

SPLIT OF RESPONSIBILITIES BETWEEN THE TWO VICTIMS UNITS

There are now two dedicated units in Government devoted to meeting the specific needs of the victims and survivors of “the Troubles”.

The Secretary of State appointed Adam Ingram as Victims Minister in the Northern Ireland Office (NIO) and took the lead in responding to victims’ issues across the whole of Government. The Victims Liaison Unit (VLU) was also set up in the Northern Ireland Office (NIO) as a response to the report compiled by Sir Kenneth Bloomfield - [‘We Will Remember Them’](#).

After devolution many of the issues facing victims became the responsibility of the devolved administration. Accordingly, a dedicated Victims Unit was set up in the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM) with Denis Haughey and Dermot Nesbitt being given specific responsibility for victims matters.

However, as many of the issues important to victims have not been devolved (“reserved and excepted” matters), it was necessary to retain the Victims Liaison Unit within the NIO. Having two units will ensure that the maximum standard of service is available to victims and survivors and their representatives. Ministers are committed to close working between the Units to ensure that this happens.

The broad split of responsibilities between the Victims Liaison Unit and the Victims Unit is laid out below. Information on the major areas of responsibility of each of the devolved Departments and a number of other organisations is also given.

The following are the current responsibilities of the NIO’s Victims Liaison Unit

- Support for Ministers in the NIO;
- Provision of core funding to victims’ support groups;
- Management and provision of grant aid to the Northern Ireland Memorial Fund;
- Ensuring victims issues are dealt with in the reserved and excepted fields in Northern Ireland, particularly in areas such as compensation, criminal justice, security and dealing with ‘the disappeared’;
- Articulating the case for victims in the reserved and excepted fields.

The following are the current responsibilities of OFMDFM’s Victims Unit:

- Support for Ministers in the devolved administration;

- Development of a suitable programme under PEACE II to address victims' needs;
- Development of a separate programme of activities designed to meet the strategic needs of victims;
- Ensuring the needs of victims are addressed in the devolved administration including management of an interdepartmental working group on victims' issues;
- Ensuring that the commitments on victims contained in the draft Programme for Government are met;
- Articulating the case for victims within the devolved administration.

Both organisations have responsibility for:

- Improving the capacity and professionalism of victims organisations and introducing core values and standards for groups to adhere;
- Implementing the findings of the Bloomfield report;
- Building networks for victims and victims' organisations to share experience and best practice.

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