



**ADVICE TO THE  
FIRST MINISTER &  
DEPUTY FIRST MINISTER  
ON BUILDING ON THE WORK OF  
THE  
TRAUMA ADVISORY PANELS**

**November 2010**

## **BACKGROUND TO THIS REPORT**

In January, 2010, the First Minister and deputy First Minister asked the Commission for Victims and Survivors to convene a Working Group with representatives of the Trauma Advisory Panels (TAPs) to consider how the work of the TAPs could be built upon.

This request came in the wake of earlier advice in which the Commission had proposed that OFMDFM should wind up the TAPs.

Therefore, the first meeting of the Working Group, in April 2010, took place in a context wherein a significant number of TAP activists disagreed with the Commission's analysis and distrusted its intentions.

The Commission is pleased to inform Ministers that, notwithstanding such an inauspicious start, the Working Group reached consensus on the substantive issues facing the future of the TAPs (see page 7 of the attached Process Report – Record of Working Group Meetings re TAPs Regional Meeting on 26 October 2010). Those proposals are reflected in this document.

The proceedings of the Working Group are recorded in the attached 'Process Report' which was collated for the Commission by independent consultants.

The Commission's advice to government is based upon the following:

- (i) The Commission's strategy for integrated development of the infra-structure which serves victims and survivors, namely: the Service; the Forum; the Commission and the TAPs or their successor (2010)
- (ii) An independent Research Report compiled for the Commission (October 2010) and attached hereto
- (iii) The deliberations of the Working Group on the future of the TAPs (April – October 2010)
- (iv) Consideration of the Working Group process by the Commission (2 November 2010)

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- a) We propose that the Trauma Advisory Panels should be dissolved and replaced by Conflict Related Services Meetings (CRSMs) under the auspices of the new Victims and Survivors Service.**
- b) CRSMs should be convened on a quarterly basis by Development Officers working for the Service.**
- c) The Commission believes that the Development Officer role should supersede that of the TAP Co-ordinator and that a Development Team (consisting of a Senior Development Officer and four Development Officers) should be recruited as part of the establishment of the new Service.**
- d) The Commission proposes to continue meeting with the regional TAP group to discuss proposals for the transition from the TAPs to the CRSMs, although of course, such proposals will remain contingent upon Ministers accepting our advice.**

## **1. AIM OF THE WORKING GROUP**

1.1. The agreed aim of the Working Group was:

To achieve consensus between the Trauma Advisory Panels and the Commission for Victims and Survivors regarding how best to utilise the expertise of the TAPs in the delivery of the Strategy for Victims and Survivors

(OFMDFM, November 2009).

## **2. THE STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF THE TAPS**

2.1. The independent Research Report concurs with much of the analysis of the TAPs themselves regarding their historical achievements and their shortcomings. Indeed, this analysis is shared by the Commission:

- (i) They promoted greater coherence among the statutory and voluntary/community sector (in relation to victims and survivors).
- (ii) They facilitated an holistic, Community Development approach to the evolution of practice.
- (iii) They responded to requests from individuals and from groups.
- (iv) They promoted training.
- (v) They assisted with assessment of local needs and in the development of policy.
- (vi) However, their effectiveness could be improved by the development of more nuanced objectives.
- (vii) Attendance at the Western and Eastern TAPs has been less than satisfactory, suggesting a shortening of their reach.
- (viii) While the support of the Health and Social Care Trusts has been crucial, the TAPs remain vulnerable to the other pressures on senior staff within the Trusts.
- (ix) The development of a regional dialogue across the TAPs has been relatively recent and, while showing signs of potential, has yet to mature.

## **3. A NEW ORDER IN THE VICTIMS AND SURVIVORS SECTOR**

3.1. The publication of a ten year strategy for victims and survivors by OFMDFM in 2009 has established the foundation for clearer direction and greater cohesion across the sector.

3.2. The establishment of the Commission confers on it a responsibility to ensure, among other things, that services address need and are effective and that practice develops accordingly.

- 3.3. The Victims and Survivors Forum will help the voice of victims to grow stronger and more influential.
- 3.4. The new Service will respond directly to individual victims and commission services which more accurately address actual need.
- 3.5. With such seismic shifts taking place there has been a clear need to consider the role of the TAPs to ensure that their area of work is included in a wider strategy for integrated development within the sector.

#### **4. MAINTAINING A PLACE FOR PRACTITIONERS**

- 4.1. In our original analysis, the Commission was of the view that the Forum could develop the equivalent of TAP meetings as a way of reaching into local areas across Northern Ireland.
- 4.2. However, experience with the Pilot Forum has altered our view. We now recognise that, for the most part, Forum members, who serve in a voluntary capacity, require most of their time and energy for the proceedings of the Forum itself.
- 4.3. In addition, the essence of the Forum is that it is primarily a mechanism for victims.
- 4.4. The Commission believes it important to establish a platform for practitioners, across the statutory, voluntary and community sectors.
- 4.5. Our assessment is that such a platform needs to be created and facilitated by the new Service.

#### **5. THE VICTIMS AND SURVIVORS SERVICE**

- 5.1. The Commission's proposals for the new Service include a Development Team, led by a Senior Development Officer with four Development Officers.
- 5.2. While being an integral part of the Service the Development Officers should be operationally deployed within Health and Social Care Trusts, to maintain an important link with the primary statutory bodies serving victims and survivors.

- 5.3. The Development Officers would act as a referral point for individual victims and perform a liaison role with service providers in their catchment area.
- 5.4. They would also participate in the Forum as resource personnel, in support of its members.
- 5.5. Each Development Officer would convene a quarterly Conflict Related Services Meeting (CRSM) in their area. The CRSM would supersede the TAPs.
- 5.6. The Development Officers role would supersede the TAP co-ordinator role.
- 5.7. The Development Officers would aim to assist the development of best practice in their area. In addition to liaising with service providers, they would engage the statutory sector to improve its orientation to victims and survivors. They would also undertake occasional fieldwork for the Forum and encourage a Community Development approach to the outworking of OFMDFM victims/survivors policy in their area (with its focus on addressing need, dealing with the past and building for the future).
- 5.8. In the Commission's view, there are significant differences between the role of the TAP Co-ordinator and that envisaged for the Development Officer. Therefore, the Development Officer posts should be advertised by way of public recruitment. The Commission suggests that the Department engage a personnel consultant to develop a job specification for the Development Officer post, along with the other staff to be recruited to the Service.

## **6. THE CONFLICT RELATED SERVICES MEETINGS**

- 6.1. The purpose of the CRSM would be to promote strategic development between the statutory, voluntary and community sectors in the provision of services to victims and survivors.
- 6.2. The CRSM would be a meeting place for practitioners or service managers/directors.
- 6.3. Each CRSM would be jointly chaired by someone from the statutory sector and someone from the voluntary/community sector.

- 6.4. The Development Officer would channel policy and practice issues from the Service and, by extension, from the Commission.
- 6.5. The Development Officer and the CRSM would agree on a programme of work which would be informed by policy and practice priorities of the Service.
- 6.6. At the same time, the programme of work would be expected to take on board issues of concern from CRSM members, geared to their locality.

## **7. THE REGIONAL CRSM**

- 7.1. Each CRSM would appoint representatives to participate in a day-long regional meeting held twice per year and including at least one Commissioner.

## **8. ENGAGING THE FORUM**

- 8.1. The Development Officers would endeavour to impart insights from the CRSMs when at the Forum and, similarly, act as a channel from the Forum to the CRSM.
- 8.2. In addition, the Forum would consider ways to interact directly with the CRSMs over the course of each year.

## **9. THE TRANSITION FROM TAPS TO CRSMS**

- 9.1. The Commission anticipates that, should its proposals be adopted by OFMDFM, in a best case scenario it is unlikely that Development Officers would be in post before September 2011. Therefore the establishment of CRSMs would not take place before then.
- 9.2. The Commission advises that, in the meantime, the Department should continue funding of the Trauma Advisory Panels.
- 9.3. The Commission wishes to acknowledge the co-operation received from TAP members during this process. We are especially grateful for our engagement with those TAP members who formed the Working Group.

- 9.4. The Commission proposes to continue a dialogue with the regional TAP group to discuss the challenges involved in the transition, should the Ministers agree to our advice.