

## **COMMISSION FOR VICTIMS AND SURVIVORS RESPONSE TO THE CONSULTATION ON GOOD RELATIONS INDICATOR REVIEW 2013/2014**

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 of the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister (OFMdFM). The principal 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.<sup>1</sup>

In November 2009, OFMdFM introduced a ten-year strategy for victims and survivors. This strategy identified a new infrastructure for dealing with victim and survivor issues that included the Commission for Victims and Survivors, the Victims and Survivors Forum and the Victims and Survivors Service. These three bodies are now operational and work closely with the Department in meeting the needs of victims and survivors.

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<sup>1</sup> 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 Commission is pleased to have the opportunity to provide a response to the Department's Good Relations Indicator Review 2013/2014.

The Commission regards the attitudinal data from Good Relations Indicators as a valuable insight to changing attitudes during periods of conflict, peace-building and analysis within the post-devolution context.

Of the four Key Priority Indicators the Commission has a particular interest in Our Children and Young People and Our Safe Community. Both areas are closely linked to our ongoing work on Building for the Future. The Commission's response will therefore concentrate on both areas.

#### **KEY PRIORITY 1: OUR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE**

The Commission agrees with the Department's aim of continuing to improve attitudes amongst young people and to build a community where they can play a full and active role in building good relations.

The Commission's Comprehensive Needs Assessment highlighted the continuing influence of the Trouble's legacy upon our young people.<sup>2</sup> The research indicated that the lives of young people living in areas worst affected during the conflict continue to be affected by its legacy. Recognising the significance of this area the Commission is currently investigating the impact of transgenerational trauma to determine if the impact on young people's psychological health is linked to the parent's conflict experience, social deprivation, parenting style or other associated factors.<sup>3</sup>

The Commission believes that indicators on relations between communities, social contact, socialisation and participation in shared activities may be used to provide explanations of how children and young people have been, and continue to be, affected by the conflict.

#### **KEY PRIORITY 3: OUR SAFE COMMUNITY**

The Commission shares the Department's aim of creating a community where everyone feels safe in moving around and where life choices are not inhibited by fears around safety.

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<sup>2</sup> Commission for Victims and Survivors (2012) *Comprehensive Needs Assessment*, Belfast: CVSNI.

<sup>3</sup> The Commission's Better Future research project is due to be published in early 2015.

The Commission welcomes the Department's intention to collate information regarding the number of people presented as homeless as a result of intimidation. The Commission has received a number of queries from individuals and groups regarding intimidation and we welcome any official statistical evidence that may be used to inform any future advice to Government.

The legacy of the Troubles is evident with continuing paramilitary activity, punishment attacks and the threat from dissident republican groups. The impact of segregation and sectarianism continues and impacts significantly on those living in areas worst affected during the conflict. The Commission therefore welcomes the collation and analysis of statistics relating to the prevalence of hate crime and evidence relating to the number of people presenting themselves as homeless as a result of intimidation.

#### **ADDITIONAL COMMENTS**

Whilst the four Key Priorities provide insights into the impact and legacy of the Troubles, the Commission would welcome consideration of specific conflict-related indicators. If this were to be considered by the Department the Commission would be available to provide assistance or guidance.

In conclusion, the Commission welcomes the opportunity to submit this response on the Good Relations Indicator Review 2013/2014. OFMdFM's continued monitoring of community relations, equality and diversity issues provides statistics on meaningful, relevant and measurable information to inform research and policy decisions. Findings also provide appropriate baselines for future measurement and evaluation.

**MARCH 2014**