



**23 February 2018
Parliament Buildings**

Present

Judith Thompson (JT)
Tina McCann (TMC)
Patricia Stewart (PS)
Alana Fisher (AF)

Paul Crawford (PC)
Donal Dunn (DD)
Paul Gallagher (PG)
Mary Moreland (MM)
Niall O Murchu (NOM)

Mina Jadeja (MJ)
Jeremy Adams (JA)
Don Mackay (DMK)
Sam Wilson (SW)
Minty Thompson (MT)

Alan Brecknell (AB)
Emmett McConomy
(EMC)
Robert McClenaghan
(RMC)

Apologies

Jan Crawford (JC)
Sarah McGrillen (SMG)
Lesley Veronica (LV)
Paul McCormac (PMC)
Carmel Rooney (CR)

Outline of Meeting

JT welcomed Forum members and noted apologies. She also outlined resignations from two Forum members for personal reasons.

JT provided an update on the political situation at Stormont and advised that following the collapse of the latest round of talks, she had requested a further meeting with the Secretary of State to determine the impact on victims and survivors' issues.

A further update was provided on JT and JB's appearance in front of the Oireachtas Committee on the Implementation of the Good Friday Agreement during which they answered a series of questions on the legacy of the Conflict and outlined issues around jurisdiction and access to services.

JT then recapped the political engagement that the Forum had in plenary with the 5 main political parties and advised the Pension and Need Working Group were also

engaging with the same 5 parties in order to try and progress the Pension for the Severely Injured (as per the Commission's policy advice in 2014).

JT also advised that she had met with the MEPs regarding the Victims Directive and the importance of ensuring that these rights are embedded in UK Legislation in the wake of Brexit. These rights will apply to victims and survivors who are going through any investigatory process including Legacy Investigations.

The impact of the failure to establish a NI Executive on proposed Legacy bodies were broken down into three core areas for clarification;

- Those which would in any case go through Westminster for which there is already draft legislation which can theoretically be progressed; i.e. Oral History Archive (OHA) the Historical Investigations Unit and Independent Commission for Information Retrieval (ICIR)
- Those without draft legislation which cannot be progressed in a state of political impasse i.e. the Implementation and Reconciliation Group (IRG which will consider where statements of acknowledgement should be made)) and Pension for the Severely Injured
- Policy initiatives that need political leadership and budget allocation; e.g. the Regional Trauma Network

The Forum strongly felt that issues that can be progressed should be and many felt that a pension for the severely injured should be included in the Legacy Consultation and that the necessary Legislation should be brought before Parliament at Westminster on the basis that severely injured victims are part of the legacy of the conflict.

An update was provided on the Forum Working Groups as below.

Pension and Need Working Group (PNWG)

A discussion was had around welfare reform and the difficulties posed by the transition from Disability Living Allowance (DLA) to Personal Independence Payments (PIP), particularly for victims and survivors. JB advised that the Call for Evidence for the Independent Review of the PIP Assessment Process was due to close mid-March and hoped that many of the issues would be addressed once an evidence base was established.

Further questions and discussions were had around eligibility for the Pension many of which are covered in the Commission's Pension Advice in 2014. It was agreed that the discussion would be tabled at the next meeting once VSF members have had chance to review 2014 Pension Advice.

Action Point: AF to re-circulate Pension Advice to Forum and agenda discussion on pension for next meeting.

Services Working Group (SWG)

The SWG had spent their recent meeting looking at and agreeing Terms of Reference for their work and objectives. They had identified key themes in relation to service provision and discussed issues around quality assurance and jurisdiction. They advised that a meeting with the Victims and Survivors Service Board was scheduled for 13 March at which they could raise the issues identified. They would also work closely with the Commission in relation to service provision outside the jurisdiction of Northern Ireland.

A presentation then followed on the Forum User Guide which outlined the background to the Forum and ways of working within the parameters of principles and values.

Group discussions then followed and feedback given to the Commission in how best the Forum can be supported in their work.

Action Point: AF to circulate presentation to Forum along with the background of the Forum recruitment process.

Dr Ciaran Mulholland from Queen's University Belfast delivered a presentation to the Forum on the Regional Trauma Network. He outlined the background to determining need for the service and outlined how the service would look once fully operational.

The Forum's final session focussed on the impact of media reporting on victims and survivors issues, particularly when sensationalism was used to provoke certain reactions from the public without any regard for the families directly impacted.

PS outlined the work of Voice Agency and Blame project being undertaken by Queen's University Belfast and advised that the project concludes in May 2018 after which the Forum and Commission could look at taking some of the findings forward.

Meeting closed.

Agreed Actions

1. AF to re-circulate Pension Advice to Forum.
2. AF to circulate presentation to Forum along with the background of the Forum recruitment process.
3. AF to circulate note of meeting for approval.