or person providing services for victims and survivors on matters concerning the interests of victims and survivors;
- Ensuring that the views of victims and survivors are sought concerning the exercise of the Commission's functions; and
- Making arrangements for a forum for consultation and discussion with victims and survivors.¹

The Commission welcomes this opportunity to comment as part of the Consultation on a Reforms Package for the Future Operation of the Office of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland as conducted by the Department of Justice. The Commission has enjoyed positive working relationships with OPONI over the last year and is committed to ensuring that this continues in the future. The Commission also welcomes the commitment of OPONI to ensuring improved communication with victims and survivors.

¹ The functions of the Commission relate to those set out in the *Victims and Survivors (Northern Ireland) Order 2006* as amended by the *Commission for Victims and Survivors Act (Northern Ireland) 2008*.

The consultation document sets out seven measures the Department intends to take forward through legislative change and a further four administrative changes which do not require legislation. The Commission is of the opinion that these are positive steps to address gaps in the remit of OPONI and encourages the Department to proceed with these changes.

12 August 2013