



Northern  
Ireland  
Office

# Equality Impact Assessment - Policy on the arrangements for the delivery of support services to victims of crime (core funding of Victim Support NI)

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# EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT CORE FUNDING OF VICTIM SUPPORT NI

## CONTENTS

|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| <b>1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY .....</b>                              | <b>3</b>  |
| <b>2. BACKGROUND.....</b>                                      | <b>5</b>  |
| <b>3. DATA COLLECTION AND CONSULTATION.....</b>                | <b>7</b>  |
| <b>4. KEY FINDINGS .....</b>                                   | <b>9</b>  |
| <b>Religious Belief .....</b>                                  | <b>9</b>  |
| <b>Political Opinion .....</b>                                 | <b>10</b> |
| <b>Racial Group.....</b>                                       | <b>10</b> |
| <b>Age .....</b>   | <b>11</b> |
| <b>Marital Status.....</b>                                     | <b>12</b> |
| <b>Sexual Orientation.....</b>                                 | <b>12</b> |
| <b>Gender.....</b>   | <b>13</b> |
| <b>Disability .....</b>  | <b>13</b> |
| <b>Dependants.....</b>   | <b>14</b> |
| <b>5. CONCLUSIONS .....</b>                                    | <b>15</b> |
| <b>APPENDIX 1 - SUMMARY OF CONSULATION RESPONSES.....</b>      | <b>16</b> |
| <b>APPENDIX 2 - CSU RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION COMMENTS.....</b> | <b>18</b> |

# **EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT - POLICY ON THE ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE DELIVERY OF SUPPORT SERVICES TO VICTIMS OF CRIME (CORE FUNDING OF VICTIM SUPPORT NI)**

*This document can also be made available, on request, in alternative formats such as Braille, large print, audio cassette, signed video cassette, computer disk and in minority languages to meet the needs of those who are not fluent in English.*

## **1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

1.1 In line with Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act, which requires public authorities to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity and regard to the desirability of promoting good relations, and the NIO Equality Scheme, the Community Safety Unit (CSU) of the NIO carried out a screening exercise of the policy on the arrangements for the delivery of support services to victims of crime (core funding of Victim Support NI (VSNI)) and determined that an Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) should be completed.

1.2 The policy's main focus is on the core funding provided by CSU to VSNI for the provision of services to help victims and witnesses come to terms with their experience of crime.

1.3 While data was sourced from areas such as PSNI Statistics, NI Crime Survey, NI Census and research into Victims and Witnesses Treatment in the CJ System, it was acknowledged that the amount of data was limited and the EQIA was delayed in order for VSNI to obtain some further Section 75 information on their clients. No further Section 75 or victim data was made

available during the consultation and therefore the effectiveness of the EQIA was restricted to the limited amount of data available.

1.4 The CSU formally consulted with 74 bodies/organisations covering the main Section 75 categories as well as those with an interest in victims of crime. Three responses were received with a further response received outside the consultation period. The comments made fall into the categories of Accessibility of Services, Availability of Data, Funding, Monitoring Section 75 Groups and Consultation and a summary of responses can be found in Appendix 1 and the CSU response to the comments can be found in Appendix 2.

1.5 The key findings of the assessment of possible impacts of this policy in each of the 9 Section 75 categories are covered in Section 4 of this document. From the limited amount of Section 75 data available on victims, the EQIA found that although the services of VSNI are available to all victims of crime, there is likely to be a positive differential impact for adult victims of crime, mainly due to the fact that child victims receive assistance from others such as social services, specialist organisations and are not therefore routinely referred to VSNI. CSU considers this positive differential to be justified.

1.6 The key decision arising from this EQIA and the consultation responses is that steps will be taken to ensure that appropriate Section 75 data is collected and monitored by VSNI in future.

## **2. BACKGROUND**

2.1 Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1988 requires public authorities to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity and regard to the desirability of promoting good relations. These duties are designed, in particular, to ensure that equality issues are integral to the whole range of public policy decision making. Public authorities, such as the Northern Ireland Office, are required to submit Equality Schemes to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland and to carry out Impact Assessments of their policies in certain circumstances. The NIO Equality Scheme, approved by the Equality Commission on 28 November 2001, set out how the Department proposed to fulfil those duties and obligations with regard to all of its policies, functions and duties. A comprehensive review of the Equality Scheme covering the period November 2001 to May 2006 has been completed.

2.2 In line with the NIO Equality Scheme, the policy for core funding Victim Support NI (VSNI) was screened and it was determined that an Equality Impact Assessment should be completed on the policy. The reason for the screening in of this policy was that while anyone may be a victim of crime and, therefore, can take advantage of the Victim Support services, it was known (at the time of screening) that there was a disproportionate number of young males who were victims of crime in NI. There was also a dearth of information and facilities for people of ethnic minorities, particularly where English was not their first language. It was accepted that victims need to be treated differently according to their circumstances. The NIO is in regular contact with Victim Support NI, who regularly present options for other services designed to meet specific needs.

### **Policy**

2.3 The Northern Ireland Office is responsible for the provision of support services to all victims of crime. This responsibility is mainly (although not

exclusively) addressed through the provision of core funding to the voluntary organisation VSNI.

2.4 VSNI is an independent charity which works to help people come to terms with the experience of being a victim of crime. Paid staff work alongside a pool of volunteers to deliver the following services across all of Northern Ireland:

- Community Service - information, advice and emotional support is provided to victims after a crime has occurred;
- Criminal Injuries Compensation Service – help is given to applicants claiming Criminal Injuries compensation; and
- Witness Service – information, help and emotional support is provided to victims and prosecution witnesses attending court.

2.5 The Community Safety Unit (CSU) provides core funding to VSNI for the delivery of these services which in 2006-07 was in the region of £2 million. Such a significant level of funding demonstrates the NIO's commitment to the support of victims of crime.

2.6 In 2006-07 VSNI made contact with 54,476 people affected by crime, helped 1932 people make compensation claims and 3056 victim/witnesses attending court.

### **3. DATA COLLECTION AND CONSULTATION**

#### **Available Data**

3.1 Data on the Section 75 categories and on the Section 75 breakdown of victims and witnesses was collected and used from the following sources:

- 2001 Northern Ireland Census
- PSNI Data - 05/06 recorded violent offences by gender of victim;  
- 05/06 recorded violent offences by age group of victim; and  
- 05/06 Notifiable Offences recorded by Age of Victim.
- NIO Statistics and Research: Crime Victimization in Northern Ireland  
Findings from the 2003/04 Northern Ireland Crime Survey
- Section 75 information from research completed by Deloitte and Touche on Victims and Witnesses views on their Treatment in the Criminal Justice System 2004

3.2 The availability of research or data on victims of crime was very limited, therefore the EQIA was delayed while the NIO commissioned VSNI to collate Section 75 information on their clients. The following information was gathered and has contributed to the EQIA findings:

- VSNI referral information for the period 11 April – 30 November 2005
- VSNI Section 75 information from Satisfaction Survey 2005-06

3.3 While this information was helpful, it was based on a short period of time and a sample size of victims and this has been taken into account in completing the EQIA.

3.4 No further Section 75 or victim data was made available during the consultation. Due to the limited availability of data the effectiveness of this Equality Impact Assessment has been restricted.

## **Consultation**

3.5 The Community Safety Unit of the NIO contacted 74 bodies/organisations covering the main section 75 categories, as well as those with an interest in victims of crime, making them aware of the consultation document which was available on NIO and CSU websites.

3.6 The 12 week period of consultation followed informal consultation carried out by VSNI through customer satisfaction surveys (mentioned above), which identified victim's satisfaction of the services delivered by VSNI and also provided helpful section 75 information that was used in the completion of the EQIA.

3.7 The consultation period ended on 27 July 2007 and a total of 3 responses were received. A further response was received on 17 August 2007. A summary of responses and a list of respondents can be found in Appendix 1. Comments detailed in the summary of responses were not attributed to any organisation. The summary attempts to reflect the range of views offered, but does not describe all the responses in detail. A copy of the summary of responses document was posted on the CSU and NIO websites.

3.8 The CSU provided a response to each of the respondents. The overall response to the consultation can be found at Appendix 2.

## 4. KEY FINDINGS

4.1 An assessment of the possible impacts of the Policy of Core Funding VSNI is set out below, taking the 9 Section 75 categories in turn.

### Religious Belief

4.2 The Northern Ireland 2001 Census shows that 44% of the population was Catholic and 53% of the population was Protestant.

4.3 The 2003/04 Northern Ireland Crime Survey Findings show that out of those surveyed (3104) 36% were Roman Catholic and 58% were Protestant. The victimisation findings showed that Roman Catholics (4.4%) were more likely to become adult victims of violent crime compared to Protestants (3.2%)

4.4 Research carried out by Deloitte and Touche in 2002/03 on 82 victims/witnesses attending court found that 43% were Roman Catholic and 41% were Protestant.

4.5 VSNI 2005-06 Customer Satisfaction Survey over the 3 different services with a sample size of about 500 victims/witnesses found that 36% were Roman Catholic and 44% were Protestant.

4.6 While the VSNI statistics showed a higher number of Protestants compared to Roman Catholics (8% difference) which differs from the NI Crime Survey findings, the breakdown would be more in line with the population breakdown in which there is a 9% differential. As VSNI services are made available to all victims/witnesses irrespective of religious belief, **CSU has no reason to believe that there is any adverse differential impact on those with differing religious beliefs in the delivery of this policy.**

## **Political Opinion**

4.7 No data is available on the political opinion of victims or those using the services of VSNI. VSNI services are made available to all victims/witnesses regardless of political opinion. **Therefore, CSU has no reason to believe that there is any adverse differential impact on those with differing political opinion in the delivery of this policy.**

## **Racial Group**

4.8 VSNI referral information for the period 11 April 2005 to 30 November 2005 demonstrated that out of the 31197 referrals received during that period, 58% (18112) were white, 1% (240) were other ethnic origins including Asian, Black Caribbean, Chinese, India, Irish Traveller, Pakistani and Mixed ethnic group and 41% (12845) were not specified.

4.9 In the VSNI 2005-06 Satisfaction Survey (based on 498 responses) 75% of respondents were white, 3% were other ethnic origins including Asian, Chinese, Indian, Pakistani, Irish Traveller and Black African/Caribbean, and 22% were not specified.

4.10 Deloitte and Touche Research into Victims and Witnesses' Views on their Treatment in the Criminal Justice System in 2004 found that all 82 of the victims/witnesses interviewed were White.

4.11 There is no actual breakdown of racial group of all victims in recorded crime therefore a comparison with VSNI findings cannot be made. However, VSNI services are made available to all victims/witnesses regardless of racial group and **the CSU has no reason to believe that there is any adverse differential impact on those of differing racial groups in the delivery of this policy.**

## Age

4.12 PSNI 2005-06 notifiable offences statistics show that 12% of victims were under 16, 86% of victims were 16-64 and 2% of victims were 65+.

4.13 PSNI 2005-06 violent crime statistics show the age of victims to be as follows:

|           |       |           |      |
|-----------|-------|-----------|------|
| Age 0-17  | 19%   | Age 45-54 | 8.9% |
| Age 18-24 | 24.7% | Age 55-64 | 3.1% |
| Age 25-34 | 22.7% | Age 65+   | 1.2% |
| Age 35-44 | 20.4% |           |      |

4.14 From the above it can be concluded that the majority of victims would fall into the 18-34 age range.

4.15 The 2003/04 NI Crime Survey identifies that the most likely victims of violent crime were young people aged 16-29 (8.4% victimisation rate), followed by the 25-44 age category (4.9% victimisation rate) with those over 45 years less likely to be a victim of a violent crime (2.9% victimisation rate). This would be consistent with the PSNI statistics above.

4.16 The 2004 Deloitte and Touche research into Victims and Witnesses Views of their treatment in the CJ System (which had a small sample size of 82) found 16% were in the 18-24 age category, 22% were in the 25-34 age category, 26% were in the 35-44 age category, 21% were in the 45-54 age category, 15% were in the 55-64 age category and 1% were 65 plus.

4.17 The VSNI 2005-06 Satisfaction Survey (sample size of 498) provides the following age breakdown of respondents:

|           |     |           |     |
|-----------|-----|-----------|-----|
| Age 0-17  | 4%  | Age 46-55 | 15% |
| Age 18-25 | 19% | Age 56-65 | 11% |
| Age 26-35 | 21% | Age 66+   | 7%  |
| Age 36-45 | 19% | Unknown   | 4%  |

4.18 While VSNI services are available to all, it is clear that they deal with a small proportion of child victims of crime. This would mainly be because of the involvement of social services and other specially trained organisations such as NSPCC and Barnardos who are called in at an early stage by the police. **While the services of Victim Support are open to all regardless of their age, there is likely to be a positive differential impact on adult victims of crime.**

### **Marital Status**

4.19 The Northern Ireland 2001 Census shows that 48% of the population were married, 33% were single and 8% were separated/divorced.

4.20 The 2004 Deloitte and Touche Research into Victims and Witnesses Views of their treatment in the CJ System found that out of the 82 people interviewed, 48% were married, 37% were single/never married, 6% were separated, 7% were divorced and 2% were widowed.

4.21 There is no reliable data available on the marital status of victims referred to VSNI, however as VSNI services are made available to all regardless of marital status, **CSU has no reason to believe that there is any adverse differential impact on those with differing marital status in the delivery of this policy.**

### **Sexual Orientation**

4.22 No data is available on the sexual orientation of victims using the services of VSNI so it is difficult to assess the likely impact of the policy on this category. VSNI services are open to all regardless of their sexual orientation, **therefore, CSU has no reason to believe that there is any adverse differential impact on those with differing sexual orientation in the delivery of this policy.**

## Gender

4.23 The Northern Ireland 2001 Census shows that 49% of the population were male and 51% were female.

4.24 PSNI recorded violent offences statistics for 2005-06 shows 58% of victims to be male and 42% were female.

4.25 Deloitte and Touche 2004 Victim and Witness Research found that out of the 82 victims/witnesses interviewed 49% were male and 51% were female.

4.26 VSNI Section 75 information gathered on referrals during the period 11 April 2005 to 30 November 2005 found that out of the referrals received 40% were male and 42% were female with 18% being unrecorded. VSNI 2005-06 Satisfaction Survey results recorded 43% as male, 45% as female and 12% unrecorded. The slight increase in the number of females offered VSNI services compared to males would be consistent with the Census and Deloitte and Touche figures but would not be consistent with PSNI recorded violent offences gender breakdown. There is not enough evidence to demonstrate a significant gender imbalance in the services provided by VSNI, **therefore, CSU has no reason to believe that there is any adverse differential impact on those with differing gender in the delivery of this policy.**

## Disability

4.27 No data is available on the numbers of victims with disability or those using the services of VSNI so it is difficult to assess the likely impact of the policy on this category. VSNI services are open to all regardless of disability, **therefore, CSU has no reason to believe that there is any adverse differential impact on those with disability in the delivery of this policy.**

## Dependants

4.28 No data is available on the dependency of victims or those using the services of VSNI, therefore, it is again difficult to assess the likely impact of the policy on this category. As VSNI services are available to all victims of crime and can be provided at a victim's home, thus removing the need for the victim to obtain childcare, **CSU has no reason to believe that there is any adverse differential impact on those with dependants in the delivery of this policy.**

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

5.1 From the limited amount of Section 75 data available on victims this Equality Impact Assessment has found that although the services of VSNI are open to all victims of crime, there is likely to be a positive differential impact for adult victims of crime, mainly due to the fact that child victims receive assistance from others such as social services, specialist organisations and are not therefore routinely referred to VSNI. CSU considers this positive differential as justified.

5.2 One of the main issues raised by respondents to the consultation was the lack of available data, thus there being no evidence to substantiate if an adverse impact existed. However, the reverse of this is also true and no evidence was produced during the consultation to demonstrate the contrary. CSU has similar concerns regarding the availability of Section 75 data **and the key decision from this EQIA will be to take steps to ensure that appropriate Section 75 data is collected and monitored by VSNI in future.**

## **APPENDIX 1 - SUMMARY OF CONSULATION RESPONSES**

The following issues were raised by respondents:

### **Overall Comment**

Respondents welcomed the opportunity to comment on the EQIA recognising the substantial funding provided by the NIO to VSNI.

### **Accessibility of Services**

Views were expressed on the importance of accessibility of services to all victims of crime in the different section 75 categories, with particular reference being made to ethnic minorities, people with disabilities and those from different political backgrounds.

It was highlighted that victims have different needs that are to be addressed through service delivery and a suggestion was made regarding identifying the need for a targeted service.

### **Availability of Data**

The issue of limited data being available for the EQIA was raised and comments were made on how this restricted the effectiveness of the EQIA.

### **Funding**

The funding relationship of the NIO and VSNI was acknowledged and suggestions were made about diversification and payment of funding.

## **Monitoring of Section 75 Groups**

A suggestion was made on the establishment of a monitoring system by VSNI on capturing victim information on Section 75 Groups.

## **Consultation**

Comments on the consultation process were made. The benefits of focus groups were highlighted and also a targeted consultation, particularly for child victims of crime, was recommended.

### **Those who responded to the consultation:**

British Irish Rights Watch

Disability Action

Sinn Fein

Mencap (response provided outside the consultation period)

## **APPENDIX 2 - CSU RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION COMMENTS**

CSU has welcomed the comments received in relation to the EQIA consultation and has issued individual responses to each of the respondents.

The following are the CSU responses to the consultation comments.

### **Accessibility of Services**

The importance of VSNI's services being accessible to all victims of crime is accepted. There was no evidence produced during the consultation to prove that VSNI services are not accessible. As well as receiving referrals from PSNI, VSNI are working towards increasing referrals from other organisations and self referrals from all victims of crime. VSNI are currently reviewing their service delivery with a view to extending it further into outreach centres in all communities affected by crime.

VSNI work to target their service to the differing needs of victims. Diversity training (covering disability) is provided to staff and volunteers, interpreters are provided when required and VSNI are currently reviewing their literature and estate with a particular focus on ensuring accessibility from a disability perspective and by ethnic minorities.

### **Availability of Data**

The CSU has similar concerns regarding the availability of data and the key decision of this EQIA is to ensure that appropriate Section 75 data is collected and monitored by VSNI in future.

### **Funding**

VSNI is aware of the need to raise funds from other sources and is in the process of appointing a fundraising officer to work towards this objective.

### **Monitoring of Section 75 Groups**

This suggestion has been accepted and the CSU will endeavour to take steps to ensure that appropriate Section 75 data is collected and monitored by VSNI in future.

### **Consultation**

The NIO is happy that the obligations around meaningful consultation have been met in the EQIA process. The NIO will continue to engage with the Equality Commission to improve consultation processes and in particular increase the emphasis towards targeted consultation and using a wider range of consultation mechanisms.