

CEC

Clio Evaluation Consortium

**EVALUATION OF THE CORE FUNDING PROGRAMME
FOR VICTIMS' / SURVIVORS' GROUPS**

1 March 2002

**Produced by
Clio Evaluation Consortium**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This evaluation measures the impact and effectiveness of the Core Funding Programme for Victims' and Survivors' Groups, highlights innovative approaches adopted by the projects, identifies the longer-term organisational requirements of groups, and describes potential synergies between the Core Funding Programme and the new PEACE II Measures for Victims. The evaluation also makes recommendations regarding the targeting of future funding criteria and assessment.

Since January 2000, the Northern Ireland Voluntary Trust (NIVT) has administered £3.1 million of funding to the 'Core Funding for Victims of Violence Programme' on behalf of the Victims' Liaison Unit (VLU). The objective of the Core Funding Programme was to provide two-year core grants to develop and support the work of groups that are either composed of victims/survivors and their carers, or working in direct support of victims/survivors of political violence in Northern Ireland. There were two types of funding: Core Funding to cover base expenses (running costs, salaries of workers) and smaller Seed/Development Grants to support development needs or small programme costs.

This evaluation was based on assessing the effectiveness of the projects delivered by the funded groups, the extent to which funded projects have contributed to the Core Funding Programme's overall goals, and the effectiveness of NIVT's management of the Core Funding Programme. It has done this through statistical analysis, three consultative seminars, nine case studies, six focus groups, discussions and interviews, a review of annual monitoring forms, and written submissions, as well as research of other written sources. Of the 49 groups that had been funded by the start of the evaluation process (six were funded during the course of the evaluation and only came into the process towards the end), 41 (83.6%) were involved in one or more ways in the evaluation.

A central finding of the evaluation is that the Core Funding Programme has been instrumental in helping establish and sustain a wide cross-section of work in the area of victims. This evaluation finds that, overall, the groups are engaged in a wide range of activities which are beneficial to victims, and that they are developing their own services, a few innovative approaches, and a capacity to work together.

Because this Programme was announced during the process leading up to the Belfast Agreement, and at a time when prisoner releases were being debated, perceptions of the funding have been politicised. And because the needs of victims of 30 years of political violence are so urgent, perceptions of the funding have also been highly charged emotionally. Core Funding is intended primarily to provide for the basic needs of groups working to assist victims and is not itself compensation to victims.

This scheme has funded some 41 groups with core grants and 28 with seed grants. A total of £3,116,948 was given out through 69 different grants to 55 groups (some groups receiving both Core and Seed grants.) Of 75 applications received, 69 were accepted. There appear to be no major discrepancies between the funding allocated and the communities served by the funded groups, or in the location of the beneficiaries of the groups funded. The breakdown of funding to groups that largely serve only Catholic or Protestant communities is remarkably similar, as is the location of services east and west of the Bann. The one noticeable discrepancy is that rural groups (30% of those funded) received 20% of funding, urban groups (39% of those funded) received 37% of funding, while groups working across Northern Ireland (29% of those funded) got 44% of the funding.

Overall, NIVT administered this fund flexibly, supportively, and inclusively, often in difficult circumstances. A key finding of this evaluation is that NIVT was successful in attempting to deliver a human and compassionate face to the funded groups, especially through its support workers. Nevertheless, there were shortcomings in the administration of the programme caused by a variety of factors. This report contains a range of recommendations that seek to address these shortcomings. In particular, we have concluded that insufficient resources were made available for administering this programme.

During this evaluation we have become aware of the stress on both the support workers at NIVT and individuals working in groups. We have recommended that support for staff should be improved both within the Intermediary Funding Body (IFB) and within many of the groups. There are models of good practice that could be utilised.

The funding programme has supported groups and activities providing vital services to victims and carers. One simple but important finding of this evaluation is that the victims'/survivors' sector has significantly developed over the last three years in terms of learning, co-operation, provision of services, and structure of groups. The work supported has been diverse, creative and helpful to victims and has built a foundation for future development. Yet it has become increasingly obvious that competition and overlap have been just as common as complementarities, partnership and synergies. It is not clear that victims' needs will best be served by continuing indefinitely the services which are now being offered, nor is it clear how these should be funded.

Political violence in particular has long-term impacts on victims, and both the work to assist them and the funding for this work must be similarly long-term. This report suggests that the Core Funding Programme and many of the funded groups have been insufficiently strategic in their planning or impact. In part this is due to the short-term, crisis-driven nature of the funding, which has led to instability and a lack of longer-term planning.

The Core Funding Programme should be continued and extended, but any extension of funding must be strategic in both being longer term and in using narrower and more targeted criteria. This evaluation proposes that the three types of groups (voluntary, self-help, and parallel service-providers) be sustained in different ways, through combinations of public funding, statutory provision, and partnerships with local bodies and communities. For example, self-help groups may be best sustained through partnerships with local community groups and by accessing a broader range of funding. However, parallel service providers must be developing sustainability through partnerships with the statutory sector. We also believe that by distinguishing different types of groups, better forms of evaluation and comparison can be developed.

We believe that only a more strategic approach to the development of this work will allow strong, sustainable development for many of the groups.

Future funding strategies and criteria should be developed by the Victims' Liaison Unit and the Victims' Unit in the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister through a process of consultation and extensive discussion.

Our specific recommendations are:

RECOMMENDATION 1: We recommend that funding for the development of victim-related work be continued and the funding base broadened.

- Government should continue to fund the further development of work with victims.

- Groups should apply for funds that are appropriate for their work and not just those earmarked for victim-related work.
- All relevant funders should take into account the needs of victims.

RECOMMENDATION 2: We recommend that the Core Funding Programme be continued as it is complementary to the Peace II measures for victims.

- Government should continue Core Funding as a major support to groups working with victims.
- Both Government and victims' groups should foster further research, reflection and discussion on the long-term impact of political violence.

RECOMMENDATION 3: We recommend that a more strategic, long-term and reflective approach be taken to funding in this area of work.

- Funders and government agencies need to model a more reflective approach in dealing with victim-related issues.
- The IFB should sponsor a series of support workshops, similar to those NIVT has run focusing on dealing with the needs of victims over the next decade.

RECOMMENDATION 4: We recommend that current Core Funding be more targeted and developed with the recognition that decisions taken now affect the long-term; ideally long-term funds are needed if needs are to be adequately met.

- Government should continue the current Core Funding cycle and extend Core Funding to five years in its next cycle.
- The Victims' Liaison Unit, the Victims' Unit in the Office of the First and Deputy First Minister and the IFB should draw up a strategic plan on the nature and shape of the current (and potential future) allocations for Core Funding.

RECOMMENDATION 5: We recommend that new criteria be drawn up for the Core Funding Programme which reflect strategic targeting and are aimed at meeting long-term needs.

- A distinction should be made between funding streams in order to differentiate between the different types of groups eligible for funding and each group should apply to the relevant stream.
- Target long-term sustainability.
- Work to define terminology.
- The meaning of criteria such as 'proven track record' needs to be defined.
- Use development or seed grants more extensively.
- Provide separate funds for networking costs.
- Target priority areas.
- Consider the special needs of rural victims and projects.
- Utilise a pilot period or early review of new criteria.
- Funding advisory committees should be established before the criteria are finalised.

RECOMMENDATION 6: We recommend that the administration systems of the current and any future IFB be sound and efficient; experience should be gleaned and used from NIVT's administration of the programme.

- The contracting agency should provide higher levels of funding for administration.

- The contracting agency should provide longer lead-in time to a new funding period.
- The IFB should improve contractual understandings.
- The IFB should improve funding and filing systems.
- The IFB should acknowledge receipt of applications and keep groups informed of process in writing.

RECOMMENDATION 7: We recommend that the IFB should provide improved and ongoing support to programme staff.

- All front-line staff must have off-line supervision.
- The funding agency should ensure that there is more internal awareness and discussion of the impact of dealing with violence-related work.
- The funder should ensure that administration officers undergo induction and ongoing training for this area of work.

RECOMMENDATION 8: We recommend that the IFB should ensure that there is appropriate support, training, and communication systems for groups.

- Compulsory induction processes and exposure to the methods of the funder must be provided for funded groups.
- Funders should provide a clearer definition of support work they will offer.
- Groups should be encouraged to offer support to their own staff.
- Groups should commit themselves to plan ahead and should be offered training in strategic planning and visioning.
- Focus groups should be used for ongoing information exchange.
- Improve communication by using different methods of communication.
- Ensure that grievance procedures are clear and publicised.
- Funders should provide clear information for groups to contact support workers, and ensure that there is learning from their questions.

RECOMMENDATION 9: We recommend that both the IFB and the groups should build in monitoring and evaluation practice.

- Develop a new method of understanding how groups' work can be monitored.
- Quarterly report system should be maintained.

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CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

Introduction

Since January 2000, the Northern Ireland Voluntary Trust (NIVT) has administered £3.1 million of funding to the 'Core Funding for Victims of Violence Programme' on behalf of the Victims' Liaison Unit (VLU). The objective of the Core Funding Programme was to provide two-year core grants to groups that are either composed of victims/survivors and their carers or working in direct support of victims/survivors of political violence in Northern Ireland.

Under the scheme, NIVT has funded 41 groups with core grants and 28 groups with seed grants. It has also set in place a number of capacity-building programmes to help groups fulfil their own objectives and achieve the goals of the Core Funding Programme.

Evaluation of the Core Funding Scheme

In April 2001, VLU put out a tender to evaluate the Core Funding for Victims of Violence Programme. The *Clio Evaluation Consortium*¹ (CEC) was awarded this tender at the end of May 2001, and over the next nine months conducted research, culminating in this Evaluation Report at the end of February 2002.

To ensure a methodologically sound evaluation, the CEC used an understanding of evaluation as a dynamic process, which was not merely event or product driven. CEC used a model that could take account of the continuous changes that organisations were experiencing. In this it was guided by the principle that any evaluative inquiry needs to offer opportunities for organisations to learn and to find ways to integrate evaluative processes into daily work practices.

The process of achieving organisational learning, for the projects and their beneficiaries, for NIVT as the IFB, and VLU as the client commissioning the evaluation, is described later in the report.

Purpose of the Evaluation

The purpose of the Evaluation, as stated by the terms of reference, was to:

- Measure the effectiveness and impact of the Core Funding Programme;
- Highlight and evaluate any innovative approaches adopted by the projects funded;
- Identify longer-term organisational requirements of groups providing service for victims of the Troubles that were supported under the Core Funding Programme, and
- Identify and describe any potential synergies between the Core Funding Programme and the new PEACE II Measures for Victims.

More specifically, according to VLU, the Evaluation would have to:

¹ Clio Evaluation Consortium is a consortium of independent consultants: David Becker (Germany), Dominic Bryan, Brandon Hamber, Cathie McKimm, Alex Tennant and Sue Williams. Gráinne Kelly worked as an ad-hoc researcher on this project. Editorial assistance was provided by Colin Harper and Helen McLaughlin.

1. Measure the effectiveness of the projects funded in terms of their inputs, processes, outputs, outcomes, i.e. the quality of the services offered by groups; ability of groups to set clear aims and objectives; ability of groups to monitor and record; ability to self-evaluate; ability to identify, change and develop.
2. Measure the extent to which funded projects have contributed to the Core Funding Programme's overall goals. In so doing, also to identify factors that contributed to success and hindered it; to assess the level of involvement and sense of ownership of beneficiaries in funded projects; to assess the ability of funded groups to identify and target those most in need; to assess the role of beneficiaries within projects and beyond. This part of the assessment would also have to identify new insights, knowledge or understanding gained by organisations and beneficiaries in respect of their own diversity and that of the wider community, as well as the potential to contribute to community healing.
3. Assess the effectiveness of NIVT's management of the Core Funding Programme. For example, their promotion of the programme; their appraisal, assessment and decision-making processes; their monitoring processes (qualitative and financial) and their support to groups.

The Evaluation was also expected to make recommendations regarding the targeting of future funding, its criteria and assessment.

CHAPTER 2 - METHODOLOGY

In designing the methodology to achieve the above aims, CEC summarised the specific terms of reference of the proposed evaluation, as outlined in the VLU's terms of reference, as follows:

1. To measure the effectiveness of the projects delivered by the funded groups;
2. To measure the extent to which funded projects have contributed to the Core Funding Programme's overall goals, and
3. To assess the effectiveness of NIVT's management of the Core Funding Programme

CEC understands the objective of the terms of reference items 1 and 2 as primarily to do with the achievements (or lack thereof) of the funded groups. Terms of reference item 3 deals with the management process undertaken by NIVT.

A range of methods were used to evaluate these aspects of the Core Funding Programme and, as much as possible given the limitations of the Evaluation, all groups were provided with opportunities to feed into the evaluation process.

The methods utilised were:

- Statistical analysis
- Consultative seminars
- Submissions
- Case studies
- Focus groups
- Monitoring forms
- Discussions and interviews
- Desktop research

This range of research methods was used (each is explained in detail below) in order to allow the collection of a rich range of data, as well as to provide funded groups with a number of opportunities to input into the process.

The response of the groups was gratifying. Of the 49 groups² that had been funded by the time of the start of the evaluation process, 41 (83.6%) were subsequently involved in one or more ways. This involvement took the following forms:

- Nineteen groups were involved in Consultative Seminar I;
- Seventeen groups were involved in Consultative Seminar II;
- Eight groups were involved in Consultative Seminar III;
- Ten groups made written submissions;
- Case studies were produced on nine groups;
- Sixteen groups took part in focus groups;
- Eight groups had completed the monitoring forms at the time of writing the report;
- Six groups were interviewed on request in person by CEC;
- Three groups were interviewed on request over the telephone by CEC;

² The 49 groups already funded by the start of the evaluation research were invited to participate throughout the process. As they were only funded near the end of the research process, the six new groups that were funded during the course of the evaluation were invited to participate only in the final consultative seminar.

- Two submissions were received from the general public as the result of an advertisement in the VLU's newsletter;
- Nine employees of NIVT were interviewed, and
- Two telephone interviews were conducted on request with individuals not involved in a victims' group.

This level of participation was better than might have been expected given the high volume of research in which groups are currently being asked to participate. While there is general support for consultation and participation in research and policy-making from the sector, at the same time groups are feeling overwhelmed by the number of such invitations they are receiving. The high level of participation in this Evaluation must reflect to a degree the central importance of the Core Funding Programme to groups working with victims of the conflict.

Statistical analysis

A typology of groups was drawn up, that is, a scheme for categorising the groups into specific types. All 75 groups who had put in an application for funds were coded and placed in the typology.

This typology and the categories it used were based on: the type of funding received or refused (seed or core); the type of work funded; how much funding was received; average size of grants; number of grants; the gap between how much money groups sought and the funds actually granted; the geographical location of the group and its beneficiaries, and the perceived identity of the beneficiaries of the funding.

Summary tables were extracted and an analysis of the data undertaken, both of which are referred to throughout this report. The typology was also used as a guide in selecting groups to be invited to participate as case studies.

Consultative seminars

Throughout the process of the evaluation, CEC was aware that it was important to keep groups informed of the process and its progress. CEC first made contact with the funded groups on 12 June 2001, when all were written to, introducing them to CEC and inviting them to the first consultative seminar. All groups that had not been in contact by Monday 25th June were contacted by telephone to determine if they would be attending.

CEC undertook two consultative seminars at the beginning of the project to inform groups about the methodology that would be used in the evaluation and to take questions of clarification, as well as a consultative seminar at the end of the evaluation to feedback results and get the funded groups' input into the recommendations.

Consultative Seminar I was held in Cookstown on 28 June 2001 and focused on explaining in detail the process that CEC would use in the evaluation. The Consultative Seminar was attended by 26 people working with 19 groups funded under the scheme. Billy Stevenson from the VLU attended the seminar briefly in order to introduce the Clio Evaluation Consortium (CEC) and to explain the purpose of the evaluation. CEC then presented the objectives of the evaluation, and explained in detail the design of the research process. After a question and answer session, the participants were split into focus groups and they were asked to introduce themselves and their group, and to discuss how they evaluated their own work. Feedback in plenary was then taken.

A leaflet summarising the purpose of the evaluation and the methodology was also distributed to all groups present, and sent by post to groups not attending. These leaflets were also sent out with the VLU Newsletter.

Consultative Seminar II was held in Belfast on 16 August 2001. This seminar was used once again to briefly outline the evaluation process, but this time small focus group discussions were also held with all participants. The groups present were asked to discuss NIVT's management of the programme more specifically. Groups were also asked to reflect on some ways that they thought they should and could be evaluated. Twenty-one people attended the consultative seminar from 17 groups funded.

Consultative Seminar III was held in Belfast, on 15 February 2002. By this time, decisions had been made on all the applications for the Core Funding Programme and so CEC was able to invite all 55 funded groups to this seminar. Fifteen people attended from eight groups. Draft findings and recommendations were presented. Two topics were then selected with the participants for further discussion in smaller groups. Some of the outcomes of these discussions were reported in plenary and discussed further. Finally, Sarah Todd, the current head of the Victims' Liaison Unit, joined the session and spoke about the process by which the VLU would take forward the findings and circulation of the report.

Submissions

It was felt that it was important that all groups be given an equal opportunity to make known their views with regard to the evaluation process. Therefore, all groups were invited to make a submission on the evaluation process if they so wished. Letters were sent to all funded groups on 24 August 2001, inviting them to send written submissions to CEC by 8 October. A series of questions were attached as a potential basis for these submissions. It was explained that the questions were not meant to elicit 'yes' or 'no' answers and the groups were invited to respond as explicitly as they could. The questions were:

1. What are the biggest challenges in your work and how do you attempt to deal with them?
2. How do you know when what you are doing is working and how would you explain/describe this to others (for example, other community organisations, funding bodies, your own users)?
3. As a recipient of funding, what do you think were the key strengths and weaknesses of the programme?
4. If you were in a position to decide if and how the Core Funding Programme for Victims'/Survivors' groups were to continue, what would you suggest?
5. How would you want to see work with victims/survivors developing in the future? (Please answer with reference to the activities of your organisation.)
6. Do you have any further comments that you would like to feed into this evaluation?

Eleven submissions were received in total—ten from funded groups, and one from a network reportedly representing 40 organisations (some funded under Core Funding Programme, others not) in the Greater Belfast area.

The November issue of the VLU Newsletter included a letter from CEC to individual victims or groups that had not been involved in the evaluation process, inviting those who wanted to have an input to contact CEC—two letters were received, and two telephone interviews resulted.

Case studies

In order to understand in a more detailed way the abilities of projects to achieve the objectives of the Core Funding Programme, a number of groups were selected for more detailed study. The idea behind the case studies was to provide some qualitative and rich material to complement the other strategies used to evaluate the groups. Nine groups were chosen and a spread of groups was selected balancing for diversity in the type of funds received (seed or core), the amount of money received, geographical location and perceived identity of the beneficiaries of the programme. The groups' names and details were kept confidential to ensure maximum participation from the groups and to ensure that they felt they could be critical of the funding process if they so wished.

This form of evaluation was much appreciated by the groups selected, and provided rich and detailed material for analysis. All groups were also given feedback in the form of a written case study of their work.

At the beginning of the Evaluation, information on each of the groups that had received funding under the Core Funding Programme was gathered from NIVT files and database. This was entered into a new database, and this information was used to identify nine groups that would reflect the range of groups funded under the Core Funding Programme.

The starting dates for the case studies were staggered from September to December. A letter was sent out to each at the start of the case study, explaining that the group had been chosen as a case study as part of the evaluation process. This was followed up by a phone call arranging the initial meeting. Having designed and agreed the case study process with each group, CEC then held on average six other meetings with staff, members of management committees, and beneficiaries/members of the groups. On this basis, a confidential Case Study Report was written, which was used in the writing of this Report and was also given to the group in question.

Focus groups

Six focus groups were planned and letters of invitation were sent to the funded groups on 26 November. They were invited to send a member of their group (i.e. staff, Management Committee member or beneficiary) to one or more focus groups. Table 1 below details the dates and topics of the focus groups.

A second letter was sent in January to groups that had not yet responded to the invitation to the Focus Groups, explaining that the last three focus groups would be their last opportunity to feed into the information gathering process.

Sixteen groups participated in the Focus Groups. There were 35 participants in total, although some took part in more than one. The numbers of participants for each session ranged between four and ten.

Table 1 Dates and topics of focus groups

Date	Location	Topic
13/12/01	Belfast	<i>Innovative Approaches to Working with Victims/Survivors</i> : this group focused on the different forms of work being done by groups, how these had developed, what had worked particularly well, and the development (or lack) of partnerships between groups and also with the statutory sector.
9/01/02	Cookstown	<i>Long Term Organisational Requirements of Groups</i> : this session reflected on future hopes and plans of groups, and what would be required in order to achieve these goals in terms of funding, training, etc.
9/01/02	Cookstown	<i>Effectiveness of the Core Funding Programme</i> : this session focused on how effective the Core Funding Programme was in supporting groups working with victims/survivors. This included how success might be measured and how the funding may have affected the development of particular forms of work, or of a 'victims' sector'.
17/01/02	Belfast	<i>Usefulness of Seed/Development funding</i> : this session involved members of groups that received seed/development funding in discussing how useful this form of grant was for the development of their work.
17/01/02	Belfast	<i>Core Funding and Peace II</i> : recognising the importance of involving groups in making recommendations about future funding programmes, in this session we looked at how a second Core Funding Programme might be designed to complement Peace II funding.
23/01/02	Belfast	<i>Beneficiaries' experiences and reflections</i> : this final group involved members or beneficiaries of victims'/survivors' groups and reflected upon their opinions of the development of the work and what they would like to see happen in the future.

Monitoring forms

All funded groups are required to complete monitoring forms at the end of each year of funding. By January 2001, eight forms had been completed and submitted to NIVT. CEC reviewed the information recorded on these forms as part of the data collection.

Discussions and interviews

Members of six groups were interviewed in person by members of CEC. Some of these people had approached CEC to express their opinions. Nine staff members of NIVT were interviewed, as well as the head of the VLU. In addition three people involved in victims' groups were interviewed by phone.

Desktop research

Over the course of the last few years, information on the nature and extent of political violence, and specifically its impact on victims, has been growing. A number of documents relevant to the context of the evaluation were consulted. Specific evaluations in the area were also carefully studied: the evaluations of the REAL programme published by NIVT in early 2002; the evaluation of services to victims and survivors of the Troubles produced by Deloitte & Touche in October 2001, and the recent summary of responses to the consultation paper circulated by the Victims' Unit in the Office of the First and Deputy First Minister.

CHAPTER 3 - ESTABLISHMENT OF CORE FUNDING PROGRAMME

Background

The Northern Ireland conflict has been a protracted conflict that has claimed over 3,700 lives and resulted in at least 40,000 people being injured. The impact of the conflict was not restricted to these direct victims and survivors—but also affected their relatives and friends, as well as those who witnessed such incidents and lived in violent and unstable communities.

The first moves by the Government to attempt to deal with the issue of victims came at the end of 1997 with the Victims' Commission under the direction of Sir Kenneth Bloomfield. This was set up to 'look at possible ways to recognise the pain and suffering felt by victims of violence arising from the troubles of the last 30 years, including those who have died or been injured in the service of the community'. Over the following months the Commission consulted with individuals and groups around this subject. The Bloomfield Report on Victims of the Troubles, entitled 'We Will Remember Them', was released in May 1998 outlining the findings.

At around the same time as the Bloomfield Report, the Department of Health and Social Services Inspectorate published a report called 'Living with the Trauma of the Troubles'. The need to 'address the suffering of the victims' was also included in the 1998 Belfast Agreement.

In June 1998 the Victims' Liaison Unit (VLU) was set up within the Northern Ireland Office to support the implementation of the Bloomfield Report and to establish initiatives and formulate policies in recognition and support of those who had become victims. It was accountable to the Victims' Minister, Adam Ingram. Shortly afterwards, the government announced that it would be allocating £5 million to the VLU, to be used to help victims of the conflict in Northern Ireland.

The VLU spent its first three months consulting with groups about the Bloomfield Report and laying the groundwork for future initiatives to support victims. The Bloomfield Report had recommended that groups in the voluntary sector working with victims receive government funding, and this suggestion was strongly supported in the consultation exercise. In response, a large proportion of the £5 million set aside for victims at that time was used to support the work of victims' groups. Although some groups, particularly the larger ones, had been in existence before this time, many emerged as the Government process gained momentum and various new funding initiatives were put in place.

Various other government initiatives were also undertaken during and after the VLU's consultation period. The initial £5 million was allocated to programmes, including the establishment of the Northern Ireland Memorial Fund and the setting up in February 1999 of the Family Trauma Centre run by the South and East Belfast Trust on a grant of £700,000.

A further £4 million allocation to the VLU was made in September 1999, of which £3 million was assigned to a Core Funding Programme for groups working with victims/survivors, administered by the Northern Ireland Voluntary Trust and launched in January 1998. The remainder was given to the Northern Ireland Memorial Fund. In June 1999 an additional grant from the VLU of £225,000 (to be administered by the Community Relations Council) was then allocated to a small grants scheme for voluntary groups working with victims.

In July 2000 a Victims' Unit was established in the Office of the First and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM) and shortly thereafter two victims' representatives were appointed to the Civic Forum. An Inter-departmental Working Group on Victims' Issues was set up through OFMDFM.

Later that year the REAL programme, designed by NIVT staff and delivered by the Workers' Educational Association (WEA), began to operate to support the Core Funding Programme (see Chapter Four for more information). Peace II funding for victims groups was announced, with allocations of £6.67 million being promised.

At the same time, First Minister and Deputy First Minister Trimble and Mallon presented a draft Programme for Government before the Assembly. This committed the Executive to preparing a victims' strategy by April 2002 and stated that the government 'will address the needs of victims'.

A further £12 million of funding to victims' groups was announced in February 2001, with 20% of this being allocated to the Northern Ireland Memorial Fund, and with some money being made available to smaller projects. The Victims' Unit was also allocated £420,000 for distribution in 2000-1 and a further £650,000 in 2001-2.

It was announced in January 2002 that a further £3 million will be allocated to a second Core Funding Programme—but the choice of IFB and the nature of the funding is reserved until the publication of this Report.

The Consultation Paper on a Victims' Strategy was then made public on 6 August 2001 by Dermot Nesbitt and Denis Haughey, MLAs in the OFMDFM with responsibility for victims' issues. A summary of responses to the document was published in January 2002, with the final strategy being expected in March 2002.

The development of the Core Funding Programme

The Core Funding Scheme was announced by the Victims' Minister, Adam Ingram on 27 September 1999, and the Northern Ireland Voluntary Trust (NIVT) was named as the intermediary funding body (IFB) administering the fund. They were reportedly chosen for this role because of their experience of administering grants to victims' groups under the 'vulnerable groups' measure of the EU's Special Support Programme for Peace and Reconciliation (hereafter 'Peace I'). A memorandum of understanding was drawn up between the VLU and NIVT, and discussions started about the setting up of the Fund.

From the start, the VLU stipulated certain conditions for the grants: the money was to be used to provide salaries and running costs for groups within the voluntary sector who were working with victims. The definition of victims used in this case was 'people who have been bereaved, injured or caring for the injured as a result of the Troubles in Northern Ireland'. There was to be a strong emphasis on supporting grass-roots, community based groups and ex-prisoners' groups were not to receive grants from this fund.

It was announced in Issue 2 of the VLU newsletter that £600,000 (£300,000 per year for two years) was to be ring-fenced for one group, provided it met the conditions for the grant, as a recognition of its regional expertise in working with victims across Northern Ireland.

Four principal objectives for the fund were agreed between NIVT and the VLU:

1. To sustain the work of groups and organisations currently providing quality services and support to those most directly affected by the Troubles in Northern Ireland (i.e. the bereaved, injured and those caring for the injured);
2. To support the development of a range of services and provision that are complementary to current statutory provision in order to meet the needs of all victims/survivors in Northern Ireland;
3. To provide opportunities for training and service development within victims'/survivors' groups, and
4. To promote models of community healing (both within and, where appropriate, between communities) and the growth in confidence and empowerment for individual victims/survivors.

Two workers already in post with NIVT were assigned to the Fund: a Community Support Worker (full time) and a Community Projects Officer, working part-time on this fund (both staff members left NIVT during the programme and were replaced). A part-time Clerical Assistant was also assigned to the Fund. Together, the staff worked to draw up grant scheme guidelines and project assessment and selection criteria for the scheme. The Community Support Worker also led a consultation process at this time, talking with groups about the design of the programme. While there was an attempt to keep the criteria fairly open, the need for some limitation was recognised—for example, ensuring that the work would not be party political, and would be community-based. A focus on healing in the broadest sense was also encouraged. A leaflet was produced outlining the above objectives of the Fund, the criteria and application process.

It was emphasised in the leaflet that the fund was for voluntary, community or self-help groups with a proven track record of working with victims as previously defined. The following criteria were listed:

1. Normally only those community, voluntary or self-help groups that have been in existence for one year or more, and that can provide clear evidence of working with victims/survivors of the Troubles, or their carers, can apply;
2. The project, or part of the project, for which the funds are being sought must be specifically aimed at working with victims/survivors of the Troubles in Northern Ireland. In situations where part funding for a project is required, the work with victims/survivors must be clearly identified;
3. The proposal must demonstrate that it is addressing a need or gap in the existing provision. A proposal will not be supported where there is evidence of duplication and overlap;
4. Core funding grants will normally only apply to organisations based in or carrying out work in Northern Ireland, and
5. Groups applying should have the ability to address the need for regular and financial monitoring, reporting and evaluation.

In addition, there was the further condition that the work of the groups be clearly underpinned by community development principles and processes, including:

- Having a high degree of user involvement in decision making (involvement of victims/survivors and their carers);
- Be open and accountable as organisations to their users;
- Be prepared to co-operate and collaborate with other groups and organisations in this area, and
- Aim to develop a programme of work that will progress individual and community healing and empowerment.

In addition, a proportion of the fund was set aside as a Seeding/Development Funding Scheme to offer seeding grants for new or recently established groups working with victims of the conflict in Northern Ireland. Money was also available through this fund for costs relating to organisational development needs or small programme costs. These groups were informed that the maximum award available under this fund would be £10,000.

Findings

The political sensitivities of funding

It must be recognised that the Core Funding Programme (CFP) was set up in a highly politicised environment, as a direct response to the recommendations made in the Bloomfield Report that voluntary sector groups working with victims of the conflict should receive financial support for their work. However, a number of groups, notably groups working with people who had been injured or bereaved by state violence, felt that their concerns had not been represented in the Report and that it had reflected only certain ‘types’ of victims—that is, victims of paramilitary violence. It was felt that the Bloomfield Report did not seem to empathise equally with victims of state security forces. The fact that the Core Funding Programme was based on this Report was a negative factor for groups working with these victims.

This view can only have been intensified by the press statement announcing the Fund which declared: ‘For the first time in 30 years government recognised the need to specifically address the needs of victims of terrorism’ (Press Statement, Northern Ireland Information Service, 27 September 1999). This seemed to suggest that the money was not intended to address the needs of other victims. However, the criteria were later drawn up to include work with all victims of the conflict and, as has been verified through the statistical breakdown of the allocation of funds, the funding was in fact distributed reasonably evenly across the community divide.

For the groups in question, largely those working primarily with people from nationalist backgrounds, the fact that the money for the Core Funding Programme came through the VLU was problematic, since the VLU is based within the Northern Ireland Office. This prevented some groups from applying to the fund and caused tensions within some groups who had received money under this fund.

For other groups, there was little understanding of the fact that this money had come from the VLU, as it was associated very much with NIVT. Indeed, the role of NIVT in administering the fund proved problematic for some groups, particularly a number which work within unionist communities, and with people who are victims of paramilitary violence. Although it had a track record of administering funds to victims’ groups, NIVT had also administered funds to groups working with ex-prisoners, and this made some groups feel that it was too sympathetic to ex-prisoners at the expense of victims. However, there is no evidence that the experience of funding ex-prisoners’ groups had any impact on NIVT’s objectivity in administering the Core Funding Programme.

The meaning of the money

In early press statements by the then Victims' Minister, Adam Ingram, the funding of victims' groups and other schemes for victims was linked with the intention of providing recognition of the suffering of victims over the previous 30 years. For example:

As we enter a new era in Northern Ireland, following last week's historic election, I can assure everyone of my personal commitment to implementing the recommendations in Sir Kenneth's report and to providing the much overdue support and recognition to the victims and survivors of our tragic past (Press Statement, Northern Ireland Information Service, 30 June 1998).

Although this was not expressed so explicitly in later statements, recognition of the suffering of victims of the Troubles appeared to be a motivation for the Core Funding Programme, as well as other schemes implemented for victims. Indeed, for many of the groups applying for the funding, particularly locally-based single-identity groups, the significance of the money has been very much bound up with recognition of victimhood, and of suffering. Although understandable, this has had a number of consequences for the administration of the fund.

The application process demanded that the groups demonstrate sound organisational structures and an effective track record of working with victims. However, there was a sense among a considerable number of groups that these demands were irrelevant, and that the most important thing to demonstrate was that they represented individuals whose lives had been devastated through the conflict. When, inevitably, the money they were awarded by the fund came far short of what they had applied for, this was seen as an affront to the members of the group and a denial of the dreadful suffering they had endured (see Chapter 5 for more detail on this point).

Broad criteria for funding

Groups were to be considered for funding provided that they could demonstrate a 'track record' of financial and administrative accountability, and that they worked with victims (those bereaved or injured) or carers for victims. In its implementation, the programme interpreted these criteria fairly loosely, and accepted all but six of seventy-five applications.

It should be noted that a number of groups expressed appreciation for the broad criteria adopted for the CFP. They felt that this allowed groups to determine the needs of their members and so to draw up a programme based on this, rather than on criteria drawn up by NIVT or the VLU—a needs-led approach. However, while the Fund's objectives talked of the work of groups being complementary to the work of the statutory sector, and of aiming to promote 'community healing', such open criteria tended to lead to competition for funds, rather than support or partnership.

Grants were awarded both to 'victims' groups' (that is, self-help, identity-based groups) and organisations providing services to victims or to victims' groups. Organisations that aimed to support the work of smaller, locally-based groups were required to compete for the funding with the very groups they hoped to assist, and frequently there was pressure on them to demonstrate that they were 'victims-led' in the same way as the self-help groups. On the other hand, the locally-based self-help groups frequently felt under pressure to deliver the same type of so-called 'professional' services, and did not feel that their work (for example, befriending, group support, social activities) was being valued. The needs of these different types of groups are considerably different, as are the methods for evaluating their success. If

the criteria had differentiated between these two types of groups, perhaps even having two separate funds, this might have encouraged more partnership and less rivalry.

The VLU appears to have conferred a lot of responsibility on NIVT in the establishment of criteria for the CFP. This had its advantages and disadvantages. The working relations between the two organisations were marked by regular consultation, co-operation and mutual support. However, there is a feeling in NIVT that, in any future funding programmes, the government must be involved in such hard decisions as definitions, remit of the work, and programme criteria, rather than leaving all of this to the IFB.

Criteria for size of grants

By the final submission deadline of the fund, the total amount requested by groups came to over £7.4 million pounds, although the total amount available was only £3.1 million. Clearly, distributing a finite amount of money among a large number of groups will always be problematic, whatever approach is taken. One possible approach would have been to fund only a limited number of groups with substantial grants, but this would have been difficult, given the meaning attached to the money as recognition of suffering and of the good work of victims' groups. Instead, the approach adopted was to try to fund as many groups as fulfilled the (broad) criteria.

This meant that NIVT needed to find a way of dividing the money up between the groups as equitably as possible. This could either be done by granting each an equal proportion of the amount they had requested, or by trying to give roughly equal amounts to groups of similar types. As it became clearer which groups were applying, and the amounts applied for, the latter approach was adopted. Groups applying for Core Funding that were working across the region, or in needy geographical areas, were considered at a higher rate of around £110,000 over two years, while for groups working in a limited geographical area a grant of around £80,000 was considered appropriate. Smaller organisations with part-time staff received closer to £60,000. The Community Projects Officer reported that she used these figures as guidelines, the final amount recommended also depending to a degree on the individual circumstances of the groups. Seed/development grants were dealt with separately, there being a stated limit of £10,000 on the amount that would be granted.

The overwhelming majority of the groups contacted during the research process expressed discontent over the amount they had received from the Core Funding Programme. There seemed to be a general expectation that the amounts awarded would be significantly larger than occurred in reality. This may in part have been due to the size of award given to one organisation at the start of the process, and also because the groups felt the money was in recognition of their extensive suffering. In addition, because the groups were asked to submit an application based on the needs of their members, and because these needs are extensive, many groups produced 'wish lists' that could not realistically be met, given the limited amount of the fund. As one participant noted, it was hard for groups to identify a realistic amount to apply for, since they were so aware of the great needs of their members. When the groups did not receive as much as they had hoped, a number felt that this was evidence of bias on the part of NIVT, despite the fact that they had received roughly the same as other similar groups.

Nature and extent of grants

Grant size and number of groups supported

According to the figures compiled by CEC, under the NIVT Core Funding Programme, there were 75 applications for funds, and of these 69 applications were accepted. Clearly, a large proportion of funding applications were accepted, i.e. 92% with only six applications being refused and these generally were referred on to other funds, or applications clearly did not fit with the aims of the victims funding.

Table 2 Number of applications accepted or rejected

Number of Applications	Number	%
Accepted	69	92%
Rejected	6	8%
Total	75	100%

A total of £3,116,948 was given out through 69 different grants to 55 groups. Some groups got more than one grant. Grants ranged from smaller seed/development grants to larger Core Funding Grants. Forty-one of the 55 groups supported received substantial core funding, with the remainder receiving funds supporting seed or development work. Seed grants ranged from £500 to £7,000 and core grants ranged from £5,800 to £126,680, excluding the grant of £596,572.

Table 3 Breakdown of funding

Type	Number	%	Total Granted	Average Grant
Core Grants	41	59.42%	£3,041,438	£74,181.41
Seed or Development Grants	28	40.58%	£75,510	£2,696.79
Total Applications and Funds Granted	69	100%	£3,116,948	

For groups receiving core support, an average of £74,181 was granted, with about £75,000 to £85,000 being the norm (often including one or two smaller seed grants). Only one group received a significantly larger grant of £596,572. This was intended as recognition of the quality of the work conducted, but caused confusion and bad feeling and made some groups feel that this was an attempt to set up a hierarchy of victims' groups. Although the group had to apply in the usual way, NIVT verified the application and ensured that proper checks and balances were in place, the group met the criteria for such a grant, and the funding was used for sound purposes, there was hostility and some envy at the decision to set aside funds in advance for this group. NIVT also bore the brunt of this anger as being responsible for making the decision, when in fact the money had been ring-fenced prior to NIVT's taking administrative charge of the fund.

Distributing the funds

The Core Funding Programme effectively helped to institutionalise within the local community the social relevance of the victims' issue, the importance of the provision of services for victims, and validation of the groups working with victims. Coming at such an early point in the development of work with victims, the way that the fund was structured had a tremendous impact on its future development. In fact, the criteria for the Core Funding Programme were set up to be as open as possible. At the time of the launch of the Core Funding Programme, it was not clear how the work with victims within the voluntary/community sector would develop, which forms of work might be prioritised, and how the fund might be structured so as best to support the work of the sector. Given the developmental nature of the sector, keeping the criteria as open as possible was probably prudent.

It appears clear that there was an attempt by the funders to support as many groups as possible. It remains debatable whether it would have been better to fund fewer groups with larger grants. This may have meant that some groups may have got funds closer to their request, but would have meant other groups received nothing. The approach adopted seemed to focus rather on using the Core fund to put one or two workers in place for most groups. This had the effect of developing a substantial body of groups—in effect a 'sector' of victims' groups. This may well have been the goal, but it leaves serious questions as to how this process can be maintained and a uniformly high quality of services be ensured.

The debate about how the funding should have been distributed is difficult to resolve in retrospect. The area could have looked decidedly different if a more discretionary approach had been adopted, but more groups would have been upset with the fact that they received no funding, and money would have gone almost invariably to the more established groups. This would have fed the idea of there being a 'golden circle of safe groups' (Deloitte & Touche, 2001) who were financially favoured to a much greater degree.

The other option would have been to fund much smaller grants as seed grants, allow groups to develop more organically, and then consider funding a larger amount later. The time pressure to spend the funds within the two years, however, mitigated against this.

Grants by community served and location of beneficiaries

In the interests of equality and to analyse the spread of funding, CEC thought it would be useful to look at a range of issues in relation to those who received Core Funding. Thus, the relationship between the size and nature of grants was explored in relation to the community served by the groups or organisations receiving funds, as well as the location of the beneficiaries of the group (for example, rural/urban or east/west of the Bann). However, it is important to note that NIVT funded 92% of the applications received, so the spread of funding is largely determined by who applied and only to a lesser extent by how NIVT chose to spread the funds. The exercise is useful, however, as it may help target future prioritisation of monies.

This process was done for Core Funding of groups and for Seed Grants separately, as well as for the funds in total. Below, we report on the total amount of expenditure in relation to the criteria mentioned. A breakdown between core funds and seed funds is appended at the end of this report, and the results are broadly similar.

As was noted, NIVT made 69 grants in total (core and seed grants) to a total of 55 groups (some groups received more than one grant). The groups receiving funds were then

categorised, using information on file at NIVT, in terms of the community they largely served and location of beneficiaries. The results are as follows:

Table 4 Community served by funded groups

Community	Number	%	Funds Granted	%
Cross-Community	26	37.68	£1,499,837	48.12
Largely Catholic	17	24.64	£778,533	24.98
Largely Protestant	24	34.78	£817,078	26.21
Unknown	2	2.90	£21,500	0.69
	69	100	£3,116,948	100

Almost half of the funding went to groups which served communities from across the Catholic and Protestant divide in Northern Ireland. In terms of groups that largely serve one community or another, there seems to be a relatively even spread.

A number of groups that worked largely with only one section of society argued that, rather than being single identity, they were cross-community, as they were happy to work with anyone who needed help. Often the individuals approaching their group were from one community background largely because of the geographical location of the group's offices, in areas which would not be accessible to all victims. Other groups, again, while welcoming individuals from the 'other' community, clearly represent a specific identity group and often lobby around the particular interests of this group.

In order to be truly cross-community, it is not sufficient to have one or two beneficiaries from the 'other' community. To be cross-community requires all the policies and principles behind the work to actively promote inclusivity. This may mean basing a group in a neutral and accessible area, and lobbying only around general victims' issues. While it is important that there are groups actively working in a cross-community manner with victims, it is also important that single identity groups continue to work with specific communities of victims, as many feel that these types of groups can be more community-based, and best represent their interests.

Table 5 Area where beneficiaries of funded groups largely reside

Area	Number	%	Funds Granted	%
Both East and West of the Bann	11	15.94	£1,090,422	34.98
East of the Bann	29	42.03	£1,080,211	34.66
West of the Bann	28	40.58	£944,815	30.31
Unknown	1	1.45	£1,500	0.05
Total	69	100	£3,116,948	100

This analysis shows that there was a fairly even spread between groups which were based either east or west of the Bann. A smaller proportion of the groups (15.94%), operated across the whole region—suggesting that most groups were fairly limited or focused in the reach of their work.

It is noticeable that, for groups with a larger reach, the amount of money granted per group was significantly larger than for groups that were confined to one or other region of Northern Ireland. On average, groups that worked across Northern Ireland received about £99,000 and groups confined to the East or West, about £35,000. This may well be justified given that the needs of groups that stretch their services further may be greater. In addition, these figures cover both Seed and Core grants, so the average figure of £35,000 may be deflated by some of the seed grant monies, which would invariably be for limited areas.

Table 6 Nature of the area where beneficiaries of the funded groups largely reside

Area	Number	%	Funds Granted	%
Both Urban and Rural	20	28.99	£1,359,630	43.62
Largely Urban	27	39.13	£1,147,272	36.81
Largely Rural	21	30.43	£608,546	19.52
Unknown	1	1.45	£1,500	0.05
Total	69	100	£3,116,948	100

Groups were also divided into whether their constituencies were largely urban, rural or both. Once again, services offered across this divide seem to have received the most funding, despite there being fewer such groups. Also, about twice as much money was given to groups that largely serve urban constituencies as to those that serve rural constituencies. This potential imbalance may reflect the number, demand, reach and size of rural groups.

Findings

As was noted earlier, the figures give a sense of the nature of those applying for funding and not necessarily NIVT’s approach to distributing the monies, as 92% of all applications were funded.

That said, there appear to be no major discrepancies between the communities served and location of the beneficiaries of the groups funded. In fact, the breakdown of funding to groups which largely only serve Catholic or Protestant communities seems to be remarkably similar, as does the location of the services east and west of the Bann.

From a more strategic perspective, however, although the broad picture is positive, it raises the issue of whether the spread of funds and groups reached was, in fact, potentially ‘too equitable’—meaning that the spread of funds may not have reached the areas of greatest need, as funds were spread relatively evenly among communities and constituencies. Again, this may reflect the nature of the applications more than any strategy, but difficult questions need to be asked as to whether the targeting and prioritising of victims’ work in specific areas may need to happen in the future.

There were some marked differences between rural and urban-based groups—for example, urban groups received about 37% of the total funds and rural groups received about 20% of the funds. This raises the issue as to whether having the 30% of largely rural groups receiving about 20% of the money is a fair spread given the distribution of violence-related problems in Northern Ireland. (At the same time, roughly 30% of groups that reach both urban and rural areas received about 43% of the money.) Intermediary Funding Bodies funding victims’ groups would do well to examine this issue further and develop a strategy to support victims’ work in rural areas—because, even if the amount of funding is adequate, given the spread of the conflict, it is often the rural groups and victims that feel the most isolated.

Finally, it should be noted that, in the Core Funding Programme, NIVT was drawn towards funding groups which have a Northern Ireland-wide reach and groups that work on a cross-community basis (which fits with some of the programme aims). However, it is equally important to note that just over 50% of resources did go to largely single-identity work.

NIVT also seems to have ensured that an equitable proportion of funds went to largely Protestant and Catholic-based groups, which allowed development of work with victims in

both sections of the community. However, given some of the underdevelopment previously seen in Protestant-based community work, it is possible that the Core Funding Programme, as managed by NIVT, has been instrumental in encouraging the development of work with victims in Protestant areas.

CHAPTER FOUR - IMPLEMENTATION AND MANAGEMENT BY NIVT

Background description

Having developed criteria and produced a leaflet, NIVT proceeded to publicise the fund through advertisements in several newspapers and leaflets sent out to groups on a mailing list that had been previously developed by the Community Support Worker. The VLU also circulated details of the fund through its extensive database. A number of information days were also held and eligible groups were invited to hear further details of the programme, and to ask questions.

Application process

As groups began to apply, the Community Support Worker helped those groups who needed it with the technicalities of the application process, explaining the meaning of the criteria and procedures. There were five deadlines for submission of applications: 31 March 2000; 30 June 2000; 31 December 2000; 31 March 2001, and 30 June 2001. When applications were received, they were given an application/grant number and a file was set up. The applications were held on a computer database along with all other applications received by NIVT. The database held basic records about the application, including contact details, funding history, date and amount of application, decisions on awards. A letter of acknowledgement was sent to applicants, followed by arranging for the Community Projects Officer (CPO) to meet the group to discuss the application. Prior to this, a checklist was used to determine if any details had been omitted from the application. NIVT pledged to have a turn-around time of 3-4 months on the application process, so the CPO had eight weeks to assess all applications after each of the deadlines.

In arranging to meet the applicants, the CPO requested the attendance of 2-3 members of the group's management committee at the first meeting. The meetings were conducted using a Project Assessment Checklist Form developed by NIVT for Peace I funding. After the meeting, the CPO did a 'desk score' for each application using the Project Appraisal Form. A brief assessment report was written on each application and a recommended award amount determined. The assessment report was then circulated to the members of the Core Funding Advisory Committee for recommendation.

Role of the Advisory Committee and Board of Trustees

NIVT had developed the practice of using advisory committees when it was administering Peace I funding. Prior to that, following common funding practice, all discussions on grant applications were made by the organisation's Board of Trustees. However, the grants being awarded under Peace I, and subsequently the Core Funding Programme, were to be considerably larger than grants previously awarded—up until then the highest grant awarded by NIVT was £15 000, which was considered a large grant at the time.

While legally the Board of Trustees have the responsibility to make decisions on awards, NIVT decided to develop advisory groups for each of the Peace I streams it was administering, including people who might represent the different interests of groups applying for the funding. These committees would be made up of people with experience and expertise in the area of work being funded, and would consider the applications in some detail before making recommendations to the Board of Trustees. When the Advisory Committee was being set up for the Core Funding Programme, there were several meetings

held with groups working with victims, in order to discuss whether they should be represented on the committee. While NIVT would have preferred victims' groups to be included in the decision making, a consensus was developed through these meetings that, given the extreme sensitivity of this fund, it would be better for the groups not to be involved in this way. It was felt that any such involvement could prove problematic for the groups in question.

As a result, the Advisory Committee was made up of people with experience of working with victims, although not within the community/voluntary sector. The main statutory organisations working with victims were included, along with members of each Trauma Advisory Panel, other funders with experience of funding victims groups, two members of the NIVT Board of Trustees and the Head of the VLU. Meetings of the Advisory Committee were scheduled approximately 8 weeks after each submission deadline. Prior to the committee meeting, each member was sent an agenda for the meeting, a report produced by the Community Support Worker (CSW), all the assessment reports and various background papers. Applications were discussed thoroughly at the advisory committee, and recommendations for funding and amount of awards went to the NIVT Board of Trustees for discussion and final decisions. Where it was felt that further information was required before a recommendation could be made, the decision was deferred and the CPO was asked to provide the missing information at the next meeting of the Advisory Committee.

For applications for Seed/Development grants below a certain amount, the decision process was different. In order to process these quickly, recommendations were sent by post to three members of the Advisory Committee (two of whom were also members of NIVT's Board of Trustees and the third a VLU representative). This sub-group then recorded their decision on an enclosed form, which was returned to NIVT. The Board of Trustees was informed of these decisions, but was not required to approve these awards.

Notice of award and payment of grants

Notice of funding awards was made by post using a standard letter. Letters included specific information on the amount of the grant and what it should be spent on. Also included in the mail-out were details on how the VLU and NIVT should be acknowledged in any publicity generated by the project. Any conditions relating to the receipt of the grant were listed, and the group were advised to arrange necessary insurance cover. Two copies of a standard contract between the group and NIVT were enclosed and the groups were asked to sign these and return one of them.

On receipt of both the contract and evidence of adequate insurance, the first payment was authorised, normally 50% of the first year's award, most awards being for two years. After the initial payment, funded groups received 25% quarterly upon receipt of quarterly returns with original invoices detailing actual expenditure for the past quarter. Invoices were checked against the return forms and stamped by NIVT's Finance Officer. These were returned along with a form detailing how much funded groups had been paid to date and any queries that needed sorting out. This form was copied to the CPO to review before the next payment was authorised. If grant aid was not being used up quickly enough, the CPO sometimes made a decision to reduce the amount of grant allocation until the next quarter, or until the group had utilised enough of its previous grant payments

Ongoing support for funded groups

Around 6-8 weeks after funding announcements were made, groups were invited to an information seminar to advise groups on monitoring and evaluation of their award and on

training available to help them develop their work. Staff members involved with financial monitoring were also introduced at this meeting, so that groups would know whom to approach with problems or concerns. An NIVT staff member commented on the high attendance rate: all but one funded group participated in these meetings. Compared to information seminars for other NIVT funding programmes, this was an unusually high rate of attendance.

Groups also received support packs which provided valuable information for groups on NIVT, its funding programmes, and how NIVT grants should be managed. Other information contained in the pack included guidelines on good practice such as: formalising group systems; carrying out a community audit; recruitment, selection and management of staff; useful contacts, and policies on equal opportunities, child protection, and health and safety. Although every group received this pack, and 50% of them also received visits from NIVT's Support Workers, when questioned, few victims' group staff seemed to have any recollection of the support pack.

Groups were informed of meetings and ongoing training and networking opportunities through a monthly mailing from the Community Support Worker (CSW). The CSW was also responsible for ensuring that any conditions attached to the receipt of grants were met—for example the training of management committees. While this usually meant putting the group in question in contact with another agency to help fulfil the conditions, given the suspicion and isolation of many victims' groups, sometimes the CSW provided this training. In addition, the CSW also had a troubleshooting role towards groups, responding to particular needs and problems as well as ensuring good working practices in relation to fair employment and other legislation.

Two conferences were also held, planned and run by an advisory group made up of groups working with victims in the voluntary sector. Both of these were held before the fund was set up, but were part of the overall support work of NIVT with victims' groups. These residential conferences involved a wide range of victims' groups as participants, and local and international speakers. They focused on themes such as human rights, the current work of victims' groups and the effect of the conflict on young people.

In addition, as the result of the work of the CSW supported by the Core Funding Advisory Committee, a capacity-building programme was developed to work with victims' groups and policy makers. This then advanced as a partnership between CRC, NIVT and VLU, the design process taking six months and involving a wide range of interested parties. Entitled the 'REAL Programme', this was not strictly part of the Core Funding Programme as it was funded by the three partnership organisations, but was set up to support the work of victims' groups such as those funded under the CFP. The Workers' Educational Association (WEA) was contracted to deliver the REAL Programme, which was divided into three parts:

Programme A - Developing the capacity of groups working with victims/survivors to deliver effective services.

Programme B - Tailored training and support for groups, particularly those experiencing extreme difficulties.

Programme C - Awareness raising of issues surrounding work with victims for policy-makers and funders.

The loss of the original CSW had a considerable impact on the support offered, as the new person coming into post had to spend a significant amount of time becoming acquainted with the funded groups. During this time, she assessed the training needs of groups and developed a training strategy. The focus of the training and support work since then has

been on helping individual groups on themes such as 'Planning to Succeed'. The CSW also participated in a range of conferences, panels and policy groups in order to ensure that the interests of victims' groups are being taken into account.

Monitoring and evaluation procedures

During information sessions, groups were advised to put in place systems of evaluation and monitoring. It was suggested that groups produce two-page monthly reports, which could be used as a basis for completing the yearly monitoring forms required by NIVT.

Findings

Programme set-up and staffing

There was a sense of urgency attached to getting funding out to groups, both for this fund and for earlier money directed towards victims' work by the NIO. In a press release dated June 1998, responding practically to needs identified in the Bloomfield report, Victims' Minister Adam Ingram said 'its distribution [funding] was to be done with as little bureaucracy as possible'. There was pressure on the NIVT staff and the Advisory Committee responsible for the fund to make it operational as soon as possible. While the funding programme was meant to implement aspects of the Bloomfield Report, some groups felt that it was also intended to balance the release of paramilitary prisoners with measures to assist victims (Case Study 6).

There was also pressure from the groups to get the funding out. As the programme was being announced, many groups were coming to the end of their Peace I funding, which for many covered salaries and running costs. For premises and staff to be retained, the VLU money had to be made available to groups as soon as possible. NIVT, having administered the Peace I funding for victims' groups, was in a strong position to set up the new fund.

This sense of urgency resulted in the money being distributed without a clearly-defined strategy shared by the government, the IFB and the funded groups. We take the view that, at the time, this was not necessarily a bad decision, as the needs of victims/survivors were just beginning to emerge and take shape. Also, the political framework against which the programme was set up was still very volatile, with government and elected representatives attempting to work through difficulties in the Belfast Agreement. However, the speed with which the money was distributed has had both positive and negative consequences relating to the administration, monitoring and evaluation of the fund, consequences that are discussed in this chapter and throughout the Report.

Due to the urgencies attached to distribution of the funds, and the absence of a detailed strategy for the long-term objectives of the funding, NIVT staff members, supported by the CFP Advisory Committee (which included a representative from the VLU) and the Board of Trustees, were given responsibility for drawing up the selection criteria for the CFP. The criteria were deliberately kept open, with the main boundaries to the funding twofold: firstly, the funding was for core costs (salaries and running costs) and secondly, the definition of victim was restricted to 'bereaved, injured, or those caring for bereaved or injured'. The leaflet clearly sets out that work that is 'party political in nature' will not be funded, but there appears to have been a lack of clarity as to the definition of 'party political'.

The overwhelming view of groups who fed into the CEC consultation process was that the NIVT staff recruited to administer the CFP were dedicated, skilful and compassionate in their servicing of the groups. Even those groups that had serious misgivings about NIVT's administration of the programme believed that the staff worked very hard to address their needs.

While [we] recognise that the overwhelming majority of NIVT employees are decent, helpful and approachable persons, the administration system they operate is substantially flawed (Submission B).

The NIVT recognised the need that such programmes should exist. They had an excellent team coordinating and processing the funding. We acknowledge the support and encouragement from present and previous staff members of NIVT who work in this area of core funding (Submission E).

Given that the funding programme was new and implemented rapidly, the staff, Advisory Committee and Board of Trustees were left to make a lot of difficult decisions. While we feel this was inevitable given the newness of this area of work and the political context of funding, staff in particular were at times left quite vulnerable in this situation. Groups funded under the CFP frequently mentioned to us that they felt that the programme was seriously understaffed. While there was support from other NIVT staff members, particularly when problems arose, the burden of the work, which was often exhausting and emotionally draining, fell largely on the two staff members assigned to the CFP.

For many organisations, the funding was interpreted as compensation for past suffering (see Chapter 3 for a more detailed discussion on this), which had the effect of making funding decisions politically and emotionally charged. In the consultative seminars and in the focus groups, representatives from many of the groups rated justice, recognition and acknowledgement as among the top three objectives and goals of their organisation. Often groups interpreted decisions to award one organisation more than another as a political decision, or similarly, delays in making grant awards were compared and interpreted politically:

When things are delayed, there is a sense of unfairness, wondering why theirs [funding] has been delayed and others haven't (Focus Group 4).

While groups were eager to differentiate their criticism of the organisation from support of staff administering the programme, NIVT staff were often under a great deal of emotional and psychological pressure. Indeed, NIVT staff were sometimes the target of serious abuse, albeit from a very small number of groups. As well as those working directly on the Core Funding Programme, a range of other staff members, including those working at the reception area and taking calls, were on the receiving end of unpleasant and abusive comments. Much of the abuse and criticism was aimed personally at the Director of NIVT. As a result of all this, a training programme was set up to help NIVT staff deal with the distress caused by these occurrences.

Given the issues and needs in this area of work, there is a tendency for work to be 'crisis-driven', a trait that was evident at times amongst NIVT staff as well as groups. Much of this can be put down to the pressure from government to get money out to the groups as soon as possible. One NIVT officer who was part-time on the CFP programme (and on another fund) reported an instance of working 81 hours in one week in order to meet deadlines. When this was discussed with NIVT, this was described as an unusual occurrence, and it was explained that the organisation had numerous structures providing support for their staff.

Given the particular stresses of this programme, however, it is not clear that these were always sufficient. This was particularly the case in the first few months of the programme.

A frequent comment from groups involved in the evaluation process was that staff turnover at NIVT adversely affected relationships with groups. Both of the original members of staff involved in administering this fund have now left the organisation, and the Community Support Worker has been replaced twice since the appointment of the original officer. While in two of these three cases the decision to leave was based on other factors, the stress produced by working on the administration of the CFP was a significant motivation for the resignation of one worker.

Application process for core funding

A total of 41 core grants have been made, totalling £3,041,438. The average funding award was £74,181.41. As was previously mentioned, rough figures were developed as guidelines for the levels of grants to meet the needs of different types of groups. These were based on estimated costings for rent, staff salaries, and running costs, which were similar for similar types of groups. Other considerations were taken into account, including the stage of group development and the geographical area covered. However, as one NIVT staff member pointed out: 'Essentially, it doesn't take much more in terms of core costs to service a bigger catchment area'.

Groups covering a significantly larger area than others tended to receive significantly larger grants than those working in limited areas; they were considered at about £110,000 rather than £80,000 for smaller groups. However at least one group covering a large proportion of Northern Ireland felt that the funding programme had encouraged it to split into several small, geographically-limited groups, in order to receive a suitable level of funding in future. It is not hard to understand why it came to this conclusion: if it had split into five smaller groups, they would have been considered for five separate grants totalling around £400,000, as opposed to a single grant of £110,000.

NIVT did not have a formal application form for the CFP. A leaflet outlined the funding criteria and gave deadlines by which groups were asked to submit all relevant evidence. Whilst a few groups mentioned how complex the application form was, there was in fact no such form—we can only assume that they were confusing the CFP with other funding sources, or describing the overall process of formalising their organisation. There were mixed feelings about this process among the groups, but from our evidence the pattern appears to be that the longer-established groups found the process more straightforward than the newer groups. Our conclusion is that this part of the process was handled successfully by NIVT, and was not made unduly complicated.

Whereas the application process appears to have been straightforward for most groups, there does seem to have been a delay on certain occasions in relaying funding decisions back to the groups. According to the leaflet, groups would be notified within 3-4 months of the application. However, it appears that, especially in the early funding rounds, the applications of some groups were deferred without the groups being notified. There were also instances when the Community Projects Officer was arranging visits with groups and their management committees before the groups had been notified that their application form had been received.

NIVT appears to have taken a lenient position in applying the criteria related to groups' 'track records', and 'systems'. A number of the groups funded were relatively new, with poor financial systems and inexperienced management committees. Indeed, we have found an example where one of the more experienced groups also had poor financial procedures, and

was funded despite its shortcomings. NIVT clearly recognised the underdeveloped nature of many of the groups but, rather than refusing to fund them, provided support and training to help them to develop their organisation and administrative systems. This is discussed later in this chapter.

The Chair of the Advisory Committee reflected upon how different this funding programme was to others NIVT had administered. In particular, she noted that the groups applying for Core Funding were, in general, at a much earlier stage of their development compared to most other types of groups, and were often unfamiliar with community development principles, training and infrastructure. However, recognising the importance of work with victims, there was a strong will to support these groups. As a result, a number of groups received larger grants than they would normally have been considered for, given their early stage of development. In a number of cases groups were first awarded a seed grant to help them develop their organisation, with help from the Support Officer, and were then eligible to apply for a Core grant. The Chair of the Advisory Committee remarked that some of these groups initially expressed very strong indignation at only being awarded a Seed Grant, most likely because of their sense of the money as recognition of the suffering of their members.

Staff working in the Programme reported that the Project Assessment Checklist Form that had been adapted from Peace I funding for victims' work was of limited use for this fund, and that they had to take substantial additional notes. This once again reflects that this funding was addressing new needs and issues that had not been fully tackled under previous funding regimes, even Peace I funding. Under the circumstances, staff dealt with these issues with a great deal of care and responsibility. It should be recognised that they were pioneering new areas that no funding body had so fully undertaken before in Northern Ireland.

Application process for seed/development funding

A total of 28 Seed/Development Grants were awarded. The average size of such grants was around £2,696, and the total amount awarded £75,510.

The procedure that NIVT adopted to process applications to the seeding/development fund functioned well, in that it enabled funding to be allocated more quickly. One group that got an award of £1,500 report receiving it within four days of submitting their application. Not all of the applications were processed so quickly, but there was consensus that access to seed/development funding was reasonably simple. Indeed, the availability of small grants was widely appreciated. Some groups used the grants to help develop projects, while others used them for one-off events or training.

Communication and relationship between NIVT and groups

The NIVT adopted an informal and personal approach in its relationship to the funded groups, and this was commented on positively, with groups appreciating the time and effort afforded them by the officers. During our consultative seminars, many of the group representatives stated that they appreciated the efforts of staff to visit their offices, saying they found workers generous with their time. They felt that there was a real attempt by members of staff to hear their problems.

In relation to funding, the first point we would make is that we have a good working relationship with NIVT going back many years. In that time we have received a number of grants and have always found NIVT to be efficient and friendly (Submission F).

However, we feel that this approach at times contributed to high expectations among groups about the level of support they should receive from NIVT. While the CSW consistently encouraged groups to seek help from other agencies, there remained high demands on her time and attention. Indeed, particularly for a few of the newer groups, the informal, 'hands-on' approach created an expectation which amounted to dependency in some senses. For example, a representative at one of the focus groups advocated that NIVT should have a dedicated 'form-filler' among their staff to service the groups and make funding applications for them. Establishing clear boundaries in supporting groups at such early stages in their development would be expected to be problematic at times. One example of this problem was when one group expected the officer to arbitrate in an internal conflict, and tried to use the Community Support Worker as a trouble-shooter. It could be argued that the NIVT staff, through their willingness to help struggling groups, may have, at times also helped to create and perpetuate this misconception around their role.

In future programmes, it would be advisable for staff to establish clearer boundaries so as to maximise their efforts at overall support. One suggestion would be for the IFB to deliver less support directly to the groups, and to be more firm in directing the groups to other agencies which could provide support and administrative services.

The listening relationship with groups presented a significant challenge to NIVT staff. One staff member spoke of the pressure on her to listen to very personal and traumatic stories, adding that although it was a privilege to hear them, it was also difficult. For the same individual, another source of stress was that each group had its own agenda, so that becoming a listener left one open to being influenced, especially when officers were hearing stories about other groups.

This draws attention to the very singular challenges for those working with individuals and groups who have been tragically affected by political violence. The pain and fear that lead quite naturally to mistrust, suspicion and paranoia in times of conflict, do not go away quickly. This is particularly the case where groups and individuals perceive themselves and their loved ones to be still under threat. In the storytelling of victims and survivors, there is often a desire to control the listening of those to whom they entrust their story. Having the story heard in a particular way becomes a pre-condition of the telling, and this can be experienced as a tremendous pressure on the listener, especially for those trying to conduct a professional relationship. While the NIVT staff assigned to the CFP received 'off-line' supervision, it is not clear that this was always sufficient to help them deal with such challenges.

A number of groups reported difficulties in communication with NIVT, for example, that it was difficult to get hold of members of staff, or that telephone messages were not relayed. There was also some criticism of the reception area at NIVT for being 'cold and unfriendly'. For its part, NIVT reported that its staff occasionally met with hostile and aggressive attitudes on the part of representatives of groups in this funding programme, which may have caused them to be somewhat wary in dealing with them. Since NIVT's move in December to a new building, it would appear that considerable thought has been given to the design of the reception area, which we would expect groups to find a significant improvement. Furthermore, a new telephone answering system has been set up which allows callers to leave messages for specific staff members if they are not available. It would be hoped that this new system would help to deal with the difficulties some groups reported in ensuring staff received their messages.

Some groups reported that computer records were apparently not always kept up-to-date, and alleged that files and information that groups submitted had been lost. A small number of groups said that they were adversely affected by NIVT losing some of their records, resulting

in the delay of grant aid. Some groups reported that there was no system of tracking documents received, although NIVT has reported that they do have such a system.

Although there was flexibility to deviate slightly from their original objectives and action plans, not all of the groups appeared to be aware of this, despite the fact that it was clearly stated in their contract, letter of offer and at the induction meeting (see Chapter 5 for more discussion). Regarding the ease by which groups were able to negotiate such changes, contrasting experiences were reported in case studies. One group found itself unable to do as it had planned, and was pleased by NIVT's willingness to allow them to make changes (Case Study 2). Another group tried to do the same, but had difficulty because of a staff change at NIVT, and ended up having to negotiate the change several times (Case Study 7), much to their chagrin.

NIVT training and support for groups

NIVT must be commended for its efforts in the training and support of groups. Indeed, if it was not for the work of the NIVT Community Support Workers, the development of this sector might have been significantly impeded. The support offered to individual groups in developing their organisational structures, along with the REAL programme, seminars and conferences, undoubtedly has proved of great benefit to the individual groups, and to the emerging sector.

An independent evaluation of the REAL Programme was carried out and it was found that the programme had 'largely carried out its objectives and was viewed positively by those who participated. Individuals got positive benefits on both a practical level, increased awareness and created partnerships' (Joe Blake Consultants, 2001, p. 25). Responses gathered from groups as part of this evaluation largely support this finding, although, as one would expect, many found some parts more helpful than others.

These conferences and the REAL Programme were frequently difficult for some participants. Meeting with individuals from other backgrounds was often extremely intimidating for some members, but on the whole was a positive experience for most. One participant commented that it was important to recognise the impact of these experiences on those who attended, in terms of broadening their understandings. Even so, it is unclear how much the learnings of individuals attending were transferable to the rest of their groups. Despite this, there is some evidence that the contact between groups facilitated by the conferences, seminars and the REAL Programme, has allowed the development of a degree of respect for diversity within the sector.

As mentioned earlier, despite their distribution to all funded groups, few participants in the evaluation claimed any knowledge of the Support Pack. Indeed, particularly in the Focus Groups, when participants were suggesting areas in which they would welcome information, they tended to list information that was included in the pack as essential, while denying having seen the pack. The reasons for this are unclear. One reason may be that one staff member or management committee member knows of its existence, but that information is not shared effectively within the groups. Another reason may be due to staff turnover, the new staff having no knowledge of the pack or the visit. We would recommend that the groups locate this pack, or request a new one, as it would potentially meet many of the information needs stated by groups in this evaluation.

While NIVT's induction meetings for the new groups were very well attended, a significant proportion of the groups had little or no experience in financial and staff management. Therefore NIVT staff had to offer a lot of additional community development support to groups in terms of completing the application process, in setting up financial and reporting

systems, and in training management committees. As we have already discussed, the fear and isolation of many groups made them reluctant to seek training or support from other agencies, such as the Ulster People's College or NICVA, and this help was frequently provided instead by the Community Support Worker. However, there was not enough staff capacity on this programme to deal with all such community development needs, and indeed there are serious questions as to whether this is the proper role of the funder.

Financial monitoring

As already noted, some of the newer groups, and at least one more established organisation we looked at in-depth, had difficulties setting up and managing an effective accounting system. Some of these difficulties seem to have resulted from a number of groups not understanding that they would be expected to account systematically for funds and expenditures:

... while policies, procedures and accountability have to be adhered to groups like ourselves can't help but feel that the likes of NIVT could adopt a more flexible and relaxed approach when administering funding (Submission J).

As for how NIVT managed the financial monitoring, the most common complaints were with regard to delays in the receipt of grant aid as a result of missing or queried invoices.

... the intermediary funding body should have enough staff to deal with the work involved in supporting these groups. It is very frustrating to have to chase payments etc. Again, most groups cannot afford to spend time on these things (Submission D).

Against these experiences, other groups liked NIVT's requirement of quarterly returns, feeling that this helped them to keep on top of their financial management, and was a less onerous task than the annual returns required under Peace I. From both the funder's and the groups' points of view, it guaranteed more contact, creating the potential for greater support and monitoring by the funder. NIVT's Finance Officer did report that there were some teething problems in establishing the financial monitoring systems, but that the groups and organisations are becoming more efficient at managing their funds.

Monitoring and evaluation of programme

The broad criteria made it difficult to evaluate all the work funded through the CFP in a standard way. The programme leaflet talked about the objectives of the funding as community healing and empowerment, and sustainable victims' work through the establishment of quality services and provision. There were problems with the criteria, especially since there is not, among the funded groups and organisations, a shared sense of what community healing is, and how best to go about it. For some, service provision is their primary activity, but for others justice, acknowledgement and compensation were and are the primary ways to heal communities. While all of these are valid, the programme criteria did not draw an adequate distinction between them, with the result that two key groupings emerged with distinct ideas about community healing, but with only one type of grant available. Evaluating all funded groups on the basis of one aim (for example, service delivery), would be unfair to groups which had never intended to do this, but which emphasised lobbying, justice issues, and/or commemoration instead.

At the time of writing this report, only eight of the annual monitoring forms have been returned, three of which are for seed grants, and five for core funding. The results of these forms are instructive, but far from conclusive. Some of those who have completed the core

funding monitoring form have had obvious difficulties with the questions, which tend to be framed as meta-questions. For example, one set of questions asked in turn about evidence of the impact of the programme on victims, on development of services and on complementing statutory provision: 'What evidence do you have regarding the growth in confidence, empowerment and healing for individual victims/survivors involved in your project'. Some groups left this kind of question blank, while others said the work had been positive without actually saying what positive means. Since it was not a condition of funding to submit more regular reports to the NIVT, it is likely that by the time groups have to fill in the annual monitoring form, they will have little material on which to reflect.

The number of groups funded, 55 in total, creates problems for a small staff team to monitor and evaluate. Added to this was the newness of many of the groups, with no experience in monitoring and evaluation, or commitment to them as beneficial for the long-term development of the groups and organisations.

The Advisory Committee and NIVT Board of Trustees

The Advisory Committee was an important group, drawn from a wide cross-section of the community and reflecting a fairly broad base of expertise and experience in addressing the needs of victims. The group were instrumental in assisting the staff to work through the early challenges of the fund, including the drafting of the programme leaflet that included the selection criteria for the project. This group proved to be a valuable resource to the overall establishment and implementation of the programme, bringing different levels of experience and knowledge to complement that of the programme staff. Programme staff expressed the feeling that the group was an important source of support, and instrumental at the beginning in helping to establish the key goals of the programme.

The Board of Trustees had overall responsibility for the operational policy, administration and delivery of the Grant Scheme. In deciding to administer this programme, the Board demonstrated their commitment to helping sustain and develop the needs of victims in Northern Ireland. This is despite the difficulties and challenges of such funding schemes, which are politically sensitive and relatively undeveloped in Northern Ireland. Along with staff and the Advisory Committee, their overall management of the programme was competent, managing to distribute all of the money in a very short timeframe without damaging or compromising the potential ongoing development of future work.

While CEC supports the use of advisory committees to inform the decisions of the Board of Trustees, there remain some questions over whether the latter took sufficient responsibility for the management of this programme. One staff member confirmed that decisions on grants were frequently made very quickly and without the level of discussion that would be expected for such large awards, particularly given the politically sensitive context. Two members of the Advisory Committee confirmed that they understood that their recommendations would be discussed thoroughly by the Board of Trustees before decisions were made. While we cannot directly assess in retrospect the level of deliberation, we would strongly encourage the Board of Trustees to be very active in considering the recommendations of the advisory groups in the future.

CHAPTER 5 - IMPLEMENTATION AND INNOVATION BY GROUPS

In this chapter we aim to look at some of the effects the money has had. We will look at these not only in terms of the goals of the funding, but also at the broader ramifications of introducing a Core Funding Programme. It is beyond the scope of this evaluation to make precise comments as to the effectiveness of all individual projects. Indeed, as we will discuss later, evaluation in this sector is very difficult, and good practice needs to be highlighted. We were, however, interested in the goals the groups set themselves and how they have attempted to evaluate these.

Findings

Managing the application process

Just as the Government was introducing this money without a specific strategy on how it would affect service provision in the long-term, many of the groups that applied for funding also lacked a clear strategic view on how they would use the funding. The Core Funding Programme was providing the financial backbone for a series of groups, in recognition of those that had suffered, but without a clear understanding of the likely effects of the money. In addition, many individual groups were attempting to adapt to needs that were even greater than they had imagined, and at the same time construct internal systems to deal with funding.

As we have discussed in previous sections, the criteria for the funding were set broadly. For example, the original programme leaflet suggested that the fund was ‘primarily for groups with a proven track record of working with victims ... which can show clear evidence of effective programme delivery...well documented policies, procedures and management structures, and well established financial procedures’. This suggested that, while the above criteria would play a part in the decisions on grants, because it was only ‘primarily’ for groups fitting these criteria, other groups would also be considered. Indeed, many of the groups that received Core Funding were relatively newly-formed or newly-formalised. A number struggled in the short term to build management structures to handle the funds.

As is demonstrated in the following table, prior to the 1994 ceasefires, approximately only 25% of the groups funded under the Core Funding Programme were in existence. Many of the longer-standing groups stood to have their position dramatically changed by the provision of core-funded posts. Although the funds were divided into Core and Seed funding, in reality, for quite a number of the younger groups, the Core funding in effect acted to ‘seed’ substantial developments in their organisation. Indeed, the very idea of Core Funding suggested that this provided a basis upon which groups could develop their organisations as well as projects.

Table 7 Estimated age of the funded groups

When group was founded	Number	%
Before 1994	14	25.45%
From 1994 to 1997	12	21.82%
Since 1998 onwards	18	32.73%
Unknown	11	20.00%
Total	55	100%

The interpretation of the money as recognition and compensation, combined with the under-developed nature of many groups, the broad criteria, and the speed with which NIVT had to set up the programme, meant that Core Funding was not targeted as specifically as it might have been, given different circumstances.

What did groups do with the money?

The range of victims'/survivors' groups have one thing in common—they all want to meet the needs of victims of the conflict. Ultimately, they all hope to provide victims with a better quality of life. A large number of groups state that they want to reduce the sense of isolation and fear that many victims feel. Many others describe the process as one of healing. The methods, processes and services to undertake this, however, are hugely varied and rely upon a wide range of political, sociological and psychological understandings of the conflict and its victims. There are well-versed public differences with regard to the political causes of the conflict that in turn lead to different definitions of 'the victim'.

Just as striking is the diversity of approaches to meeting the needs of victims/survivors. For a number of groups, the political issue of justice is of vital importance, whilst for others commemoration and recognition are central. On the other hand, many groups are more concerned with individual cases, looking at therapeutic approaches to healing and specific (sometimes material) needs of individuals. For them, service provision is of uppermost importance. There are also a wide variety of therapeutic approaches using different psychological models. Then again, there are differences between those that work at the level of befriending and advice-giving, compared to those utilising professional psychotherapeutic approaches. Some groups seek to raise awareness with victims as to the effect of trauma, while others look to raise awareness of the issue of victims with communities, statutory bodies and political representatives. And, of course, many groups are doing more than one of these things (see also section on 'Innovative Work' later in this chapter).

As well as varying widely in the activities they are undertaking, the groups also vary widely in terms of their structure. Some have been in existence for a reasonably long period of time and were already well organised before the Core Funding Programme. Often these groups have had to function with very little money, and have depended on building a strong base of volunteers to sustain their work. For these groups, the Core Funding Programme has presented them with a significant opportunity to develop the work and volunteer base. Other groups, while possibly also in existence for many years, worked in a less formal way, and depended on the work of one or two people working on a voluntary basis.

The peace process brought a new focus on those that had suffered throughout the conflict. As political parties dealt with issues such as prisoner releases, a higher profile was given to issues of justice and recognition, as well as to therapeutic approaches. The political environment, increased recognition, and Peace I funding were beginning to change dramatically the position of victims'/survivors' groups, and effectively to create a new 'sector' of groups working with victims of conflict-related violence.

The effects of core funding

The CFP represented a significant input of money to a range of groups working with victims/survivors. Since the money was aimed at the central running costs of groups, it was effectively offering groups some basic stability from which other projects could be developed. Other funding programmes rarely offer this, normally offering small grants towards training,

development or programme costs. It gave community, voluntary and self-help groups working with victims a form of funding that had not been readily available before.

As we have seen above, a number of the newer groups had to rapidly develop their management structures and financial systems. Some groups that were working on a purely voluntary basis changed the basis of their operations as they received funding to employ paid staff. A greater range of individuals involved with victims' groups received training, both to manage their group and to work with victims/survivors. While the support and training accessed by groups has clearly been of great benefit for many groups, some feel that the push for training at times might undervalue the very real skills already developed, particularly in the less 'professional' forms of work. This opinion was expressed by one group in particular, perhaps the oldest group working with victims in Northern Ireland, which felt that its befrienders were being pressurised to undergo training. This groups felt that this 'demand for certificates' was undermining the recognition of the skills already developed. The focus of the Peace II funding on training has clearly played a significant part in this dynamic.

Training was only one aspect of what many groups perceived as a pressure to professionalise. While they wanted to access money from the CFP, we would suspect that often groups gave little thought to what the impact of this funding would be on their organisation. Groups which had begun on a voluntary basis, without formal structures, administrative employees, or staff with credentials in 'trauma counselling', were suddenly being required to show evidence of all of the above. This in itself had the knock-on effect of increasing the demand for training and more specialised services. In this respect, an unintended element of dependency seems to have been introduced—there was now a 'sector' that needed resources if it were to be sustained.

Who was funded?

The existence of victims' groups as a 'sector' then raises the question of flexibility as to the types of groups that were funded. It is clear that NIVT interpreted the criteria relatively loosely. One of the criteria was that '[n]ormally only community, voluntary and self help groups...can apply'. While this clearly stated a predisposition towards these kinds of groups, it did not, however, exclude larger groups, a number of them connected to big charities that are providing service and/or training. Some of these groups providing services have expressed to us an apprehension about competing with groups working on issues of collective identity. It is worth quoting at length from a submission made by a service provider (Submission A):

My experience of working with victims' groups has been that although they have a collective identity, each member has individual needs that can only be addressed on an individual basis. I am referring in particular to emotional needs arising out of trauma...

Funders presumably fund in the hope that groups will look to the individual as well as collective needs. The reality is that funding to-date, has been interpreted as the measure of recognition and acknowledgement for groups' collective experience. The way to obtain this then has been to focus on the collective need, which has invariably meant (collective identity) issue(s), rather than the composite individual needs...

This can only be addressed by a greater definition of purpose by both sides, funder and recipient. From the funder, there must be greater clarity as to what it wants to support in terms of victims' needs, both individual and group, as well as how it intends to measure the impact of funding. From the recipient there must be greater clarity as to what they define as individual and collective needs, how these will be specifically

addressed and how success or otherwise will be measured and future progress developed.

The distinctions made in this submission are important. As the work in this area develops, it has become increasingly obvious that competition and overlap have been just as common as complementarities, partnership and synergies. Issues of collective identity, justice, advocacy and commemoration have a different profile in this regard to service provision for individuals. For example, in order to prevent duplication and to ensure high quality service provision to victims of the conflict, it would be expected that service-providers should be working with or have a relationship with the statutory sector—the same is not true of commemorative projects. It is also more likely that service-providers will be working to much longer time-frames than projects, which may have a clear finishing point. The aims and objectives of these different forms of work are quite distinct.

The CFP did not differentiate between funding non-community based groups that provide services to victims, and funding more identity-based victims groups that work largely in a self-help and advocacy role. Both types of group ended up applying under the same funding programme, thus setting up a context of competition. As discussed in Chapter Three, this led to a situation where the self-help victims' groups felt that their work, in comparison to that of the more 'professionally-based' groups, was undervalued, while the larger non-community based service providers constantly felt under pressure to prove that they are victims or victim-led.

It will be very difficult to develop a strategic plan for the future without more clearly defining the different roles that groups are playing. The strategic profiles of different types of victim/survivor groups and projects, particularly those concentrating on issues of community identity and commemoration as opposed to those involved in service provision to individuals across the community divide, are significantly different. This suggests that their funding might be considered separately in the future.

Management committees

The nature of this funding had major consequences for the structure of many of the groups, since the funding criteria required that groups have management committees. It seems reasonably clear that groups that were closely connected to other existing community groups, or were more long standing, were better able to adapt to and meet some of the criteria laid down by NIVT. For others, it appears that a specific model (that is, of having to set up a management committee) was imposed from the outside. Unsurprisingly, some groups developed difficulties, particularly in the relationships between staff and their management committees.

Change and development of groups

Based on focus groups, case studies, and interviews, we can see that many groups have learned a great deal, developed their work so as to identify and meet needs more appropriately, and developed as groups in their structures and protocols. Indeed, the entire sector appears to have been on a rapid learning curve. For example, one person working with a group providing therapeutic service described to us how their original plans for operating in the community were clearly not working, so they changed their mode of operation in order to better achieve their goals (Submission A). For many other groups, changes have been around the building of partnerships with other groups, with the statutory sector, and with key client institutions. For some groups, the development stage has been very problematic.

There is further evidence that groups have significantly developed over the last two years in terms both of their management and their services. Overwhelmingly, groups felt that the money had been useful in enabling a diverse range of activities to develop that impacted positively upon victims. Importantly, groups felt that it had allowed them to employ staff and run programmes that they would not otherwise have been able to do. It appears that groups recognise the Core Funding Programme as significant in developing capacity within the sector. As funding for core costs is not readily available elsewhere, there was strong support for this kind of funding to be continued.

Flexibility of Core Funding Programme

At the consultative seminars and the focus groups, people stressed to us that forms of funding should be flexible and adaptable to allow for changes in the sector. So it is reasonable to ask how flexible has the scheme programme been and whether or not it has allowed for groups to adapt and develop.

There has been a mixed reaction to the criteria used in the Core Funding Programme and the flexibility with which it was managed. There was some criticism expressed by groups that the term 'victim' had been defined too narrowly, excluding those who had been psychologically affected by the conflict. This opinion is in stark contrast to the fact that so much of the funding was given to support counselling and other therapies. A few groups complained that NIVT had not been flexible enough in how the money should be spent. They felt that, to meet the needs of the people they were working with, they needed to adapt and develop their work. However, as explained in Chapter 4, this contrasts with the experience of many groups who found NIVT very willing to reconsider funding categories, if negotiated in advance. It had been clearly stated at the induction meeting, in the contract and letter of offer that changes of less than 10% could be negotiated with staff, while changes over this amount would be considered by the Advisory Committee. It seems that some of those making complaints over the inflexibility of the funding either had not attempted to negotiate this change before spending the money, or were confusing this funding programme with another (a problem frequently experienced during this evaluation).

While the Core Funding Programme provides funding for staff posts, much of staff time is spent in managing the increased financial and administrative burden accompanying the receipt of the funds. Whilst such a burden should be kept to a minimum, it is an inevitable aspect of receiving what is, by any measure, large amounts of funding for voluntary/community groups. In some senses, the Core Funding Programme is recognition of this. The objective of Core Funding is to increase the capacity of the sector to deliver projects and services by funding some areas that other programmes do not—that is, core costs such as salaries, rent, and bills. Programme costs are traditionally much easier to access, and funding for them is available from a number of different sources.

We have found that NIVT was sufficiently flexible in allowing groups to negotiate changes between financial categories within their grant, and that the Core Funding Programme fulfils an important role in the sector that other funding sources are less likely to cover. However, we do think that it would be useful to return to the definition of *core* funding, to be more explicit about the type of work that is judged as core work as opposed to programme work. We believe that the relatively broad definition used to this point has contributed to the confusion of many over the role of the fund.

Innovative work

One of the tasks of this evaluation has been to 'highlight and evaluate any innovative approaches adopted by the projects funded'. Echoing the point made in the previous section, it must be borne in mind that the funding was not for the running of programmes *per se*, but to cover core costs. However, as the purpose of this was to support the work of groups with victims, it is reasonable to reflect upon how this work has been developed. In order to do so, the evaluation gathered information on all funded groups from NIVT files, carried out nine case studies on a range of groups, and conducted several interviews as well as a focus group on this topic.

From all of this, CEC has been able to map the types of work being conducted by groups working with victims of the conflict. Clearly, the range of *services* that can be offered is very broad, and would include training, advice and welfare work, as well as a large range of therapies. While some organisations, particularly larger non-governmental organisations, focus on one particular type of service provision, for example training in counselling, most organisations, particularly locally-based self-help groups, offer a range of services to meet the needs of their members. Combining different forms of work appears to be useful. A number of groups offered 'safe' activities, such as craft classes, meditation, social outings, as a step towards overcoming isolation and building confidence. This allowed individuals to meet other victims and gradually become more open to addressing deeper issues.

A common form of 'service' work of many groups was in advice and welfare, particularly helping their members to receive the benefits that they are entitled to. For a large number of victims, particularly those who were members of the security forces, giving information to social services staff went against the grain—for these people, security was dependant on maintaining secrecy about their occupation and personal information. A number of groups have played a significant role in helping them to proceed with claims. A large number of other victims have also not received the benefits they were entitled to, for a range of other reasons. Welfare support has also proved of great use for them. Helping victims put in an application to the Memorial Fund has also been a focus of attention for many groups.

A number of groups felt that the provision of complementary therapies such as aromatherapy, reflexology, and reiki, has been particularly helpful to their members. As well as these forms of complementary therapies, most groups also provide listening-ear services, befriending, and/or counselling, while others provide deeper therapies. Many victims have been helped by social events, group sessions, befriending, and complementary therapies. Now some groups are recognising that some need more in-depth therapy, as they seem 'stuck', unable to move after perhaps several years of help.

Lobbying was also a frequent activity of groups, often around recognition and justice issues. Lobbying was also understood by many groups as an acceptable way of accessing money for their group, by putting pressure on NIVT through interventions by political representatives. Although it is fairly clear that this had no impact on the funding decisions in the CFP, lobbying may have been more effective in raising money from elsewhere, one group evidently feeling that this enabled them to access money from the Irish Government.

Several groups felt that research was of great importance for their members, in order to enable them to better understand the context in which they had become victims, and to support their deep sense of injustice and suffering. For these groups, research projects are a way of developing insight and empowering individuals and communities that have been so disempowered through the suffering inflicted upon them. While several groups would like to do research as part of their range of work, in general it is smaller, geographically based

groups focussing solely on a specific research project that are pioneering this work. These groups tended to apply only for seed or development grants.

When speaking of their work, groups emphasised the need to be flexible in attempting to meet the needs of their members. It could be argued that, while victims are often subject to crises, depending on the political context, anniversaries or other events, groups must avoid being crisis-driven, and develop a longer term vision. However, there is a need to be able to support members in their periods of crisis, whether by providing a listening service, visiting or by other means. Furthermore, groups need to demonstrate that they can carry out ongoing evaluation, and use it to change and develop their work. The evident concern of the groups, on the whole, to meet the needs of their members as effectively as possible has ensured that they are eager to reflect upon and make appropriate adjustments to their work.

The Core Funding Programme has supported groups in developing their work with victims, but whether this work can be described as innovative is questionable. Certainly, the majority of groups have developed a deeper understanding of the needs of their members and in such a new area of work this is vital. Many have developed their work accordingly. Sharing of information between groups on the ways they are attempting to meet the needs of their members, for example, has become more widespread. Connections established through NIVT support and training work has certainly provided valuable opportunities for sharing of information and learning.

The question remains as to whether the work developed can be described as 'innovative'. A number of projects were innovative, new and inventive. One group has developed a 'remembering quilt' project, which has involved a large number of people, and appears to have been very effective in enabling individuals who have lost loved ones to commemorate them in producing a square. This has also allowed individuals who might not otherwise have been reached by victims' groups to meet others who have also lost family members, and to start to speak more freely about their feelings. A subject of one of the case studies has pioneered a number of innovative therapeutic models that have not previously been experienced in Northern Ireland. The research projects mentioned above could also be considered innovative, drawing as they do on models of research developed in other conflict zones. Furthermore, a number of the larger organisations have been supported through the CFP to develop innovative training programmes, often in areas where previously training opportunities have been few.

However, it is important to question whether it is correct to assess all work in this sector solely by innovation. While it is not possible to generalise about the quality of the work, our research indicated that the majority of the work conducted has provided some measure of support to victims. Often the work that is most appreciated is that which is most straightforward and non-'professional'. Straightforward support work, befriending, a listening ear and genuine concern and empathy, the things that most self-help victims' groups do best, are what is probably most needed by the majority of victims. It is often these basic things that have proved the lifeline to so many victims who spoke movingly to our researchers about the support they had received.

That said, over the period of funding, with the support of NIVT and other training programmes, many groups focused on developing good practices, establishing the principles and protocols behind their work. While this may not be seen necessarily as innovative, this is surely a very welcome development in the work with victims of the conflict.

Partnerships and complementarity

It was a key objective of the Core Funding Programme that it should 'support the development of a range of services and provision that are complementary to current statutory provision', and 'a proposal will not be supported where there is evidence of overlap'. What makes this objective so difficult to evaluate is the wide variety of groups. By their very nature, some of the groups have very little relationship with the statutory sector. Those projects involved either in advocacy or in focusing on forms of recognition and remembering are not intersecting at all with any sort of statutory service provision. The nature of the conflict means that some victims are unwilling to approach statutory agencies. Whilst many people involved with groups in this sector argue that their very existence is in part due to a failure of provision on the part of the statutory sector, it is not part of CEC's terms of reference to evaluate statutory provision.

However, for those groups dealing with the welfare of individuals, relationships with public agencies are important. It is reasonable to suggest that the long-term sustainability of groups in this sector will be related to their ability to work in such partnerships. If groups can offer services in a form that is distinctly different from those that could be offered by statutory agencies, then it is desirable that the sector develop in a complementary rather than a competitive way.

There is extensive evidence from our research of the difficulties in developing partnerships between the voluntary and statutory sector. There are many reasons for this, including:

- The failure of the statutory services to address victims' needs in the past;
- An inability on the part of statutory bodies to be sufficiently flexible;
- A lack of funding for both sectors to meet the needs of victims;
- Differing perceptions of how to address the needs of victims;
- Differing organisational cultures in the two sectors, and
- Legal obligations on the statutory sector which limit its willingness to take risks in developing partnerships with the voluntary/community sector.

Community groups frequently complain that statutory agencies are too bureaucratic and work too slowly. One submission to our evaluation made the following points:

There needs to be real and inclusive collaboration (not consultation). Existing lines of communication don't work in either statutory-to-statutory or statutory-to-community relationships. We recognise that there are cultural differences here but there is need to operate through less hierarchical structures. The statutory sector needs to recognise the importance of the community sector and their experiences in relation to victims'/survivors' needs. Partnership means that the statutory sector NEEDS the community as part of their delivery, unless they intend to continue to duplicate some of the services provided within communities for years rather than supporting them (Submission I).

It is equally true, however, that the statutory sector has a range of legal obligations which would require it to scrutinise closely any service provider it might work with. As groups work more closely with the statutory sector, they will inevitably find levels of bureaucracy rising.

A number of groups have developed successful and innovative partnerships with statutory agencies. One group is working out of a local health centre, although they have reservations about this situation (Submission A). Another group involved in training counsellors worked together with the Department of Health and Social Services to produce an assessment of its programmes and acted upon the recommendations (Case Study 3). Yet another counselling

service receives about 70% of referrals from the statutory sector (Focus Group 5). Of course, successful partnership can bring its own problems. If a group gets a lot of referrals, it can start to resent that it seems to be taking the strain from the public services. A number of groups suggested that the voluntary sector should be subsidised by the statutory sector for these services.

If provision of services for victims is to be improved, then community-based service and training providers must work in cooperation with the statutory services. Equally, the statutory sector needs to recognise the value of the work of community/voluntary sector groups, and to be willing to share control of partnerships developed.

Networks

As well as the relationship between victims'/survivors' groups, we also need to consider the relationship between groups, so that they can work in partnership, learn from each other and prevent duplication of services. The Core Funding Programme specifically aimed to avoid overlap. There is a tension between the development of a sector composed of independent, diverse groups and the efficient distribution of limited resources in a manner that encourages cooperation (Focus Group 1). How far should or could the work of different groups within specific geographical areas be co-ordinated? One option is to utilise the Trauma Advisory Panels, but these are viewed with suspicion by a number of groups who have felt excluded. Some groups expressed reservations about such coalitions. Confirming our assessment in the previous chapter, a number of people stated that NIVT themselves had provided several useful networking opportunities (Focus Group 1).

For some groups such as those involved in specific commemoration projects, there is only limited need to be in a network of victims groups. For groups involved in advocacy and justice issues, the networks are often based upon political considerations. Strong networks are particularly important for the many groups looking to provide a range of services, in order to share information and potentially resources. It should also be noted that a number of groups work closely with other agencies that do not work specifically with victims of the conflict. This form of networking and co-operation should also be encouraged.

Some of the more long-standing service providers or those attached to bigger charities have been able to build up partnerships with other groups. The provision of training or very specific skills is obviously an area where rationalisation is desirable (Submission A and Case Study 3). One of the submissions into our evaluation called for training provision that is 'free from duplication where possible'.

Sustainability, mainstreaming and exit strategies

Not surprisingly, there was a pessimistic response to the idea that funding would run out in a few years' time (Focus Group 5). All of the groups we have spoken to are only too well aware of the limitations around funding and the need to explore the long-term sustainability of their projects, or the exit strategy as the project comes to an end. A number of group members have argued that funding needs to be mapped out for a much longer time period, perhaps up to fifteen years. Others have argued that the government should recognise that they are saving the statutory sector money. A member of one group warned against simply seeing provision of training as being the avenue for future funding (Focus Group 5).

There are undoubtedly long-term requirements for dealing with victims, more so than in other kinds of community development work. This is particularly true given that political and violent

conflict is far from being merely a thing of the past. It is unrealistic to expect all of these groups to be self-supporting.

In considering sustainability, it is important to differentiate between different types of groups. Projects focusing on commemoration and advocacy may reasonably be expected to run over a limited period of time and either have a strategy of development or one of exit. For groups providing services, the situation is more complex. If the situation is to be seriously addressed, it is not practical to ask groups working to meet the long-term needs of victims to function like economic enterprises. Furthermore, there are no 'quick-fix' solutions to be had in this field, changes and improvements necessarily being modest and support-intensive. Work with the victims of the conflict demands an appreciation of the fact that needs are long-term and this must be reflected in the financial support provided for this work.

It is also important to note that sustainability must also be thought of in ways that focus on more than financial resources; the sustainability of human resources, that is, staff and volunteers, must also be given weighty consideration.

'Hidden victims'

Groups commented on the fact that the CFP did not benefit those who were not part of a group.

Needs exist at all levels, but extend outward from the individual level. This is so obvious when one considers the majority of victims do not belong to (victims') groups. (Submission A).

They also expressed concerns about victims they had not been able to reach—many expressing the view that the need was greater than they had first anticipated. This is perhaps one of the biggest quandaries. Which strategies maximise the likelihood that people who need help do in fact get help?

The term 'hidden victims' is used to mean individual victims needing support who have not yet accessed support from the voluntary/community or statutory sectors. Some members of the groups have argued that, with more resources they could reach more people. It is clear from some of the beneficiaries in the focus groups that many of them had been slow to turn to the groups, but that a moment had come when they felt ready to look for support. Several commented that if the group had not been able to help them, they do not know what they would have done. Indeed, there are numerous stories of individuals who had become victims of the conflict many years ago (often twenty or thirty years ago), but only felt willing or able to come forward for help very recently. Recognising the small proportion of victims already reached by the victims' groups, one might conclude that there will be an increased demand on the work of the groups in the future. Indeed, a number of groups are beginning to express anxiety at the increasing numbers approaching their group, and are concerned that they will have to start to turn people away.

It is also possible that a number of victims have not approached groups for help because they are not aware of the existence of the groups, or because they do not feel comfortable becoming involved in the group in their area. Given that so many of the groups working with victims are identity-based (often of a particular political opinion, although they might not be deliberately exclusive), there is no doubt that many individuals do not feel able to approach them for help. For these victims, the larger, inclusive groups that are not based in a particular community are the most likely source of support.

Evaluation and self-reflection

At the start of the evaluation process, great emphasis was placed on discussing with funded groups what methods they used for judging the effectiveness of their work. At the first Consultative Seminar and the Evaluation Workshop, a considerable amount of time was spent in small group sessions reflecting on these issues. There was also a focus on evaluation and self-reflection in the nine case studies conducted.

A wide range of methods is being used by groups to assess their work. What was generally recognised as being most important, however, was the feedback from the beneficiaries, or members of the group. Much of this feedback is informal, anecdotal evidence: conversations, comments and notes. Staff described clearly seeing changes in beneficiaries as they work with them, and repeated comments from victims who felt that they had been helped significantly. Often, groups request more formal feedback from beneficiaries, particularly at the end of a project or training programme, with feedback sessions and questionnaires often being used.

Clearly, the success of projects must be determined by comparing outcomes with goals. General goals of the groups were identified as helping improve the quality of victims' lives, reducing isolation and improving self-confidence. These indicators are certainly difficult to measure except by anecdotal evidence. However, a number of organisations suggested that one way these improvements might manifest themselves is when people who were previously beneficiaries of a group become keen to 'give something back' and to volunteer for the organisation.

Measuring more specific, tangible goals is often easier—for example, where the overall goal of a group has been to produce a book recording the deaths of people from a particular community, then the production of a book could be seen as a measure of success. However, many groups found identifying qualitative indicators difficult. Certainly, they were able to record outputs such as hours spent on a project, a book or report, numbers completing training courses, or counselling sessions, but these figures give little indication of the effectiveness and outcomes of the work.

That said, changes in these figures, for example in numbers attending courses, might give some indication of the success of the work. On the other hand, where people become less involved in groups, it would be important, where possible, to determine the reason for this. If they felt that they had been substantially helped and no longer needed assistance, then their absence might be interpreted as a positive indicator. If they left because they did not feel that the group was helpful to them, then this might be a negative indicator. Indeed, there are many other reasons for non-attendance, many of which may have nothing to do with the work of a group. Therefore, figures alone cannot truly reflect whether the work conducted by groups is having a positive effect, unless they can be backed up with qualitative evidence.

While much feedback is unsolicited, the groups reported ways that they are attempting to formalise their evaluation systems and to document their own progress, drawing upon this informal feedback. Methods included staff documenting their work weekly or monthly, written accounts of group meetings, questionnaires and evaluation forms, figures being kept on work conducted, and the recording of informal comments. These records are then reflected on in Management Committee meetings, regular staff meetings, newsletters to group members, and AGMs. Some larger groups have also had professional evaluations of the organisation or one of the projects.

In general, this evaluation found that the majority of groups are very concerned about assessing the effectiveness of their work, although many find it difficult to determine ways of

measuring their success. Also, due to demands on workers, there is a recognition that they often find themselves too busy, and formal evaluation can end up being neglected. NIVT staff offered help to groups on evaluation, for example through the 'Planning to Succeed' seminars, which took place in Derry and Belfast in November 2001. It will be important to continue to support groups in the monitoring and evaluation of their work as well as developing a new method for evaluating this type of work. In addition, a future funding programme might be in a position to support research in this area of work, and help to develop an active research community focusing on evaluation and monitoring work with victims.

CHAPTER 6 - OVERALL EFFECT AND IMPACT OF CORE FUNDING

Evaluating the overall impact

In assessing the overall impact of the Core Funding programme, it is important to begin with some general observations about the context in which Core Funding has taken place. We recognise that the Core Funding Programme, although central to the larger funding picture and history of dealing with victims in Northern Ireland, is only one aspect of the broader funding process, but throughout the process of this evaluation it was often difficult for the evaluators (and those being evaluated) to distinguish the impact of the Core Funding Scheme from the larger picture. More importantly, the larger funding and political environment shaped groups' views of the Core Funding Programme, even when certain issues were not directly related to the way the Fund was managed or to the way funds were distributed.

Several perceptions of the context are worth mentioning as they came up time and time again in the Evaluation and deeply influenced some of the opinions expressed about the Core Funding Programme and how the groups carried out their work.

Contextual issues

Firstly, there is much confusion about what victims' work is specifically. Most groups are clear that a victim's needs are diverse, extensive and differ from person to person, but exactly what those needs are, and exactly what the funding is for, is often confused and is subject to multiple interpretations.

There is a confusion between: service delivery and 'parallel' providers, offering services that the statutory sector should or does provide; community interventions and commemoration projects; money for self-help programmes; money as a way of acknowledging the suffering and money as a kind of reparation, as well as whether the money can be used for lobbying and political purposes (other than party-political) or not.

The broad remit of the Core Funding Programme did not help to clarify the different types of work; if anything, it legitimised an incredibly diverse range of activities under the 'victim' banner. This is in itself not a problem, but the meaning of 'victim' work remains undefined, and at times this leads to tensions.

Secondly, it is clear there has been a substantial injection of funds for victim- and survivor-related work over the last few years. Much of the funding allocation has come within a rather short space of time. There have been large allocations to specific groups and projects, some of which were very new. The result has been a rapid expansion of victim-related work over the last few years.

Although it is difficult to calculate the exact dates when most groups began, especially those that developed organically, we conservatively estimate that a minimum of about thirty-three percent of the 55 groups funded under the Core Funding Programme were not in existence prior to the Bloomfield Report in 1998. In fact, at least three of the groups were not even in existence prior to the announcement of the Core Funding Programme in September 1999. As discussed in the previous chapter, we estimate that only about twenty-five percent of groups were in existence prior to the 1994 ceasefires, and some of these were not necessarily working with victims directly prior to the ceasefires anyway.

Thirdly, the direct impact of past violence has only begun to be fully quantified in the last few years. We feel it is fair to say that the groups, as well as NIVT (not to mention the society at large), have only been coming to terms with work in this area very recently.

This is clearly evident in the statutory sector. A 'policy silence' in the areas of health, social services, education and other provision characterised the government approach to the Troubles in the past (Hamilton, Thomson & Smyth, 2002). This has left a legacy of distrust within many community groups working with victims, who lack faith in the statutory services ever meeting their needs, given past experience.

This lack of trust for some groups often spills over to all those working with victim-related issues. Some of the groups' experiences of being isolated and ignored, and particularly of being used by politicians for their own ends as bargaining chips, has left many individuals in groups cynical and doubtful about the motives of those working with or around the area. It has been concluded elsewhere that 'needs ... other than those of victims are being served, and that victims themselves are being abused' (Hamilton, Thomson & Smyth, 2002, p. 9). This can have, and has had, repercussions for funders and the various government bodies trying to manage the work in this area in a holistic way, as many of the groups fear hidden agendas and almost expect to be let down by the funders and government agencies.

Hamilton, Thomson & Smyth (2002) have also argued that this may be part of the psychology of victimhood:

... many victims experience strong feelings of helplessness and the accompanying desire to be supported. However, the heightened expectation of 'help' or of having one's problems solved by someone else can lead victims to feel very let down when their problems do not disappear. This can lead to powerful feelings of rage and blame, directed against the person in the helper's role (p.10).

Interestingly, our data suggests that, within this Core Funding Programme, anger was directed not only against NIVT and the VLU. Many of the staff in groups have experienced feelings of anger from the people with whom they work, and in some cases between staff and management committees. There were also indications of significant tensions between some groups, which generally revolved around the 'political' content of the work. Some groups split on the grounds that some members did not want to undertake work that had a political agenda.

Competition for funding between groups was also evident. Some groups seemed to spend a great deal of time comparing themselves with other groups, not only in terms of funding, but whether their programme offered more than others. This view extended into comparisons (and competitive anxieties) about the statutory sector. It indicates a high level of insecurity in some groups, much of it related to the short-term nature of funding and the lack of clarity about what work is 'legitimate' in the eyes of funders.

Several of the groups remain suspicious of why monies were granted in the first place and the exact rationale behind it. Deloitte & Touche (2001) found that groups believed they were being used as part of a wider political agenda. We also found that there were perceptions that funds were allocated on political grounds, with certain groups feeling that larger allocations were not made to them because of their political background—an accusation heard from both main political traditions in Northern Ireland.

There is clear anxiety by some that the funds allocated to victims as a whole (not always the Core Funding Programme specifically) were an attempt to offset the release of prisoners,

rather than to fully appreciate the work that they do. At the other extreme, there are groups who see the money as some form of compensation and recognition of their suffering.

Some groups argue that the expectations following Bloomfield have still not been met (Deloitte & Touche, 2001). Other groups feel that the Bloomfield Report's overemphasis on victims of paramilitary violence has relegated victims of State violence in terms of priority. The anger at the Bloomfield report was still present during the course of this evaluation, and has left a legacy of distrust for some groups.

Finally, and perhaps the most controversial issue, is the definition of victim-hood. The debate about who should rightly be called a 'victim' and who should not continues and still influences the work of all groups to some degree. This has abated in some senses with the broad definition adopted by the Consultation on a Victims' Strategy developed by the Victims' Unit of the OFMDFM. It defines victims as:

The surviving physically and psychologically injured of violent conflict related incidents and those close relatives or partners who care for them, along with those close relatives or partners who mourn their dead.

However, there has been much acrimonious debate about who should legitimately lay claim to the label of 'victim'—an issue that remains unresolved.

Perhaps, in the long run, the issue will only be resolved through building sufficient trust between groups, ensuring adequate recognition of suffering matched by genuine attempts to address victims' diverse needs, and through stabilisation of funding in this area. Such conditions are the foundation for a greater sense of tolerance for enduring divergent opinions of the definition.

Core funding – a social intervention

Some of the perceptions and issues raised above were symptomatic of the broader context, rather than a direct result of the Core Funding Programme. However, the Core Funding Programme, and particularly the speed at which it was implemented, also shaped this process significantly.

Equally, the way that the Funding Programme was administered was also influenced by this context. This is most noticeable in terms of the speed at which funding was deployed into the field and the attempt to fund as many groups as possible (92% of all applications were funded), rather than taking the hard decisions of excluding certain groups. This may well have been driven, at least to some degree, by a fear of accusations of inequality and failure to acknowledge the suffering of certain groups. This had both its positive and negative impacts.

A central finding of the Evaluation is that the Core Funding Programme has been instrumental in helping establish and sustain a wide cross-section of work in the area of victims. The issue with which the programme was concerned (i.e. victims of the conflict) and the context in which it occurred were also intrinsically and inescapably political. As such, we would like to suggest that the funding of such a large number of groups was not only instrumental in developing this type of work, but also a 'social intervention' in its own right.

A sector is born

Although the decision to fund as many groups as possible allowed for a rather unstructured development of work in this sector, equally the range of work and activities that have been supported is diverse, creative, helpful to victims in many cases, and acts as a foundation for future development. We share the opinion of Deloitte & Touche (2001) that the decision by the Northern Ireland Office to filter funding to grass-roots organisations, whilst clearly creating difficulties in respect of defining service provision generally, facilitated the victims' sector in providing a range of services. This has been a positive development, and has moved the needs of victims from relative obscurity to the mainstream.

Funded groups, despite criticisms at times of the process of delivery and the nature of the funding, clearly recognised the contribution of the funding to their work and its sustainability. In this sense, our findings are, once again, similar to the Deloitte & Touche (2001) finding that groups felt that the funding was the single most positive aspect of Government support in recent years.

The victims' industry?

A tension exists about whether the sustainability of groups working in this area has developed to the degree that it will 'inevitably' have to be funded, or whether sustainability is possible. It does seem that some 'inevitability' has developed and is necessary to keep the process from collapsing and all the positive work that has been done from being completely undone. The core question is whether, within the framework already put in place by the rapid expansion of work in this area, there is sufficient space to develop a more strategic approach for the future. Some funded groups are very critical of the growth of a new 'industry' around the issue of victims, but at the same time they are anxious that funding be extended and staff jobs be ensured.

A genuine understanding of what sustainability is (a difficult and challenging task) has not been inculcated by the groups or funders. Much strategic thinking about the long-term nature of this remains to be done. Anxieties about the equity of the funding process and fears that funders will simply let the groups down (and thus leave groups unable to meet victims' real needs) serve to exacerbate this situation.

The fact that NIVT's programme funded 92% of the applications received was particularly helpful in developing the work in this area – but now leaves serious questions about whether funding so many groups in the future will be possible or desirable. If prioritisation or targeting of funding is possible, how should it be done, and how would it be received?

It would be almost unthinkable to many groups that, in order to sustain the sector, there might need to be some rationalisation and a greater merging of groups and their interests. While many groups favour strategic or targeted funding, most may do so in the belief that they will gain additional funding, not in the expectation of being among the groups with less or no funding. Equally, it seems that given the already tense environment, funders and VLU may well be reluctant to make the 'hard decisions' when it comes to trying to sustain the sector, where insufficient funds will invariably mean that not all groups are supported to the degree they have been in the past. This aspect of understanding funding constraints and the implications of strategic funding needs to feature prominently in consultations to develop criteria and guidelines for the future.

Is victims' work unique?

The idea that victims' work is different from other areas of community development was mentioned on several occasions by those interviewed. Deloitte & Touche (2001) felt this had an impact on the nature of victims' groups, and as such distinguished them from the ordinary trajectory of community development work, that is, 'timeframes for measuring the value of work with victims are distinctly long-term and they cannot be easily associated with quantification. There was a need to develop systems that would provide both funders and groups with information on the effectiveness of service delivery to victims'. (p.9) In many senses, CEC found this to be true. It is clear that the needs of victims are long-term in their nature, and both because of the timeframe and because of the psychosocial nature of the need, it is almost impossible to quantify or assess the direct impact on them of a particular programme. New methods of evaluation are needed for this type of work.

It is important to acknowledge the uniqueness of funding in this area, particularly with respect to the long-term needs of victims. It is in the long-term nature of the investment required, as well as the relative newness of many groups, that this programme is unique. It is important to provide extended support to groups, particularly those who are still in an early development stage. At the same time, there should be no dilution of rigorous standards of monitoring and assessing both services and organisational accountability. This brings into relief the speed with which the Core Funding Programme was established and evaluated, suggesting that investments in this sector need to be more long term, measured and more strategically implemented.

Differentiating types of funded work

Work with victims raises the issue of what work actually needs to be funded. It is often easier to conceive of funding 'counselling', for example, because, if a standard method is being used and the number of sessions quantified, the services can be assessed. It is more difficult to evaluate less tangible forms of work like basic support, befriending, providing a listening ear, or assisting with setting up commemoration and remembering processes.

Many of the groups' work and needs went beyond mere service delivery. They, and the people they worked with, also had unmet needs around justice, truth, compensation and acknowledgement. For government, this is a difficult area, not just because these are complex matters to deal with, but also because government played a role in the conflict which has caused the trauma.

Work that is not direct service-delivery is more difficult to assess. Some work with victims entails lobbying, which can be, or be perceived to be political. Although this may not be easy to deal with, the frequency with which the groups mentioned issues such as truth and justice suggests that such issues need attention. Groups, and more importantly victims and survivors, need to be provided with the space to work through such issues, though this is likely to be uncomfortable and challenging for other individuals and for society at large.

There is also a tendency—as is evident in the focus for the European Union Peace II Fund—to want to wish away the long-term impact of extreme political violence too quickly. Although it may in theory sound advisable to move groups, and their beneficiaries, onto re-training and re-skilling programmes as soon as possible, these will not be effective if they short-circuit the long and complex process of dealing with multiple psychosocial needs. We found very few groups expressing the need for programmes aimed at 'employment' and re-skilling. More

urgent psychosocial needs were generally identified, such as mental health care support, housing benefit and basic home assistance for the elderly.

Confusion between VLU and OFMDFM

Some groups were reluctant to apply for funding which came through the Victims' Liaison Unit, since this unit is attached to the Northern Ireland Office. This reluctance reflects both the well-known feelings of those who do not see this government as legitimate, and the additional and sharper discomfort of victims who perceive themselves to have suffered at the hands of the State, having to request funding through the State. A few groups to whom we spoke had actually decided not to apply to the Core Funding Programme because of its source. Some others limited their applications to 'seed' funding for the same reason. These groups saw the Office of the First Minister and Deputy Minister (OFMDFM) Victims' Unit as more publicly accountable, and therefore a more desirable conduit for funding. However, our findings were similar to those of Deloitte & Touche (2001)—that is, groups and victims are confused about the necessity for two units dealing separately with their needs, but generally feel it would be preferable for the OFMDFM Victims' Unit to take the lead in this policy area.

Voluntary and statutory service provision

Many groups felt that the most appropriate way of providing services to victims was through groups such as themselves that were victim-led. Although this is true in many cases, such statements, at times, masked a general hostility to the statutory sector and a complete lack of faith in their ability to meet the needs of victims. This reflects many victims' experiences of the statutory sector, and their belief that service-providers simply cannot understand what people have been through. At the same time, there is often a competitive feeling between the so-called 'victims' sector' and the statutory sector. Given the extensive needs, future development of work in this area will need all possible resources.

Although many of the groups received referrals from the statutory sector, they were fearful of future funding being channelled into the statutory sector at the expense of their own funding. For some groups, the anxiety about the short-term funding arrangements led to an outright dismissal of any idea that the statutory sector could ever deliver some of the services they offer, or that they could work in partnership with them. Other groups seemed to be forging good links with the statutory sector, particularly groups that offer similar 'parallel' services. Of course, some 'parallel' service providers also feel anxious about the services they offer being 'taken over' by statutory providers.

The most widespread problem between voluntary and statutory sectors was the anxiety of voluntary groups at what they perceived as a 'push to professionalise'. Nearly all groups felt that there was, or might be, pressure on them to ensure that all services were provided by people with degrees or credentials. They were anxious that this trend would replace committed volunteers with salaried professionals (who would be unlikely to be victims themselves.) More significantly, there was concern that services which were important and helpful to victims would be replaced by the sorts of things in which it was possible to obtain credentials (for example, listening and socialising being replaced by aromatherapy or counselling). The focus on training and re-skilling of the measures for victims under 2.4B of Peace II has exacerbated this problem. Ironically, groups which provide services the state could generally not offer (for example, befriending, commemoration projects, or self-help work) are often the most anxious of their work being taken over by state services. This anxiety seems more a reflection of fears about funds being re-channelled into the statutory

sector and away from the voluntary sector, and of a general anxiety about how seriously their work is taken.

Our sense was that this competition and anxiety are not necessary. The statutory sector seems to us unlikely to wish to take on those services which voluntary organisations provide best. Partnership should be both possible and fruitful in terms of meeting victims' needs, as well as a continuation of parallel offerings in the two sectors. The perception is real, however, and should be addressed in future funding. One course we recommend is to separate the funding of voluntary groups from that for 'parallel' service providers, so that they will see clearly that they are not in competition (see Recommendation 5, Chapter 7).

Bridging the gap between statutory and voluntary services

As was noted earlier, there was a marked lack of faith in utilising government services, although some funded groups did report receiving referrals from the statutory services, and many groups did refer people to statutory services where appropriate.

Certain services offered by the statutory sector (for example, counselling and support for those victimised by the troubles) are relatively new and have been under-developed in the past. As a result, parallel service provision has been set up. Many services that arguably could be offered through health clinics, such as counselling and advice-giving, are run through self-help organisations funded by CFP. Our research suggests that many of these organisations offer a useful service. However, their position as a 'parallel' provider raises a number of issues concerning collaboration, synergy and support between voluntary and statutory services. Groups seemed to feel that victims' needs and issues were best dealt with through the operation of a localised delivery mechanism (Deloitte & Touche, 2001). Our findings were similar, and our analysis would suggest that a localised approach is helpful to effective delivery.

In terms of sustainability, different strategies should be adopted for different types of groups. For 'parallel' providers, the strategy might be for a greater synergy with statutory service providers in the future and integration to some degree. For those offering other services—such as befriending, community work with victims and survivors, and self-help support groups—the key to sustainability probably lies more in close links with community development programmes and linkages to local support agencies than in linking with statutory services. District Councils, local councils and partnerships seem to be the obvious route for funding and longer-term sustainability of such services.

Defining core funding and appreciating its value

Core funding is a unique opportunity for funders to offer support for salaries and not just programme costs. This needs to be sustained and encouraged. However, there needs to be greater discussion about the value and direction of the Core Funding in the future—within the IFB, VLU, Victims' Unit of OFMDFM and with victims' groups, drawing upon the organisational learning of NIVT.

Groups in many cases did not seem to grasp that the objective of core funding was to help them develop in the long term. When asked what they understood by core funding, most knew that it meant core costs, including staff. Some thought that "core" simply meant "coming from the core", the core being the government. Others saw the "core" as the central pieces of work they were undertaking. They did not necessarily identify the long-term benefit of core funding in providing a base infrastructure to build on in further fund-raising and

development. In developing new criteria (Recommendation 5), we suggest that what is defined as core costs might vary depending on the type of group. For example, core costs for a volunteer organisation might be travelling expenses, whereas for a larger service provider, it might be for a financial administrator.

Sustainability

The issue of sustainability came up routinely during the course of this evaluation. All those working in this area are keen to have some aspects of this work sustained in the long run. The needs and services revealed in this evaluation also highlight the advisability of long-term sustainability of services to victims. However, we would like to make the following observations and findings:

There is little consensus on what sustainability means

The lack of consensus on what sustainability means is linked to the inexperience and newness of groups working in this area. This is true of government, funders and groups. Core Funding for victims' work came into being in a relatively unknown area, in which professional opinion on best practice also varies a great deal. When money is given for urban development or for developing farmland, there is quite a lot of consensus on what to do, what the different options are, what the goals could be, and how one can measure the effectiveness. However, when we talk about assisting victims of violence, the picture is much more complicated. Professionals disagree, and the issue is highly political. Defining goals is complicated, as needs and goals are likely to change over time. The groups that are asking for money usually have a good cause they are working for, and understand the constituents they work with, but cannot necessarily define what techniques they are using or what is working and how. All stakeholders in this process are learning.

Sustainability means different things to different groups and role-players

There is an apparent contradiction between different understandings of what sustaining work in this area means. It is defined in some senses by economic development (for example, economic reintegration, development, inventing jobs, or job training). Other groups see sustainability as finding funds to continue their work through charging for services, or having a paid membership.

In our discussions, there was a clear difference between two kinds of groups. Those providing 'professional' sorts of services tended to describe sustainability in terms of payment for services, possibly through contracts from the statutory sector. Locally-based self-help groups tended to describe their sustainability as dependent on the commitment of volunteers. There is little public discussion of this issue, none of it suitably subtle. We found few who could articulate any vision for the future of this sector. It is likely that this sector will change considerably over the next few years, and that definitions and models of sustainability will also unfold. This would be helped, however, by funders' willingness to convene discussions and provide input into public debate on this issue.

Sustainability is generally defined in a polemic way

The debate is also still framed in terms of an all or nothing approach; that is, sustainability means maintaining organisations and groups exactly as they are, lack of sustainability

means nothing being present. A subtler unfolding of the process would be to see that sustainability for service-providers may be linked (in part) to their integration into the local health and welfare system, while for victims' groups it may lie more in the local community system and support.

Part of this work is unlikely to be sustainable at all in the strict sense of word—for example, the fight for justice, uncovering truth about past events, or commemorating the lives of victims. Sustaining such work is not related to traditional ways of understanding sustainability, since the results are seen as events rather than processes, not extending into the future. Even if the groups choose to professionalise and employ staff, they are likely to face the same problems as service-delivery groups, and to be constrained to provide the same kinds of services.

This lead us to the conclusion that, in terms of the future needs of the sector, much discussion needs to take place before sustainability can be adequately understood and provided for. To do this, more of a long-term strategic approach needs to be developed for work with victim-related issues. This is dealt with substantially in the final chapter of this report.



CHAPTER 7 - RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Development of victims' work

Work in the victim-related area is, in many senses, only at its early stages. There has been an unpredicted growth of work in the area and a host of new projects and groups have developed. One simple, but important, finding of this Evaluation is that the victims'/survivors' sector has significantly developed over the last three years in terms of learning, co-operation, provision of services, and structure of groups. Everybody has been on a rapid learning curve. This has led to some tensions within and between groups, and highlighted differences and strains between statutory and voluntary service-providers. We see much of this as an inevitable part of the process of developing work in this highly charged area dealing with the core of hurts and pain of the conflict. The tensions will not disappear immediately, and much ambivalence will remain, but we do see an easing out of the process over the next few years. This is dependent on the continuing prioritisation by all government structures (and hopefully by society at large) of the needs of those who have been affected by conflict-related violence, and on acknowledging and addressing the long-term and complex nature of these needs (see Recommendations 2, 3 & 4).

RECOMMENDATION 1

We recommend that funding for the development of victim-related work be continued and the funding base broadened.

Recommendation 1.1

Government should continue to fund the further development of work with victims.

We recommend that both the UK and Irish governments increase developmental funding for work in this area.

Recommendation 1.2

Groups should apply for funds that are appropriate for their work and not just those earmarked for victim-related work.

It is clear that some of the groups' work crosses boundaries with community development, rural development, and other areas of work and funding. Applying for other kinds of funding will both increase the support for and awareness of work with victims, and facilitate co-operation and shared learning between this and other sectors. Funders should continue to inform groups of these sources.

Recommendation 1.3

All relevant funders should take into account the needs of victims.

Other kinds of funding should be made sensitive to the needs of victims, in the same way as for other groups—for example, ethnic minorities and people with disabilities.

2. Usefulness of core funding

Work with victims and survivors has developed rapidly, due in part to the impact of the Core Funding Programme in meeting groups’ core needs so that they could develop their work. Overwhelmingly, the groups involved in the Evaluation felt that the money had been useful in enabling a diverse range of activities to develop that impacted positively upon victims. We found evidence of several helpful and useful initiatives being undertaken. The commitment made by government for a further £3 million of Core Funding is welcomed.

RECOMMENDATION 2

We recommend that the Core Funding Programme be continued as it is complementary to the Peace II measures for victims.

Recommendation 2.1

Government should continue Core Funding as a major support to groups working with victims.

Investment in this sector has been useful to the groups and beneficial to victims, and therefore to society in general. This reinforces the need for a Core Funding Programme that may allow the groups some stability as they develop their work. Core Funding has been beneficial in its own right, and we see it as a critical and necessary complementary funding source to Peace II. The measures aimed in Peace II at re-skilling and retraining are inadequate at this stage to meet all the psychosocial needs highlighted by groups.

Recommendation 2.2

Both Government and victims’ groups should foster further research, reflection and discussion on the long-term impact of political violence.

This process should also include researchers, health professionals, and other interested parties, and should draw on learning from other parts of the world. There needs to be more thinking and focus on the extensive impact of the conflict as it affects reintegration of victims and survivors into society, as well as its long-term implications.

3. Developing a more strategic, long-term and reflective approach

It needs to be recognised that short-term funding encourages short-term thinking. An insecure funding environment often encourages a high staff turnover, as workers tend to start to look for new jobs and begin to disengage from projects in the last six months of a two-year funding cycle. Groups and funders often find it hard to project into and plan for the future if their short-term needs constantly have to be addressed. Initial funding has also created

expectations of future funding, and a sudden drying up of the money would be detrimental to the development and maturing of the work in this area.

The crisis-driven atmosphere in which this programme began has focused everyone's attention on a very short-term future (see findings Chapter 4). Having acknowledged in this Report how and why the initial phase of the programme has been crisis-driven, we recommend that it is now time to take a more measured and strategic approach to funding. A central finding of this evaluation of funding for those victimised by conflict-related violence is that their needs are long-term and investment in this area should also be long-term to match the needs identified.

A recognition of the long-term nature of the investment in work in this area means that all concerned need to start to work in a way that is more strategic and reflective. This is as true for the groups as it is for the funders and government—and ultimately means a paradigm shift in the approach to victim-related work in Northern Ireland.

RECOMMENDATION 3

We recommend that a more strategic, long-term and reflective approach be taken to funding in this area of work.

Recommendation 3.1

Funders and government agencies need to model a more reflective approach in dealing with victim-related issues.

The needs of people affected by political violence are urgent, but moving too quickly will not help. The implementation of all new schemes needs to be more measured and reflective, and to move away from any perceptions that they are crisis-driven and motivated by political necessity or a 'quick-fix' ideology.

Recommendation 3.2

The Intermediary Funding Body should sponsor a series of support workshops, similar to those NIVT has run for the groups before, focusing on dealing with the needs of victims over the next decade.

All concerned need to be sensitised to the long-term effect of political violence and genuinely understand its impact. International comparative experience can help in this regard, but ultimately this relies on fostering a more nuanced and deepened understanding of what is being dealt with, within the voluntary and statutory sectors, among funders, and within the broader public. As noted in Chapter 6, all concerned need to appreciate that working in this field is analogous to dealing with severe illnesses and chronic diseases such as cancer, not short-term complaints than can be easily cured. This demands an appreciation of the fact that the issue is not about to disappear and that needs are long-term.

Recommendation 3.3

It is recommended that victims' groups include strategic planning skills in their skills development, and that core funding explicitly target this.

A further way to develop a more forward-looking approach is to ensure that adequate strategic planning is part of the criteria (see Recommendation 5) to receive core funding. Costs for strategic planning could also be considered 'core' costs.

4. Core Funding needs to be geared toward the present as much the future

It is clear that the needs of people affected by the conflict are severe and extensive. We recognise that some steps have been taken to remedy this situation by groups, organisations, funders and government. There is currently much expectation that the 'Victims' Strategy' being developed by the Victims' Unit in the Office of the First and Deputy First Minister will provide a new strategic impetus in this area.

However, our research suggests that much of the approach to work with victims to date has not always been guided by a sound long-term strategic vision or plan. This is evident in the process underlying the setting up of the scheme, as well as implicit within the working practice of many of the groups. When the Core Funding Programme began, the political context required urgent action to be seen to address the urgent needs of victims. The time has come, in our opinion, to institutionalise and capitalise on the gains made in this process, and the only way to do this is to plan for the long-term.

RECOMMENDATION 4

We recommend that current Core Funding be more targeted and developed with the recognition that decisions taken now affect the long-term; ideally long-term funds are needed if needs are to be adequately met.

Recommendation 4.1

Government should continue the current Core Funding cycle and extend Core Funding to five years in its next cycle.

Government has committed £3 million to Core Funding for the next two years. Although we recognise the difficulty of projecting beyond these two years, given the long-term needs of those affected by conflict-related violence, we recommend that any current development of new criteria (see Recommendation 5) be done within the context of developing a long-term funding cycle and plan. It is strongly recommended that *at least* five years of funding follow the current allocation, if it is to have the effect of genuinely addressing the long-term needs identified in this evaluation. To this end, deliberations on the distribution of the current two-year cycle of Core Funding need to be extensive and consultative, and not simply developed with a short-term view in mind.

The development of any new criteria for the current cycle needs to be based on a vision for how work will develop in this area over the next 5-10 years, not the next two years alone. Although we appreciate the pressures of having 'to get the money out'—and that government is currently only committed to fund the Core Funding Programme for the next two years—one of the most important findings of this research is that the pressure to react has undermined the ability of those involved to be sufficiently strategic and reflective in this highly sensitive area of work. Any new criteria should be developed with this in mind and ideally form the

bedrock of a new and extended funding cycle in order to have a lasting and transformative impact.

Recommendation 4.2

The Victims' Liaison Unit, the Victims' Unit in the Office of the First and Deputy First Minister and the Intermediary Funding Body should draw up a strategic plan on the nature and shape of the current (and potential future allocations) for Core Funding.

This should, as much as possible, be based on extensive consultation with victims' groups, researchers, and funding bodies to ensure that the issues involved and the decisions as to priorities are widely understood and supported, both within this area of work and among the public. Our experience of undertaking this Evaluation suggests that, without sufficient buy-in from the funded groups, any process will be undermined from the start, and old political divisions and suspicions exacerbated. Agencies and government departments charged with victims should consult widely in devising the current distribution of Core Funding and this should be placed within the context of a wider strategic plan that encapsulates a vision for the future.

In addition, any longer-term plan needs to consider when Peace II will end. Core Funding should extend longer than Peace II funds in order to assist groups with the process of finding new ways to sustain themselves. It definitely should not end at the same time as Peace II, as this would mean a sudden drying up of funds.

5. New criteria to develop a new sector

To date, the Core Funding Programme has offered entry for a variety of groups with a range of approaches. The use of broad criteria in the first tranche of Core Funding has been useful in developing a range of work and, in effect, a 'victims' sector', and in fostering a rapid expansion of work in this area. This has been appropriate, and has enabled the groups and the sector to develop in distinctive ways. The next stage, however, should be one of consolidation and strategy, in which Core Funding sets more specific criteria and is able to target specific areas of need. This needs to be done not only for the current cycle, but the current cycle needs to be considered within the framework of a wider and more long-term vision.

To this end, we were asked to make recommendations with regard to the *targeting* of future criteria. We offer an approach which can form the basis of new criteria and articulate how future criteria should be targeted. We do not pretend that our approach is without its problems, but we believe it could provide the basis of new criteria and a starting-point for discussion in any consultation process or intensive planning session. Our approach is based on our view that the area which most needs support is the self-help groups which provide a range of services which are important to victims without being likely to attract alternative funding (specifically: counselling, befriending, socialising, advice-giving, remembering, and commemoration). This is also arguably work that the statutory sector cannot and should not try to undertake.

RECOMMENDATION 5

We recommend that new criteria be drawn up for the Core Funding Programme which reflect strategic targeting and which are aimed at meeting long-term needs.

We recommend the following to the VLU, Victims' Unit of the OFMDFM, or other bodies setting criteria:

Recommendation 5.1

A distinction should be made between funding streams in order to differentiate between the different types of groups eligible for funding, and each group should apply to the relevant stream.

Different types of groups working in this area have varied approaches and needs. The strategic profiles of different types of victims'/survivors' groups and projects, particularly those concentrating on issues of community identity and remembering as opposed to those involved in service provision to the individual, are significantly different. We have found competition between service-provider groups who offer specialised services to victims, and self-help groups that offer other types of support. Different types of organisations applying for the same pot of money can lead to tensions and such differences also make evaluation and comparison difficult.

We recommend that, in any future fund, there be clearer differentiation between types of groups and activities. We propose that victims'/survivors' groups funded by the Core Funding Programme can broadly be divided into three types.

- Parallel Service-Providers
- Self-Help Groups
- Volunteer Groups

Whilst groups do not always fit clearly into one type alone, we believe that if we look at their management and structures, their relationship with other parts of the sector (the type of partnerships they might build), their support requirements, their long-term strategies of sustainability and the forms of evaluation that might suit each type, then the distinctions might be useful. Once one makes these distinctions, then different criteria might be suggested for each type and a more realistic view be developed of what sustainability in the sector might mean in the future.

- **Parallel Service-Providers**

This type of group is so called because it provides professional services and training that are close, or parallel, to work that is provided by (or should be provided by) the statutory sector. The groups are generally run by professionals (for example, social workers or psychologists). Many will have direct contact with and feedback from victims themselves. These groups are sometimes connected to larger organisations. They offer a range of services including counselling, group work, psychosocial projects and training. They often utilise a range of funding sources, and use the core funding for administration and central running costs. These groups should have well-developed forms of self-evaluation and monitoring. They also tend to need less close support than other types of groups. These are the types of groups which generally are in a position to offer training and capacity-building of individuals and

communities as outlined in measure 2.4B of Peace II, and they would therefore be expected to consider seeking funding from Peace II and/or other sources, and not depend on Core Funding as their primary source.

The future sustainability of these groups will be largely, although not exclusively, through developing close partnerships with the statutory sector and in the provision of services for self-help groups. Future funding should particularly target services and training not provided in the statutory sector, thus developing synergies with present provision. It is hoped that funding for this sector could eventually come from partnerships with the statutory sector. Funding should be aimed at groups that can show working relationships with the statutory sector, possibly with partners (such as Health Trusts) matching funding. These groups generally desire core funds as a way of running their administration and show a high level of competence in raising money for project costs.

We believe that Parallel Service Providers should have a clear strategy for catering for all sections of the community. Learning lessons from the responses of public bodies to section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 might prove helpful in this regard.

- **Self-Help Groups**

Groups of this type are so called because they show a high degree of user involvement and are generally user-led. They may develop a range of activities. We have distinguished the following:

- a. Counselling
- b. Befriending/socialising/advice
- c. Remembering and commemorating
- d. Advocacy
- e. Research

We do not want to suggest that the counselling offered by these groups is any less important or valuable than the Parallel Service Providers, merely that the nature and needs of these organisations are often different. The capacity of self-help groups to offer training and services more widely is also generally limited. However, we are also aware of the tendency for some of these groups to feel that they need to compete, 'to professionalise', when their role in befriending, advice-giving, or commemoration is different but of equal merit. Whilst 'core funding' for these groups will include administration, it will also include salaries for those providing services and organising activities directly. Due to the small size of these organisations, salaries for workers are often their primary requirement, with the workers running projects themselves.

For many of these groups, the partnerships they might develop would tend to be with community groups or perhaps with local authorities, rather than the statutory sector. The activities they take part in are less likely to be offered in the statutory sector and arguably should not be. Some of these groups, particularly those active in remembering and commemoration, may have time-limited projects and thus will develop exit strategies. Others should begin to source funding from a broader range of funders. Many of these groups require quite high levels of support from the funder. It should also be noted that the forms of evaluation and monitoring that might be applicable for these groups would be different from those of the Parallel Service Providers.

In many respects, these groups are the ones least provided for under Peace II as they may not have the capacity to run training. They and their membership of victims may benefit from the types of training that Parallel Service Providers could offer if successful with Peace II applications.

- **Volunteer Groups**

In terms of meeting varied needs in a way acceptable to victims, the work of volunteer groups, which may in content be similar to parallel service providers and/or self-help groups, is particularly important. This work would be impossible to replace with paid workers. Some groups we met made cogent arguments as to why they wished to stay volunteer-based rather than develop into a larger group or service-delivery-driven organisation. These types of groups should be encouraged and supported to develop in ways they see as necessary and helpful for their users. A separate stream of funds should be considered for assisting volunteer-based groups with small costs to improve their work, for example, not to pay for salaries but for costs like travel or room hire. These are the ‘core’ costs of volunteer-based groups. It is important to distinguish this from development or seed funding, so as not to base funding on the expectation that the group is being ‘developed’ into something else, rather than just enhancing existing practice. These grants should be small, entail minimal administration and be able to be decided upon quickly. They should be offered in an atmosphere of acknowledging and respecting the importance of the work of voluntary groups, and seeking to support them in ways they wish, rather than increasing their anxiety that they will be ‘pushed to professionalise’.

The primary resource for this type of group is voluntary time. Such programmes should be encouraged by funding them in a separate stream. The core funding needs are expenses and basic running costs (maybe including IT). They may develop partnerships with either the statutory sector or community groups but neither is essential. What is essential is that any funding provided does not over-burden the group with bureaucracy. In addition, forms of evaluation and monitoring should be simple, such as the keeping of diaries and note-taking.

Very broadly, therefore, these three types of group have different strategic dynamics as shown in the table below.

Table 8 Strategic dynamics of different types of groups

Groups	Core needs	Support Requirements	Evaluation	Partnerships	Sustainability and exiting
Parallel Providers	Administration and costs	Low	Detailed	Predominantly statutory sector, some community and voluntary sector	Partnerships and synergies with the statutory sector
Self-help groups	Administration support staff and costs	High	Project-specific	Predominantly community and voluntary sector, some statutory sector	Broader funding base with community structures and development of exit strategies
Volunteer groups	Expenses	Low	Limited, but project-specific	Less need for partnerships, some community and voluntary	Not a funding issue due to volunteer nature and demand-driven

For each of the types, a new set of criteria might be suggested. These would incorporate those used in the original Core Funding Programme, but might be more specifically targeted. For example, ‘Have a high degree of user involvement in decision-making’ is clearly applicable, indeed definitional, for Self-Help groups, but not for Parallel Service-Providers.

Parallel Service-Providers would, however, have to 'be open and accountable as organisations to their users'.

Over and above the existing criteria, we suggest the following for each group, along with a definition of core funding and some possible targeting.

The new criteria for parallel service providers should be as follows:

New Criteria:

- Show a willingness and ability to engage in partnership with and take referrals from the statutory sector;
- Demonstrate partnerships with self-help and volunteer groups;
- Be open and accountable as organisations to their users;
- Show well-developed forms of evaluation and monitoring;
- Show a five-year strategic plan for the organisation;
- Show evidence of consideration of fund-raising from Peace II and willingness to use monies to offer services to self-help groups and the statutory sector in the form of training and support, and
- Show a strategy for providing services to all communities.

Funding Targets:

- Groups showing both partnerships and synergies with the statutory sector;
- Groups offering support, partnerships or training for self-help groups;
- Groups showing a strategy for professional staff development, and
- Groups with innovative projects not likely to be covered by the statutory sector.

Core Funding covers:

- Running costs;
- Administration costs;
- Salaries—although with a view that salary costs will in future increasingly be found with the statutory sector, or other funders, and
- Training and development of new services (which may not yet be covered by statutory or other provision).

The new criteria for self-help groups should be as follows:

New Criteria:

- Have a high degree of user involvement in decision-making;
- Demonstrate a high degree of co-operation and collaboration with other groups working in the sector;
- Show a needs-assessment;
- Show the development of partnerships with voluntary or community groups and/or with the statutory sector, and
- Show forms of evaluation or feedback suitable for the type of project.

Funding Targets:

- Groups engaged in befriending, counselling, advice giving, remembering and commemoration;
- Groups building relationships and networks, particularly those building trust and confidence within and between communities;
- Groups developing strategic plans exploring sustainability or with exit strategies, and
- Groups that show a strategy for sourcing alternative funding.

Core Funding covers:

- Running costs;
- Salaries—administration and support staff, and
- Training in skills for organisational development (for example, strategic planning, finance, fund-raising).
-

The new criteria for volunteer providers should be as follows:

New Criteria:

- Demonstrate the benefit of their work to users;
- Demonstrate a degree of co-operation and collaboration with other groups working in the sector, and
- Show evidence of feedback and monitoring mechanisms.

Funding Targets:

- Groups engaged in basic support, befriending, counselling, advice-giving, remembering and commemoration, and
- Areas with particular infrastructure difficulties.

Core Funding covers:

- Expenses, particularly travel costs;
- Social events considered a core part of volunteer operations;
- Limited running costs, and
- Necessary and beneficial IT provision.

In developing the above criteria the following issues also need to be considered:

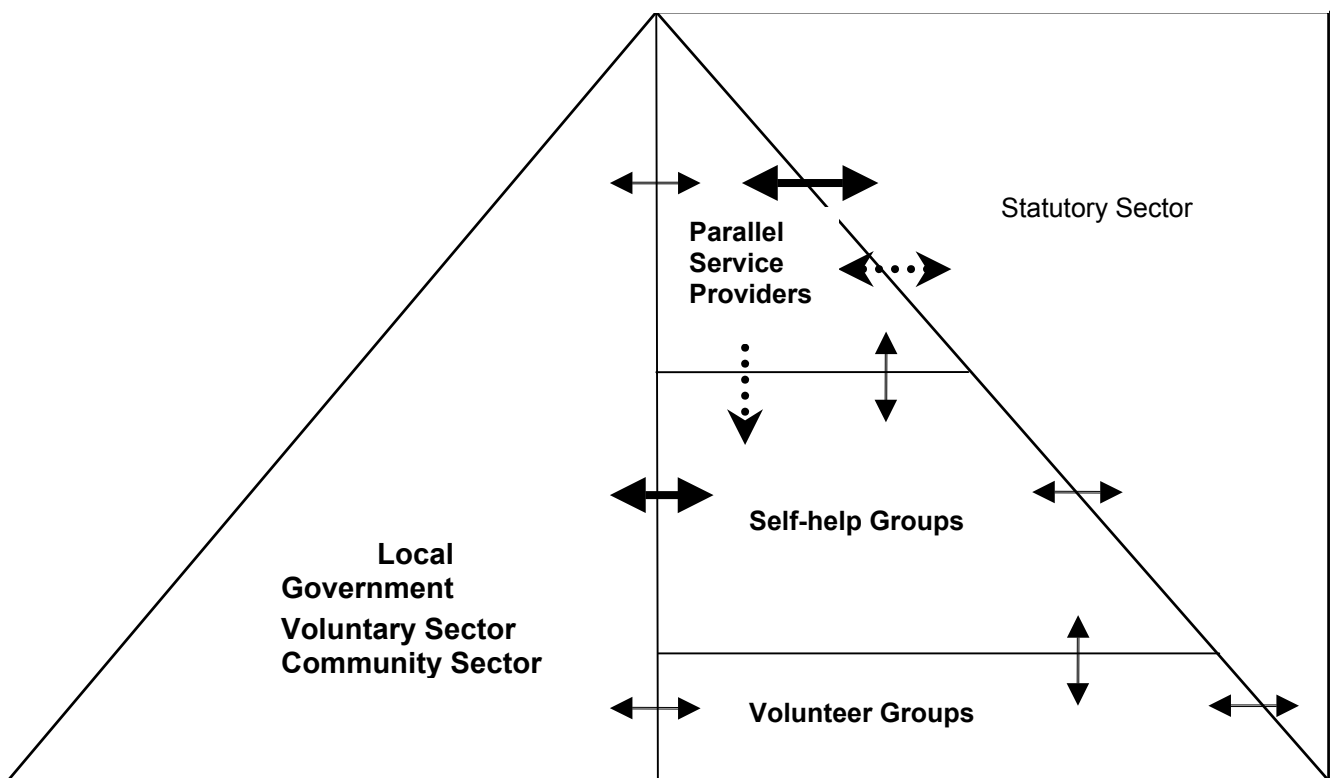
Recommendation 5.2




Target long-term sustainability.

As this evaluation has shown, different kinds of groups depend on different things for their sustainability. Funding criteria should explicitly reflect these differences, supporting selected services, fostering partnerships which will sustain others. The criteria should demonstrate an increasingly nuanced and shared understanding of how long certain activities will be needed, and how best to sustain them. This will not necessarily mean sustaining all organisations indefinitely, nor will it necessarily mean supporting equally all kinds of groups or all kinds of activities.

Sustainability is often defined narrowly as either groups being able to generate their own income, or the victims they work with being absorbed into the job market. These must be seen as complementary to other processes. Voluntary groups, for example, have suggested that the basis of their sustainability is vision and commitment. These different understandings need to be explored and taken into account. The temptation to move the groups too fast to a process of sustainability needs to be resisted in favour of an appreciation of the reality of the difficulty of being sustainable, and the many forms it can take. A more open and honest discussion of what sustainability is and a vision for this sector in the future needs to ensue. The comments made in Chapter 6 of this report could form a basis for this discussion, as well as the approach adopted above, which tries to stream groups into different areas. If groups are streamed as is proposed, then sustainability for different types of groups will lie in partnerships and synergies within different sectors. Figure 1 below outlines the various kinds

Figure 1 A model for future partnerships and sustainability relationships



Key	
	Major partnerships and primary area where sustainability should be built in the long-term
	Minor but important partnerships
	Training relationships

Recommendation 5.3

Work to define terminology.

There needs to be a deeper and braver attempt at defining such terms as 'service delivery', 'self-help', 'lobbying', 'party political', 'commemoration', and 'community healing'. New funding criteria cannot proceed without a minimal, shared understanding of at least some of these terms.

Posing objectives as broad as 'community healing', although perhaps desirable as a vision statement, makes evaluation difficult and can promote very nebulous work being done in pursuit of a rather vague goal. All parties will need to recognise that definitions are never singular or final, but are nevertheless crucial for the establishment of meaningful discussions and respectful relationships, where boundaries can be observed and responsibilities taken. This is critical for all terms used in the new criteria and specifically important for defining the concept of 'victim'.

There is no doubt that the term 'victim' and the question of who is a legitimate victim of the conflict have caused a great deal of strain. The definition of 'victim' developed by the Victims Unit in OFMDFM has gone some way to addressing these difficulties and appears to be broadly acceptable. We are of the opinion that the term 'victim' needs to start to be seen as a psychological position, and not just a political one. Perhaps in the long run the only way the issue will be resolved is if a greater sense of tolerance among divergent opinions of the definition can be built.

Recommendation 5.4

The meaning of criteria such as 'proven track record' needs to be defined.

NIVT did fund some groups that, even if they were 'in existence for one year or more', were not well established, but rather struggling to work in difficult situations with very little infrastructure. In some ways, the Core Funding helped rapidly put such structures in place. Future funding needs to consider more carefully the definition of groups that are capable of managing such funds, with an infrastructure sufficient to deal with the amounts of money and plan their activities adequately. The length of time a group is in existence (more than one year old) should not be used as a sole criterion in deciding on fitness to manage funds and use the monies appropriately; criteria of having a 'proven track record' need to be more specific and tied to the criteria we have proposed above.

Recommendation 5.5

Use development or seed grants more extensively.

Although the funds were divided into Core and Seed funding, in reality, for quite a number of groups, the Core funding acted to 'seed' substantial developments in their organisation. Some organisations that were still fairly new had to develop the capacity to manage larger projects, and the Core Funds served to speed up this development process. In some instances, this rapid growth was not desirable. In future, more consideration will need to be put into the wider use of development funding for new groups and outlining their future sustainability needs before Core grants are made. Seed grants may also be a particularly suitable way to assist Parallel Service Providers in developing new areas of work.

Recommendation 5.6

Provide separate funds for networking costs.

Networking between groups needs to be encouraged, particularly across existing divides such as those between communities, between rural and urban, between political viewpoints, and between the statutory and voluntary sectors. Already there is considerable competition and rivalry between groups. This is not surprising, given the different bases on which they work and the politicisation of the sector. Funding should encourage contact and sharing across kinds of work, political constituencies, and the statutory-voluntary divide. Networking can also foster greater public awareness of victims' issues and encourage good practice. This issue should be discussed when criteria for a new programme are considered.

On the other hand, it does not seem desirable to foster a proliferation of networks, each with its staff, each trying to sustain itself indefinitely. Our recommendation would be to support networking activities rather than necessarily the bureaucracy of networks. Core costs of a networking agency (generally not salaries) should be looked at in the context of the broader criteria we have proposed above, and perhaps some funds set aside for 'core' networking costs.

Recommendation 5.7

Target priority areas.

Consideration should be given to the targeting of specific priority areas, as well as looking at distributing funds aimed at needs and impact, rather than simply trying to fund all groups that make applications. These criteria will be difficult to establish and delicate to discuss, but this hard discussion is one that needs to occur. This recommendation is specifically **not** intended to encourage knee-jerk funding in response to each new atrocity, which would simply increase the crisis-driven and competitive atmosphere. On the contrary, targeting should be measured and strategic, intended to encourage and support work in areas which may have suffered particularly from the conflict, but which have not become the locus of work by groups. It should also target work to meet urgent needs which are not otherwise being addressed.

Recommendation 5.8

Consider the special needs of rural victims and projects.

Rural groups, and specifically those working in the border areas, seem to feel the most isolated in the process of developing victim-related work. Special consideration and investigation into the dynamics of the conflict in rural areas needs to be considered when designing new programme criteria. Special support processes for rural groups should be considered for aspects of their work which are more costly or more difficult.

Recommendation 5.9

Utilise a pilot period or early review of new criteria.

Any new funding scheme should include an early review or explicit pilot period of 6-8 months with a limited number of groups. At this point, funding assessment criteria, contractual arrangements, staffing and general systems for monitoring the funding can be reviewed and if necessary revised before the bulk of applications are processed.

Recommendation 5.10

Funding advisory committees should be established before the criteria are finalised.

We recommend that the appointment of an advisory committee take place early enough to enable it to be involved with any consultation or discussion that might take place between the funder and potential recipients as new criteria are being drawn up. This committee should be fully aware of the operations of the new funding programme.

6. Administrative systems

A key finding is that NIVT was successful in attempting to deliver a human and compassionate face to the groups, especially through its support workers. At one consultative seminar, groups described NIVT’s role as ‘midwifing a dream’. Most groups understood the difficulties of the role and appreciated what was done. They particularly welcomed the values and principles underlying NIVT’s administration of the programme, and would want to ensure that any future IFB also base its involvement on ‘a passion for voluntary work and a commitment to this sector’. On the whole, the administration of the system ran satisfactorily, but there were specific problems, and the systems to administer the programme could be improved in the future.

RECOMMENDATION 6

We recommend that the administration systems of the current and any future IFB be sound and efficient; experience should be gleaned and used from NIVT’s administration of the programme.

For the next phase, the Intermediary Funding Body (which might be NIVT or another agency) should be encouraged to learn from the experience of NIVT, and to strive to do even better in administering the programme (see also Chapter 3).

To do this, the following is recommended:

Recommendation 6.1

The contracting agency should provide higher levels of funding for administration.

There should be a higher proportion of funds allocated to the administration of any future Core Funding Programme. In the prevailing context, it is difficult to divert any funding intended for victims to administration, but it is necessary. Our finding is that a minimum staffing would be one full-time Group Support Officers, and two part-time Community Projects Officers, in addition to administration, finance, and support/supervision. The £50,000 that NIVT was given to administer a £3 million scheme was inadequate. In addition to staff assigned to the Core Funding Programme, NIVT provided considerable additional staff time in consultation and support, as well as off-line supervision. It would be impossible to set a specific figure based on our findings, but we recommend that the IFB receive somewhere in the range of 10% of the total for its administrative costs. This may require additional funds being made available.

Recommendation 6.2

The contracting agency should provide a longer lead-in time to a new funding period.

It is recommended that there be a longer lead-in time to any new funding period to allow for wider consultation with groups, time to shape and agree at least the key strategic objectives of the funding, and to agree suitable delivery options and mechanisms. Timescales for such processes should take cognisance of the emotional, psychological, political and social complexities of work involving those who have been the casualties of political conflict.

Recommendation 6.3

The Intermediary Funding Body should improve contractual understandings.

NIVT does have a satisfactory contract that is used between groups and NIVT when funds are accepted. However, the importance of the contractual arrangements between funder and groups needs to be emphasised and understood more clearly by both parties. If contracts are to be of value, then both parties need to respect and comply with the contract, which should not be seen as a mere formality, but an agreement that may and should be evoked if necessary. There should be a compulsory induction period for all groups receiving funds in which this agreement is clarified and discussed (see Recommendation 8.1).

Recommendation 6.4

The IFB should improve funding and filing systems.

During the course of the evaluation, NIVT was transparent with their records and files—this was welcome. However, at times, their filing system proved to be inefficient, and we were unable to obtain access to materials. Some groups also reported that files and correspondence had been lost, and that they had been shifted from person to person when they had phoned the offices to locate information. NIVT reports that there is a log system for documents received at reception, but many groups seemed to have contrary experiences. The log system in operation by the funder, which is there to assist with tracking files internal to the organisation, needs to be evaluated and adhered to, and perhaps also explained to groups.

Recommendation 6.5

The IFB should acknowledge receipt of applications and keep groups informed of process in writing at all times.

The funder should acknowledge the receipt of all applications in writing within ten days of receipt. Once a date has been set for funding recommendation, groups should be advised of this and notified when they will receive a formal decision.

7. Relationships between groups and staff

Through the submissions we received, the interviews we conducted and the case studies, we consistently found that groups appreciated the efforts of NIVT staff, particularly the support workers. The change in staff at different points was considered a real loss, and was highlighted as a blow to the process of communication with and development of groups. It is important to be aware of the difficulties around changing staff when relationships of trust are

so important. Groups perceived that one of the reasons for staff changes was that there were not enough staff, or that the work was quantitatively as well as qualitatively more than they could do.

RECOMMENDATION 7

We recommend that the IFB should provide improved and ongoing support to programme staff.

Staffing of future programmes should take greater cognisance of the emotional, psychological, political and social challenges of the work, as this could potentially ensure the retention of staff and a better administration of the programme. To do this:

Recommendation 7.1

All front-line staff must have off-line supervision.

NIVT has reported that staff were encouraged to seek supervision, and that funding was allocated for this purpose. Nonetheless, both staff and groups reported that there was inadequate supervision, which fed into the emotional overload and heavy time commitment, which led to staff burnout. We recommend that all front-line staff have access to off-line supervision and be supported through clear line management structures that make provision for at least fortnightly supervision sessions. There should be adequate formal and informal reporting procedures, which should operate as a two-way process between managers and staff. For staff of the funding body as for the groups themselves, the demands of work of this kind are extraordinary, and must be met by extraordinary levels of support and supervision.

Recommendation 7.2

The funding agency should ensure that there is more internal awareness and discussion of the impact of dealing with violence-related work.

The funders should either create, or through a recognised agency have access to, a list of supervisors who are skilled and experienced in dealing with those who have become victims of political violence, and coping with consequent stress in the workplace. Such professionals will have a more detailed understanding of the narrative and behaviour styles of those who have been subjected to severe trauma, and will be better placed to support officers to develop and maintain professional relationships with individuals and groups. The funding organisation as a whole should have quarterly de-briefing sessions to discuss the impact of this work on the organisation. The funder has a responsibility to model sound internal support work to the groups it funds.

Recommendation 7.3

The funder should ensure that administration officers undergo induction and ongoing training for this area of work.

In addition to staff specifically assigned to the Core Funding Programme, others often dealt with members of the groups, their beneficiaries, and their management committees. These dealings were sometimes characterised by levels of intensity and expectation which surprised and overwhelmed staff used to dealing with other kinds of community groups.

Officers and staff of an IFB involved in administering this funding programme should undergo an induction period before taking up their positions, which should last at least two days. Ideally, the induction should be two-fold. Firstly, those specifically assigned to this programme should be made aware of their roles, responsibilities and the limitation of these roles and responsibilities in the context of this programme. Secondly, all staff should have an introduction to issues and challenges which will affect work and relationships on the ground with groups. All staff should be made aware of the support structures that have been put in place, and where possible work in teams with other staff working in the funding agency (see above).

8. Support of groups

As has been noted earlier, most groups were satisfied and appreciative of the support given by the support workers of the funder. Equally, the REAL programme has been evaluated and seen as a valuable support process to the funding of victim-related work. However, it is clear that many groups needed and expected more support than was realistically possible for a funding agency.

RECOMMENDATION 8

We recommend that the IFB should ensure that there is appropriate support, training, and communication systems for groups.

As much as a responsibility lies on the IFB to support its own staff and make the objectives of the funding programme clearer, so too should those applying for funds have a number of responsibilities. NIVT provided induction sessions and detailed packs for groups, outlining what was expected of them in the way of reporting, financial management, etc. Nonetheless, many groups reported being unaware of their responsibilities in this regard. In future, even greater efforts must be made to ensure that groups understand and can meet requirements. These might include:

Recommendation 8.1

Compulsory induction processes and exposure to the methods of the funder.

All funding awards should be conditional on key members of management committees and officers of groups attending an induction session that outlines the contractual responsibilities of receiving funding. This should include the responsibilities of management committees, financial monitoring, general monitoring and evaluation, the roles and responsibilities of funders to the groups, the roles and responsibilities of the groups to the funders, the remit of funding and the need for forward planning.

Recommendation 8.2

Funders should provide a clearer definition of support work they will offer.

From the outset, funders should be clear about what support they can realistically offer the groups, specifically in terms of ongoing and day-to-day support. This should be given to the groups in writing. If funders opt to offer community development support to groups, then this should be specified in hours that the groups can access over a specific period of time. This

ensures that officers' time can be divided equitably between groups, and that boundaries are established and observed. If the categories of groups were to be more strictly defined (see Recommendation 5) then support provision could be made more strategic. Support could be concentrated on Self-Help Groups rather than on Parallel Service Providers.

In addition, a clear decision needs to be made by the funders at the outset as to their responsibility, if any, in assisting groups with internal difficulties. We take the view that, if funders adopt the role of 'trouble-shooter' for the groups (for example, in a dispute between management committee and staff), they are in danger of compromising their relationship with the funded group, and run the risk of being drawn into local disputes. In this respect, it is our opinion that they should involve themselves only to the extent that it affects their contractual arrangements with the group. If mediation and negotiation are viewed as helpful in certain circumstances (and this certainly was demanded from NIVT by some groups), then an independent organisation should be identified to provide them. Groups should be clear as to the limits of the funders' responsibility to them. The funder might, for example, develop a list of support services which it is prepared to offer, and a separate list of additional services which may be needed, and from whom they may be sought or contracted.

Recommendation 8.3

Groups should be encouraged to offer support to their own staff.

It is clear that many of the groups working in this field and funded by the Core Funding Programme are at the coal-face of the impact of the violence of the last few decades. Although the impact of working with those affected by violence can vary from person to person, there is a responsibility, especially when working with victim-related issues, that all employees be provided with adequate and sufficient support.

This is, in our opinion, a critical and neglected health-and-safety issue. All groups applying for funds should have to show in their application how their staff would be emotionally supported, either through external supervision or other methods. If this requires additional funds, the Core Fund should support it. The funder should encourage this process by offering a range of support workshops focusing on the impact of working with violence-related issues. That said, a few groups modelled good practice in this regard and lessons could be learnt from them.

Recommendation 8.4

Groups should commit themselves to planning ahead and should be offered training in strategic planning and visioning.

The lack of forward thinking and visioning in this rapidly-growing area of work has been identified throughout this report as problematic and needing attention. This applies both to those funding work in this sector and to the funded groups. Given the extensive needs on the ground, it is often difficult for groups to articulate a longer-term vision or even to consider the sustainability of their work. This needs to become a priority, and the funder should offer support to develop this longer-term capacity through workshops and other methods. It is not sufficient to expect groups to answer questions in applications forms about sustainability, when a deep-rooted sense of what sustainability means has not permeated this sector. This needs to be developed across the board (see Recommendation 5.4).

Recommendation 8.5

For ongoing information exchange, use focus groups.

The evaluation team found the focus groups the most useful forum for getting information and discussing certain issues with the groups on a continuing basis. Deloitte and Touche (2001) reached a similar conclusion. We recommend the ongoing use of focus group discussions between the funder and groups so as to deepen mutual understanding of some of the key issues and to allow the Core Funding Programme to be shaped as the process unfolds. This process need not include all groups, could evolve over time, and would demand little time and bureaucracy.

Recommendation 8.6

Improve communication by using different methods of communication.

Information useful to the groups' ongoing support and development should be posted to a web-site where all of the groups can access it, as well as sent through the post. This puts the onus on the groups to check the information from time to time, rather than relying only on periodic postal communication. In this respect, initial funding allocations should ensure that groups have the minimum IT requirements to access such a web-site and that they have the facility to be in contact with the funder through e-mail.

Recommendation 8.7

Ensure that grievance procedures are clear and publicised.

Groups should be advised of all grievance and complaints procedures for all elements of funding at the induction day (see Recommendation 8.1) and they should also be aware of how the funder will process their complaints and grievances.

Recommendation 8.8

Funders should provide clear information for groups to contact support workers, and ensure that there is learning from their questions.

Groups should be notified of who is their contact in the funding agency and how to contact them. Officers should ensure that there is regular system of checking communications when they are out of the office. All calls should be logged, and the nature of queries and concerns of the groups reviewed periodically by the funder. This should be used to help shape the list of issues that the support officers will and will not (or cannot) deal with (see Recommendation 8.2).

9. Monitoring and evaluation

A central finding of this evaluation has been that everyone involved in the process has been on a sharp learning curve. It is important that the knowledge gained not be lost, and that it feed into ongoing processes of evaluation. We have also found that methods for evaluating work of this kind, especially psychosocial work, are not always as straightforward as other areas, and that outcomes are less quantifiable. Newer groups are often not accustomed to thinking in terms of systematic monitoring and evaluation, and are often reluctant to take time away from the more urgent issue of meeting immediate needs of victims.

RECOMMENDATION 9

We recommend that both the IFB and the groups should build in monitoring and evaluation practice.

Recommendation 9.1

Develop a new method of understanding how groups' work can be monitored.

We recommend that ongoing evaluation of the groups' work and the funding process continue. To do this adequately, a 'think-tank' should be established with representatives from funded groups and evaluation experts to develop new, innovative models of monitoring and evaluation for victims' work. This could include benchmarking to develop standards in the sector (such as sensible and workable performance indicators), as well as comparisons with work in other areas such as the statutory sector. A part of the funding should be allocated to cover the expenditure of this group. The funding and the process should be managed by the funder.

Recommendation 9.2

Quarterly report system should be maintained.

The system of quarterly financial reports should be maintained, as it made it easier for groups to manage their funding. Also, the principle of funding groups 50% in advance and then in three quarterly payments is sensible, as it means that groups should not be 'in the red'. Groups should be asked to submit brief reports with their quarterly financial report, describing what they have been doing, including any problems or opportunities that have arisen. Groups should also be asked to submit agenda and minutes of all management committee meetings at this time. Receipt of these should be a condition of grant release. At the same time, groups should be encouraged to interact with the funder about potential changes in their plans. This will facilitate a more dynamic approach to the work in this sector.



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APPENDIX

Analysis of Funding Grants for Core and Seed Grants

Analysis of Core Funding Grants

Area in which Beneficiaries of the Funded Group largely Reside

Area	Number	%	Funds Granted	%	Ave Grant
Both Urban and Rural	11	26.83	£1,336,720.00	43.95	£121,520.00
Largely Urban	20	48.78	£1,129,672.00	37.14	£56,483.60
Largely Rural	10	24.39	£575,046.00	18.91	£57,504.60
Don't Know	0	0.00	£0.00	0.00	
	41	100	£3,041,438.00	100	

Area in which Beneficiaries of the Funded Group Largely Reside

Area	Number	%	Funds Granted	%	Ave Grant
Both East and West of the Bann	7	17.07	£1,078,982.00	35.48	£154,140.29
East of the Bann	19	46.34	£1,054,941.00	34.69	£55,523.21
West of the Bann	15	36.59	£907,515.00	29.84	£60,501.00
Don't Know	0	0.00	£0.00	0.00	
	41	100	£3,041,438.00	100	

Community Served by Funded Groups

Community	Number	%	Funds Granted	%	Ave Grant
Cross-Community	17	41.46	£1,479,127.00	48.63	£87,007.47
Largely Catholic	12	29.27	£764,233.00	25.13	£63,686.08
Largely Protestant	11	26.83	£778,078.00	25.58	£70,734.36
Don't Know	1	2.44	£20,000.00	0.66	
	41	100	£3,041,438.00	100	

Analysis of Seed Funding Grants

Area in which Beneficiaries of the Funded Groups Largely Reside

Area	Number	%	Funds Granted	%	Ave Grant
Both Urban and Rural	9	32.14	£22,910.00	30.34	£2,545.56
Largely Urban	7	25.00	£17,600.00	23.31	£2,514.29
Largely Rural	11	39.29	£33,500.00	44.36	£3,045.45
Don't Know	1	3.57	£1,500.00	1.99	
	28	100	£75,510.00	100	

Area in which Beneficiaries of the Funded Groups Largely Reside

Area	Number	%	Funds Granted	%	Ave Grant
Both East and West of the Bann	4	14.29	£11,440.00	15.15	£2,860.00
East of the Bann	10	35.71	£25,270.00	33.47	£2,527.00
West of the Bann	13	46.43	£37,300.00	49.40	£2,869.23
Don't Know	1	3.57	£1,500.00	1.99	
	28	100	£75,510.00	100	

Community Served by the Funded Groups

Community	Number	%	Funds Granted	%	Ave Grant
Cross-Community	9	32.14	£20,710.00	27.43	£2,301.11
Largely Catholic	5	17.86	£14,300.00	18.94	£2,860.00
Largely Protestant	13	46.43	£39,000.00	51.65	£3,000.00
Don't Know	1	3.57	£1,500.00	1.99	
	28	100	£75,510.00	100	