



Subject:	Proposed response to the consultation on the new Strategy for Victims and Survivors
Date:	12 March 2024
Reporting Officer:	David Sales, Strategic Director of City and Neighbourhood Services
Contact Officer:	Godfrey McCartney, Good Relations Manager David Robinson, Senior Good Relations Officer (Acting)

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.	
Insert number <input type="checkbox"/>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Information relating to any individual2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the council holding that information)4. Information in connection with any labour relations matter5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained6. Information showing that the council proposes to (a) to give a notice imposing restrictions on a person; or (b) to make an order or direction7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime	
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sometime in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues
1.1	To seek approval for a Council response to the consultation on the new Strategy for Victims and Survivors.
2.0	Recommendation
2.1	That Members note the contents of the proposed response to the strategy and submit for agreement to the People & Communities Committee for approval for submission to The Executive Office, by the closing date of 13 March 2024.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	Members may be aware that The Executive Office is currently undertaking a public consultation on a new Strategy for Victims and Survivors.
3.2	The Strategy has been developed through collaborative co-design and partnership working with the Commission for Victims and Survivors and the Victims and Survivors Service, as well as with victims' and survivors' representative groups. Through this engagement, victims and survivors have been placed at the heart of the development of the Strategy.
3.3	The Strategy proposes a new Vision of "A trauma informed society that addresses the needs of victims and survivors" and sets out high level outcomes and actions under three pillars – Past, Needs and the Future. It builds on the progress made to date to ensure the needs of victims and survivors continue to be met.
3.4	As part of this consultation process, the Council has been invited to respond to the consultation. This is via an online questionnaire. An initial draft response has been prepared and is attached as an appendix below. Many of the questions are 'yes/no' answers. Any additional comments that are proposed are highlighted in yellow below. Once agreed by the People & Communities committee, the questionnaire will be completed by the Acting Senior Good Relations Officer and submitted on behalf of the Council, with the provision that the response is subject to full Council approval at its April meeting.
3.5	<u>Financial and Resource Implications</u> None
3.6	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u> The response to the consultation represents an opportunity for the Council to consider the issues and needs prevalent to victims and survivors of the conflict and to demonstrate support for ongoing work in this area.
4.0	Appendices - Documents Attached
	Draft consultation response

Appendix 1 – draft consultation response (for insertion into online survey questionnaire)

1. Are you responding to this consultation as an individual or representing an organisation?

Individual Organisation - please specify below

Please add name of organisation

Belfast City Council

2. Prior to answering this questionnaire, were you aware of the Strategy for Victims and Survivors?

Yes No

3. How were you made aware of the Strategy?

Accessed services made available through the relevant agencies/bodies (e.g. VSS, CVS, the Forum) Community group Traditional media (e.g. newspapers, TV, radio) Social media Word of mouth Other (please specify):

Please provide any further comments you may have in relation to your response

Invitation to participate

1. Vision, Principles and Values

Initiatives and proposals within the Strategy for Victims and Survivors will work towards an enduring vision articulated by a number of key principles and core values.

1. Do you agree with the vision as set out below for the strategy?

Strategy Vision

A trauma informed society that addresses the needs of victims and survivors

Yes No I don't know

Please provide any further comments you may have in relation to your response

Yes, the primary aim of such a strategy should have the needs of victims and survivors at the heart of it.

2. Do you agree with the Principles and Values as set out below for the new strategy?

Principles and Values

- **Victim centred.**
- **Trauma informed.**
- **Collaboration and partnership.**
- **Responsive to changing needs.**
- **Evidence based.**
- **Trust and confidence.**
- **Empowering.**

Yes No I don't know

Please provide any further comments you may have in relation to your response

Yes, the strategy should be genuinely and wholly victim centred.

3. Do you feel there are Principles and Values missing from this list?

Yes - please specify No

Please provide any further comments you may have in relation to your response

Is there the potential to include something on reconciliation? For example, should a value be: 'contributing to wider reconciliation efforts'?

2. Victims and Survivors Strategy Strategic Pillars

1. Do you agree with the aim listed below for the Past pillar?

Past Pillar Strategic Aim

Support victims and survivors and their families as they move forward from experiences of the past.

Yes No I don't Know

Please provide any further comments you may have in relation to your response

2. Do you agree with the high level outcome listed below for the Past pillar?

Past Pillar High Level Outcome

Victims and Survivors feel supported in their journey.

Yes No I don't know

Please provide any further comments you may have in relation to your response

3. Do you agree with the key priority areas listed below that have been included under the Past Pillar?

Past Pillar Key Priorities

- We will continue to work with victims and survivors to meet their needs and ensure that they are supported in dealing with the legacy of the past, and we will be flexible in the face of changing needs and prevailing circumstances.
- Continue to support victims and survivors through the Advocacy Support Network within the VSS PEACE PLUS project currently funded through the VSS.
- Work with victims and survivors, and wider society, to develop a designated public space of reflection where people can come together to remember our past.
- Work with third and faith sectors to recognise and promote the Annual Day of Reflection on 21st June each year.
- Further explore themes of Acknowledgement including shared acts of commemorative activity to collectively acknowledge the impact of the Troubles/conflict on the peoples of these islands and beyond.
- Engage with the Irish and UK Governments to ensure they are aware of the needs of victims and survivors, and the potential impact on individuals and communities of failing to meet those needs.

- Continue to deliver the Troubles Permanent Disablement Payment Scheme in a victim centred and trauma informed way.

Yes No I don't know

Please provide any further comments you may have in relation to your response

On the point of the Annual Day of Reflection, you could add in 'statutory' as well as 'third' and 'faith' sectors. Belfast City Council has delivered the Annual Day of Reflection now since 2022.

4. Do you feel there are Key Priority Areas missing under this Outcome?

Yes No I don't know

Please provide any further comments you may have in relation to your response

Could a point on reconciliation be included? For example, could something like the following be added:

Develop a greater collective understanding of what reconciliation means in the context of a post conflict society, with the needs and concerns of victims being paramount in such an understanding.

Victims and Survivors Strategy Strategic Pillars

1. Do you agree with the aims listed below for the Needs pillar?

Needs Pillar Strategic Aims

To support and enable victims and survivors to improve their health and wellbeing, addressing the factors which impact on mental and physical health.

To ensure victims and survivors have an improved awareness of and access to high quality, trauma informed services.

Yes No I don't know

Please provide any further comments you may have in relation to your response

We see this as a key part of this strategy.

2. Do you agree with the high level outcome listed below for the Needs pillar?

Needs Pillar High Level Outcome

Improved physical health and emotional wellbeing of victims and survivors.

Yes No I don't know

Please provide any further comments you may have in relation to your response

3. Do you agree with the key priority areas listed below that have been included under the Needs Pillar?

Needs Pillar Key Priorities

- Deliver a strategy that can adapt to changes in needs, environment and learning to ensure the best possible outcomes for victims and survivors and encourage piloting of new ways to support victims and survivors.

- Ensure access to victim-centred, trauma informed, needs based support and services that contribute to improved wellbeing and quality of life for victims and survivors.
- Raise awareness of Troubles/conflict-related trauma and the needs of victims and survivors in other service providers and across government.
- Maintain a Network of Health and Wellbeing Case Managers and Regional Health and Wellbeing Case Workers to identify and address the needs of victims and survivors.
- Deliver the Regional Trauma Network and monitor progress to ensure learning and development for the future provision of services.
- Deliver appropriate support for the bereaved.
- Improve access to services for rural and socially isolated, including through the promotion of befriending.
- Invest in capacity of the sector through training and development to meet national and regional standards, research, and improved regulation.
- Improve awareness of services and support available including clear pathways and signposting.
- Review the accessibility of the services we provide, including any potential barriers to access.
- Work to better understand the different impact that the Troubles/conflict had on men and women, and how the different needs can be met today.

Yes
 No
 I don't know

Please provide any further comments you may have in relation to your response

Could it also be included: To involve and include survivors and victims in supporting the development of a greater understanding of what reconciliation means for our society.

4. Do you feel there are Key Priority Areas missing under this Outcome?

Yes
 No
 I don't know

Please provide any further comments you may have in relation to your response

See above as an additional comment

Victims and Survivors Strategy Strategic Pillars

1. Do you agree with the aim listed below for the Future pillar?

Future Pillar Strategic Aim

To ensure that families are supported, and that society works towards “breaking the chain” of transgenerational trauma.

Yes
 No
 I don't know

Please provide any further comments you may have in relation to your response

2. Do you agree with the high level outcome listed below for the Future pillar?

Future Pillar High Level Outcome

Improved quality of life for victims and survivors

Yes No I don't know

Please provide any further comments you may have in relation to your response

3. Do you agree with the key priority areas listed below that have been included under the Future Pillar?

The Future Pillar Key Priorities

- Continue to include those with lived experience in discussions and decisions around issues that affect them.
- Ensure victims and survivors issues are integrated into relevant and emerging strategies, policies and programmes including for example the Central Good Relations Fund and Communities in Transition, which can deliver outcomes for victims and survivors. We will actively seek opportunities for strategic alignment and collaborative working across government and the wider public sector, by creating connections with initiatives supporting reconciliation and the development of a shared and better future.
- Carry out research to maintain and develop our understanding of the current needs of victims and survivors and conduct, as necessary, further research into the impact of transgenerational and intergenerational trauma to ensure adequate services and support are available and raise awareness of the transgenerational transmission of trauma.
- Work with other sectors and Departments to build on existing and create new formal and informal education programmes to enhance knowledge and mutual understanding about the transgenerational impacts of the Troubles/conflict.
- Work together with faith organisations to raise awareness of victims and survivors needs and help shape a peaceful society for all.
- Consolidate expertise within the sector and work in partnership to protect front line services for victims and survivors, supporting victims' groups to partner and collaborate to deliver for victims and survivors on a regional basis.
- Build upon our experience in dealing with trauma and work to support partners in the sector through organisational transition to support our aspiration of becoming a fully trauma informed society that can be an exemplar for others.
- In light of the results of these actions, review how best victims and survivors can be supported in the future.
- Review the facilities available to community and voluntary organisations who support victims and survivors and consider the need for a capital building programme.
- Build links between sectors, across the public sector and with GB and RoI to raise awareness and share learning on the needs of victims and service provision for those who have suffered trauma.
- Expand upon and support the roll out of trauma education throughout society, raising awareness of trauma and developing trauma informed services.

Yes No I don't know

Please provide any further comments you may have in relation to your response

4. Do you feel there are Key Priority Areas missing under this Outcome?

Yes No I don't know

Please provide any further comments you may have in relation to your response

Could something on memorialisation be considered? For example, could the implementation of the strategy consider the contents of the report of the Commission on Flags, Identity, Culture and Tradition on the area of Memorials, Remembrance and Commemoration (Chapter 15), and in particular the section that remembering the dead "should be done in a way that is respectful, sensitive, dignified and seeks to avoid causing pain or hurt to others" (p.140) <https://www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/execoffice/commission-on-fict-final-report.pdf>