An in-depth look at victims, survivors and legacy issues from the Troubles

Jennifer McNern, who lost both her legs in the Abercorn bomb, Belfast, in 1972. Read Jennifer’s story on page seven

Neil Harrison 2018; copyright WAVE Trauma Centre; Injured On That Day Photographic Exhibition
Victims’ story must be top of the news agenda

Government disregard for victims and survivors cannot be tolerated. It will be judged on its actions following the public consultation on the proposed new Troubles legacy institutions. The media must make sure this is top of the news agenda.

VIEW welcomes the new media guidelines on reporting conflict-related issues. Paul Gallagher, chairman of the Victims and Survivors Trust said that journalists have an “important part to play in calling out injustice and have the power to shine a bright light into the dark parts of our past”.

We back the Amnesty campaign to support journalists Trevor Birney and Barry McCaffrey, arrested under the Official Secrets Act after working on the award-winning documentary ‘No Stone Unturned’ which looked at the 1994 Loughinisland massacre.

Journalists were among those at the scene following atrocities and one colleague Martin O’Hagan was murdered for doing his job; other journalists were injured, physically and mentally, while covering the Troubles.

The first rough draft of history is produced by journalists and we believe that the CAIN (Conflict Archive on the Internet) archive on the Troubles should be kept open and fully funded.

Peter Heathwood, an injured group member of the WAVE Trauma Centre – the grassroots charity offering care and support to people bereaved, injured and traumatised as a result of the Troubles – has diligently contributed to the CAIN archive.

Journalists, along with film and theatre practitioners like Cahal McLaughlin and Jo Egan can all contribute by working with victims and survivors, to ensure their voices are heard.

And that Government inaction ends once and for all.

• On behalf of VIEWdigital, I would also like to thank guest editor Alan McBride and the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust whose support immensely helped the production of this issue.

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Editorial

By guest editor Alan McBride, Manager, Wave Trauma Centre

Imagine how society could be transformed if we tried to please our neighbours and make them feel welcome rather than please ourselves?

I lost my wife 25 years ago at the hands of the IRA. At the time I worked as a butcher on the Shankill Road in Belfast, just a block down from where she and nine others lost their lives. Despite the trauma of that day I have tried to remain optimistic about Northern Ireland and the moves by some to bring the violence to an end.

There have been undoubted highs, like the IRA decommissioning their weapons, Sinn Fein signing up to policing and age-old adversaries like Ian Paisley and Martin McGuinness sharing power. Sadly, there have also been lows, like the 158 people that have been murdered, the growing polarisation of politics and the collapse of the Northern Ireland Assembly.

It would appear to many that we are going backwards with an apparent inability by even the most forward-thinking politicians to stop the slide. That said, the thing that bothers me the most is that those who could really make a difference, perhaps the only ones who could make a difference, don’t seem to care.

This thought came home to me as I listened to a radio show a few weeks ago. The Assembly being down was thrashed about by politicians from the two big parties, but rather than trying to fix the problem this morning’s guests were once again playing the blame game.

It didn’t matter what the issue was as they smugly argued the size of their mandates as justification for the stance they have taken and the resulting stalemate. How long will the electorate let them get away with this?

I would like to appeal for a different kind of politics. It’s time to put the past behind us and to start and deliver the kind of Northern Ireland I and so many people like me voted for in the Good Friday Agreement. That said, the past won’t simply disappear. It’s for this reason that a process has been put forward to allow society to deal with the past in a way that doesn’t cast a shadow over the future.

It isn’t perfect and there will always be those who have suffered that will remain unmoved by it, but it is my view that the mechanisms for dealing with the past, contained in the Stormont House Agreement, have the potential to bring much needed redress to victims and survivors. Society owes them nothing less, and (if implemented) could lead to the fresh start so many of them are looking for.

I made my own fresh start when Sharon died by moving out of my Loyalist estate into a mixed area. I wanted my daughter to grow up with friends from all sides of the community and it worked. Zoe got to be friends with a couple of little Catholic girls from across the street and I got to be friends with their parents.

One Eleventh Night I was getting ready to go round the bonfires, something I had done since I was a child. My Catholic neighbours from across the street called over and invited me and Zoe to a barbecue at their house. I explained that we could go for a while but since it was the Eleventh Night I would have to leave early to go round to the fires.

What happened next has stayed with me for a long time and has served as a reminder of the kind of Northern Ireland which I want to live in. When we arrived at their house they had built a small bonfire in their back garden, just for me. There were no flags on this fire and no effigy to be burned. I sat around the fire, drinking beer and eating a burger. We talked about everything and anything as our kids laughed and played together in the garden.

Later on as I stood watching an Irish Tricolour burn on another loyalist bonfire I thought about what had just happened in my neighbours’ house and wondered why it couldn’t be like that all the time. That’s the kind of Northern Ireland I voted for in 1998. It’s still the kind of Northern Ireland I want to be part of in 2019.

Imagine how society could be transformed if we tried to please our neighbours and make them feel welcome rather than please ourselves? An Irish Language act? No problem. An act that protects the culture of Unionists and Loyalists? No problem. These things don’t have to be contradictory or cost the earth and be delivered at the cost of education or health.

The cost of not doing it is costing us so much more in terms of missed opportunities and the ability to steer our own course. How long will those in power continue to play hardball before the penny drops? We need all our politicians working together to deliver the kind of Northern Ireland envisaged in the Belfast Agreement. The agreement didn’t have much to say on victims, but it did say that ‘the achievement of a peaceful and just society would be the true memorial to the victims of violence’.

I believe that’s still the goal and this year I want those that could be in power to climb down off their high horses and deliver it.
VIEW editor Brian Pelan talks to Judith Thompson, the Commissioner for Victims and Survivors in Northern Ireland, about the work of her post, the lack of a pension scheme for the most severely disabled victims of the Troubles and other outstanding legacy issues.

**Question:** When do you expect the findings from The Northern Ireland Office consultation ‘Addressing the Legacy of Northern Ireland’s Past’ to be released?

**Answer:** The consultation closed last October with 18,000 responses. We would expect to know what the findings are in the next few weeks.

**Q:** Are you hopeful the consultation will significantly help to address what you have previously described as “a lack of progress”?

**A:** The outcome of the consultation has to be legislation. Nothing is going to address our lack of progress other than new legislation.

**Q:** The Commissioner for Victims and Survivors (CVSNI) was first established on October 24, 2005. Since then numerous commissioners have held the position including yourself when you were appointed in August 2015. Has it been public money being well spent and what are the main achievements of the office, including your time in the post?

**A:** If you look in the round of the history of it, this is a piece of the Good Friday Agreement that 20 years later we have done very little, within many respects, with victims issues. In the Good Friday Agreement there was a statement that in order to achieve reconciliation you needed to address the suffering of victims. The only significant development that actually hit the ground and is working is funding through the Victims and Survivors Service for groups and individuals on the ground. We have the beginnings of work on a new regional trauma network to address what is a significant and lasting mental health legacy here. The things we have not done and I think they are incredibly significant ones, such as dealing with the backlog in our justice sector, which are costing us credibility here and payment around £30 million a year of public expenditure, according to the Criminal Justice Inspectorate, on institutions which can’t deliver what they are meant to deliver. It is costing us in terms of international judgements against us for failure to comply with human rights legislation.

**Q:** Should a victim of The Troubles ever be appointed as a Commissioner for Victims and Survivors?

**A:** I think holding this office or any other office is down to the competence of the individual to hold it. But neither on its own would it form a good enough basis to do the job. I wouldn’t in principle be opposed to a victim doing anything.

**Q:** What’s your definition of a victim?

**A:** I work absolutely within the law. The law says a victim is anybody who has been injured, anybody who has been bereaved, anyone who has been traumatised, anyone who is a carer.

**Q:** Do you think people who were injured whilst engaged in violent activities can considered to be a ‘victim’?

**A:** Under our law they clearly are. Under our law in respect of any type of action you’ve always got people who will both be victims and responsible for causing harm to others because that’s how it is.

**Q:** In 2016, the Wave Trauma Centre urged politicians and church leaders to back a pension for those severely injured during the conflict. The group is believed to number about 500 people who were so badly injured they were unable to work and could not build up pensions. Will the pension scheme they have called for be set up and when?

**A:** I would be absolutely delighted to see the scheme set up. In 2015 this office delivered advice to the then First and Deputy First ministers which set out how we thought the pension could be established, who it would be for, what it would cost, how we thought it should work, how it should pass to people’s relatives in the event of their passing on. The political agreement around it has held up that happening. It’s a scandal that you’ve got people like Paul Gallagher (who was shot and left paralysed during the Troubles), people like Jennifer McNern and Peter Heathwood, who have all campaigned for this pension and who were injured in a life-
changing way and who were given compensation that in no way ever was going to help them life long with those injuries.

Q: Who or what is the roadblock to this pension being set up?

A: In Northern Ireland there is political disagreement between our parties. It hinges around the fact that a small number of people who may have been responsible for the harm that befell themselves might also get that pension. At the moment we have no Assembly to deal with it even though the pension scheme is regarded as a devolved matter. The only place to take it now is Westminster. I believe now that is where it should go.

Q: Would you regard it as a failure if this pension scheme has still not been set up in five years time?

A: I would see it as a failure of our government, our society and our people.

Q: Would you include your office in this ‘failure’?

A: Of course. But this is an issue that depends on political support. It’s the job of the Commission to give our advice and to absolutely push the issue in every possible way. I believe the only way to do it is to bring this issue to Westminster. These are people who have been let down many times and I’m not in the business of making promises that I do not personally have in my gift to keep.

Question: Would a hard Brexit affect the work of the Victims and Survivors Commission?

A: There are significant issues. One is peace funding. We are being reassured that regardless of the EU exit that peace funding will continue to help victims and survivors but it’s not an indefinite promise. The other really significant issue is the EU directive on the rights of victims. It says that all victims, including historical ones, have a right to support, the right to protection if they need it, the right to know the progress of their case. We’re talking about 1,150 cases. There is no guarantee of this continuing with an EU exit.

Q: Why has the Regional Trauma Network not been established?

A: I guess that we have been slow to learn. I don’t know how we once thought that people had been remarkably resilient during the Troubles. Over the years research has emerged which shows the effects of trauma. The Regional Trauma Network is now in existence. It just needs more money. We need a big injection of funding, amounting to millions of pounds.

Q: Your current position ends in 2019 with a provision to extend it for another four years. Would you like to remain in the post?

A: Yes. Absolutely

Q: What have been the highs and lows of your job?

A: One has been getting the new Victims and Survivors forum together. I also think we are a step nearer to getting the pension scheme delivered. We have also delivered research and policy advice. The most disappointing moment was that when I was appointed on September 1, 2015, there was an expectation that consultation on new legislation would start in November of that year. We had the Fresh Start Agreement at the same time where the politicians agreed on everything except legacy. And they published an agreement on everything except legacy. I remember talking then to a victims and survivors forum when it was the one thing where they all said that nobody is prioritising us over anything. They all said that this is completely unacceptable. That was a real low point. We need to have a conversation not about blame but understanding and moving forward. We can’t draw a line under the past until we have addressed the outstanding issues.
Paul Gallagher, who was left paralysed after being shot by loyalists in January 1993, tells VIEW editor Brian Pelan why he is a strong advocate for the setting up of a pension fund

Paul Gallagher who is doing a PhD at Queen's University

Paul Gallagher was 21 years of age when UFF gunmen burst into his home on the Stewartstown Road in west Belfast in January 1994. They were apparently looking for former Republican prisoners who lived nearby.

In a room at Queen’s University, Belfast, Paul recalled the horrific events which were to dramatically alter his life.

“I had just come home from a day’s work. My family and I had just sat down for our dinner around 6pm. The TV was on and The Crystal Maze was about to start. There was a knock on the front door and my sister opened it.

“Four men entered the room. They were all wearing balaclavas and carrying automatic weapons. They claimed to be members of the IRA. They held us in the house for around an hour. Paul said he done his best to try and keep calm in a “very tense situation”.

“One of the gang then said ‘operation over’ but as they left the house they opened fire at Paul, his mum and dad and his sister and younger brother.

“I’m told they were specifically aiming at me. I was hit six times. I was basically dying in front of my family and could start to feel myself fading away. I could hear my family phoning the ambulance and my brother was slapping me in an attempt to keep me awake.

“Towels were shoved into the bullet holes. A wooden spoon was also pushed into my mouth to stop me biting my tongue. I can also remember being brought into the hospital but nothing else until I awoke a few days later in intensive care.”

Paul, who was left paralysed, described how he still lives in constant pain. “I am sitting with you now and from my waist down it feels like I am burning and my feet are getting crushed in a vice. It feels like I’m sitting in a pool of lava. You have to learn to live with it.

He talked about the effects of the shooting on his family and how they had to become his “doctors and nurses” when he was released from hospital six months later. “They and my wife are now my carers.”

Paul did receive some compensation for his injuries but had to wait for about 10 years until it came through.

He is now a strong advocate for a pension disability fund along with others at the Wave Trauma Centre who were severely injured during the Troubles.

“We feel that we have been forgotten about. I personally thought that the Eames-Bradley proposals could have worked for a lot of victims.

“When you have become severely injured it as if you are a new person. You have to learn how to walk again, how to dress yourself. You need people to help you go to the toilet.

“I was shot because I was an easy target and I was a Catholic. The pension fund is required for people who were left with life-changing injuries. The compensation that was paid was totally inadequate to victims’ needs.

“I want the pension fund to be as inclusive as it can. It needs to be set up.”
The sun is shining through the windows of Jennifer McNern’s kitchen at her home in Belfast as she takes me back to that awful day in 1972 when a no-warning bomb exploded in the Abercorn restaurant. Two people were killed and many others were injured.

Jennifer, now in her sixties, was 21 years of age when she lost her legs in the explosion in Belfast city centre. Her sister, Rosaleen, was also horrifically injured.

She is a strong supporter of the WAVE Trauma Centre’s campaign for a special pension fund for people severely injured in the Troubles.

Jennifer received compensation after the explosion but described it as inadequate. She believes that severely injured victims deserve a pension fund to help them cope with ongoing financial, physical and emotional needs.

I felt her deep frustration when she spoke about experiencing a wave of deep anger when she received a cheque for £50 from the Northern Ireland Memorial Fund in 2009.

“It was Christmas time and this envelope arrived through the door. There was a Christmas card in it and everybody had signed it. It was from the Memorial Fund and there was a cheque for £50 in it,” said Jennifer.

“I lost it. I absolutely lost it. I don’t think I’ve ever been so angry. I made a number of phone calls and insisted that someone should come and take the cheque out of my house.

“Eventually a man did arrive at my home. He said: ‘Jennifer, I’ll take it back. It’ll just go into the coffers though’.” He also added “that a lot of people would be happy to get a cheque for £50 at Christmas”.

I said to him: “If you were someone who was injured in a bomb explosion and you had lost both your legs and you needed £50 at Christmas then there is something desperately wrong.”

Apart from going back to education for a while she has never worked since the explosion and tries to survive on her disability pension. She admitted that she had suffered financial pressures.

Getting involved with the WAVE Trauma Centre was a huge turning point for her in terms of combating depression and how she was feeling about herself.

“I remember feeling so elated after my first visit to WAVE. I felt as if I now had two homes. One where I could talk about what had happened to me and the other where I didn’t need to.

“At the moment the pension fund is pretty high on the political agenda but that could all fall apart again. “We’ve had our downtimes when we wonder is it worth carrying on our fight but then you reboot and go on.”

My final question to Jennifer was did she feel optimistic that the fund would be eventually set up?

“We’ll carry on until it is set up. It is something that should be done. The State should look after us.”
In 1984 Mary Travers, a gifted young musician from Belfast, had recently started work in her dream job as a teacher. With one of her first pay packets she treated her 14-year-old sister Ann to lunch in the city centre.

Ann recalls: “People today take that for granted but it was a rare treat in the 1980s. I had chicken in a basket, which I thought was very exotic, and Mary had a scone. It was the only time I ever got to go for coffee or lunch with my sister.”

Just a few months later 22-year-old Mary was murdered by the IRA. She had been walking home from Mass at Saint Brigid’s Catholic Church in the south of the city with her mother and father, Catholic magistrate Tom Travers, when they were targeted. Mary was shot through the back. Her father was shot six times but survived.

He was later to tell how the same gunman who shot Mary also pointed a gun at his wife's head but it misfired twice.

The significance of recalling the lunch trip into the city for Ann, now 49, is to illustrate how the years cannot dim the memories of her sister.

She is also is able to recall with chilling accuracy every detail of what happened when her sister was killed. “I had been to 11 o’clock Mass, then I came home and was listening to Radio 1 in my bedroom when my brother Paul came running in and said mum, dad and Mary had been shot.”

Ann ran to the scene which was just 200 yards from her front door.

“I just didn’t know what to do. I remember Mary was being put into an ambulance, there was a doctor who was helping her. Paul said to her ‘She’s going to be alright, isn’t she?’ and the doctor shook her head.”

“It’s a day that remains vivid in my memory, I can remember every moment in minute detail. It just never, ever leaves me.

“Mary was a lovely person and we had great fun. All my memories of her before that day are happy ones. She was a good and kind person.”

When asked how a teenager deals with such sudden and traumatic pain Ann is uncertain in her answer.

“I don’t know how any of us really got over it, we all still carry those scars with us today. Grief is a funny thing because you never forget the person, they are always there with you, but the healthy thing is to get through life and live as best you can. I have got married and raised five children and I have to be a good example to them. “But traumatic grief can be triggered by anything. It could be fireworks at Halloween or maybe just hearing a piece of music.”

One such trigger was when Sinn Fein appointed Mary McArdle, the only person convicted over the Mary Travers murder, as a Ministerial Special Advisor in 2011.

Ann says: “Just hearing that name after all that time triggered something inside me. I hadn’t realised how badly I would be affected. Sinn Fein didn’t know it at the time but what they did gave me the voice to be able to speak up and I found that quite cathartic, quite healing.

“All the grief that I had been burying for all those years came out and I had to deal with it.”

Today Ann Travers works as an advocate for other victims of paramilitary violence. She doesn’t expect anyone else to be brought to justice for the death of her sister but will not give up hope altogether.

“I will never give up on justice. It is the identity of the gunman who shot Mary that I’m interested in as well as who gave the order for it to be carried out.”

By Jonny McCambridge

'I will never give up on justice. It is the identity of the gunman who shot Mary that I'm interested in as well as who gave the order for it to be carried out’

Ann Travers, whose sister Mary was shot dead by the IRA in 1984
Voices that have been hidden for too long

George Larmour’s brother John, an off duty RUC officer, was shot dead by the IRA on October 11, 1988, while helping out in George’s family ice cream parlour – Barnam’s World of Ice Cream in Belfast. Now almost 70 years of age, George, left, remembers all victims and survivors who should never be forgotten

“...Our stories must be heard – if we don’t speak up for our dead and injured – the victims and survivors – who will?...”

unbearable phantom pain in their missing limb long after the event. Mothers staring at the last photo of a son or daughter who had so many hopes and dreams cruelly stolen from them.

In each and every home that was touched by the evil of our ‘Troubles’ past, there are loved ones who are still in pain and others who stare at an empty chair and the very sound of their loved one’s name evokes lingering, aching grief and unending memories of loss.

The Victims and Survivors of the ‘Troubles’ have been deplorably treated for too long. We deserve better.

We can all learn so much from little Anne Frank – we have been silent and sidelined for far too long.

Our stories must be heard – if we don’t speak up for our dead and injured – the victims and survivors – who will?

I wrote my own story for a number of reasons. Mainly to ensure that, having reluctantly realised that I will probably never get proper justice for the unsolved murder of my brother, and that the truth will probably never be fully revealed, that his name – John Larmour – will not be forgotten.

I’m reminded of one of the many observations young Anne Frank wrote in her diary: “What is done cannot be undone, but one can prevent it happening again.”

We can’t bring our loved ones back, to hold them just one more time.

But maybe we can ensure that they are never forgotten.

In doing so not only will we be honouring our loved ones but maybe our children and grandchildren will never have to tell such stories of loss and heartache ever again.

• ‘They Killed the Ice Cream Man’ – By George Larmour – www.amazon.co.uk/They-Killed-Ice-Cream-Man/dp/1780731043
Briege Voyle sitting in her home under a painting of her mother Joan Connolly who was shot dead in Ballymurphy, west Belfast, in 1972.

Image: Brian Pelan
On August 9, 1971, Joan Connolly (44) was killed as she stood opposite a British Army base in Ballymurphy, west Belfast, during a military operation. The mother-of-eight was one of 10 people fatally shot in the area over a three-day period following the introduction of internment. Although the British Army have long been held responsible for the shootings, the victim's families have never discovered the truth concerning what happened. For over two decades Mrs Connolly's daughter Briege has campaigned for the truth and now fresh inquests have started into the death of her mother and the other victims.

On the morning of August 9, Briege woke to the sound of bin lids banging — in those days a warning that a British Army patrol was nearby. Later that day as tensions heightened, she watched alongside her sister and friend as some local youths fought against the Army's internment campaign.

“I remember I was up at the Henry Taggart actually standing watching the rioting, it was all kids, ten, twelve, fourteen,” she recalls.

As Briege and the others were standing there her mother appeared and told them that a curfew had been issued due to suspected trouble later that night. “Next thing the loyalists came down from the back of the houses and the whole crowd just seemed to run in that direction. Gas was thrown and when I looked round, I couldn’t see my mummy.”

Briege returned home without her mother and as time passed, she recalls her father growing more concerned. The following day her father used a neighbour’s phone to call the nearest hospital and ask if a female with red hair had been admitted. “When he came back, he was literally carried in, he said there was only one woman brought in and she was in the morgue. “As far as we knew my mummy was out looking for us and she got caught up in the shooting. Eyewitnesses heard her screaming she was blind, she couldn’t see. Then they heard more shooting and then never heard her again.”

Life without their mother proved difficult for Briege and her seven siblings, especially in the early years. “Growing up was horrendous for us because my mummy did everything in our house. She cooked the dinners, cleaned the house, she kept a very clean home. “She couldn’t work because there was eight of us, there was nobody to look after us. We didn’t have very much but we had each other. “When she left, we had nothing, my daddy had taken a heart attack two months before that and was out of work. All we had was his sickness benefit, there were days that there was no food.”

In her pursuit for the truth Briege has met many other victims and survivors, she believes that all pain is the same and that all victims are equal. “I was on the Victims Forum and I met loads of people. I tell my story to anybody who wants to listen, I’ve no problems with meeting anybody.”

In the aftermath of her death, Mrs Connolly was branded a gunwoman, something that her family have always claimed to be untrue. “I want it acknowledged that my mummy was an innocent person, my main aim is to get her name cleared. “Everybody wants different things, personally, I just want them declared innocent and the truth to be told. “There is no justice, there will never be justice for us because the only way you’ll get proper justice is if you get them back and you aren’t going to get them back.”

By Kelly McAllister

There is no justice, there will never be justice for us because the only way you’ll get proper justice is if you get them back and you aren’t going to get them back.
Two decades on from the Good Friday Agreement and the government is still working to address the legacy of the Troubles. The Northern Ireland Office (NIO) is currently examining more than 18,000 responses to its consultation to give everyone a chance to have their say on the best way to address the violence that marred the province for generations.

However, Kenny Donaldson is scathing in his assessment of the consultation. As director of services at the South East Fermanagh Foundation (SEFF), he represents the views of innocent victims and survivors of terrorism and works to effect positive change in areas such as justice, truth and acknowledgement.

He has branded the NIO legacy consultation “unworkable” and said it will not advance the needs of victims of terrorism.

Victims are the very heart of the work being done by SEFF, which was set up on August 15, 1998, the day of the Omagh bomb atrocity.

This was by chance rather than design, but the events of that bloody day hardened the resolve of the founding members that action was required to support victims.

To this end, Kenny (38), who is also Spokesman for Innocent Victims United, is clear about the definition of a victim. “A victim is not someone who has carried out their own act of violence or been involved in a serious criminal act themselves,” he said.

This issue, Kenny said, is a major sticking point for many victims of terrorism in Northern Ireland.

“When you have an organisation which purports to represent victims including those who have committed terrorist acts, it stops innocent victims from getting involved,” he said.

“The very act of trying to be inclusive means that real victims are being excluded.”

As for the definition of justice, Kenny believes this is much more fluid and should be interpreted by the people who have suffered harm.

“Justice takes a number of different forms, there is justice that comes from truth and also accountability, so basically someone is made responsible for their actions,” he said.

“This can in itself take different forms – for some people there is a desire to have someone imprisoned for the activities they have committed, although the numbers of those are going to be very small.

“Undoubtedly the criminal justice system has been usurped by the political agenda over the last 20 years.

“With issues such as the OTR letters and politicians putting their own political agenda in front of achieving justice for victims, there is a sense of victims asking what justice is there for me and there is a lot of frustration.

“When it comes to forgiveness, I believe it is important that there is remorse.

“I know there are those who come to a point where they are able to forgive but from my own perspective, there has to be some element of remorse.

“How else can you forgive if there is no acknowledgement that a wrong has been done?”

Kenny also believes it is crucial that people move away from what he regards as a harmful mindset that victims of terrorist violence should “move on”.

“We never tell people to move on, it’s a shameful attitude, and we do a lot of work is working with them to put in place the structures they need to be able to move forward,” he said.

“Everyone has lost a loved one, whether that is through cancer, ill health or a car accident, but a death caused by another human being, in a pre-meditated deliberate act, there is no death quite like it.”
Raymond McCord is one of the best-known victims of the Troubles. Over the years, he has campaigned tirelessly for justice for his son, Raymond McCord Jr, who was beaten to death in November 1997 by a UVF gang based in the Mount Vernon area of north Belfast. As someone who had always refused to be cowed down by paramilitaries, his reaction to his eldest son’s murder was no different.

He now lives under a constant threat to his life as a result of his unrelenting quest for justice.

His efforts resulted in an explosive report by former Police Ombudsman Nuala O’Loan, which found collusion between his son’s terrorist killers and their Special Branch handlers.

Yet, more than two decades on and in spite of huge personal suffering, the justice that 65-year-old Mr McCord craves, remains elusive.

“Justice to me would be the people who murdered my son standing in court and being convicted of murder. I would expect them to get a full-life term, that’s justice.”

Given the harrowing reality of the circumstances of Raymond McCord Jr’s death, it is little wonder that Mr McCord has not yet achieved his goal.

He lays a large proportion of the blame at the feet of Northern Ireland’s political parties.

“I feel as though we have had no justice whatsoever,” he continued.

“There has been no support from the political parties who are supposed to support victims right across the board.

“I’m not political at all, when I was growing up I had friends who were Catholics and their houses were being attacked after the Troubles started.

“I would have argued with the loyalist paramilitaries because of this, I wouldn’t stand for any kind of sectarianism but it still remains in politics.

“You don’t hear the main parties talk about their policies, they don’t get voted in for their policies or what they’re going to do for our children and our grandchildren, for what they’re going to do to fix our roads or our hospitals.

“They get voted in to keep the other side out and I don’t feel like they represent victims.

“When Nuala O’Loan’s report came out, the politicians took senior police officers to the House of Commons and the House of Lords, but they didn’t invite my family to Westminster.

“There’s been a total failure as a result of the lack of representation of victims.”

Mr McCord said this has also been an issue with successive Commissioners for Victims and Survivors.

“I always remember the former commissioner, Kathryn Stone, saying to me that she didn’t always agree with what I was saying but it was her job to represent me,” he said.

“She said she didn’t understand how I felt as she hadn’t lost a child, but her priority was to represent victims, so she was the best commissioner we’ve had.

“I also believe that any victims’ groups that receive government funding should have a 50:50 policy for staff, or they lose their funding.”

While Mr McCord said he remains dedicated to his campaign, he will not allow the challenges he has faced destroy him.

“There isn’t a day goes by where I don’t think about Raymond,” he said.

“The truth is I’ve never been able to grieve for him.

“People ask me why I do what I do and the reason is that I know he would do it for me, we were so close, but I can’t let what happened ruin me otherwise two lives will be lost.”

By Lisa Smyth

Victims campaigner Raymond McCord
There is this pain inside. It’s almost like a heartache – a bereavement for yourself

Miami Showband massacre survivor Stephen Travers

By Kelly McAllister

The story of the Miami Showband massacre will reach a wider audience than any other story from the Troubles this March, survivor Stephen Travers has told VIEW.

It is to feature as part of Netflix docu-series ReMastered, an investigative series focusing on the history behind some of the most significant events in music.

According to Stephen it is a huge opportunity to educate people on what happened during the Troubles.

On July 31, 1975 the Miami were travelling home after a performance in Banbridge when their minibus was stopped at a false UDR checkpoint at Bushkill in County Down.

Three of Stephen’s bandmates were killed when members of the Ulster Volunteer Force opened fire on them after a bomb they had attempted to plant on the minibus exploded prematurely.

The two men planting the bomb were killed in the blast.

Afterwards Stephen believed that it was a random act of sectarian violence, but later discovered that much more sinister forces were at play.

“At that time the British authorities weren’t too happy about the arrangements on the Southern side of the border. They felt that they should be more stringent and they came up with a plan to force the Irish authorities to stop and search everybody.

“The British came up with – from their point of view – this excellent plan. ‘Let’s frame somebody that everybody does trust. If we can frame them as being terrorists, then the Irish government can’t refuse to stop and search everybody’.

“They picked us, the Miami, because we were accepted by everybody. We were Catholics and Protestants and from North and South.”

Stephen and fellow band member Des Lee survived the attack but were both left deeply traumatised by the experience.

“I’ve often compared it to a baby that has a pain but can’t tell the parents where the pain is. It’s a bit like that with victims.

“There is this pain inside, it’s almost like a heartache, a bereavement for yourself. You can’t quite articulate because you don’t fully understand. You won’t understand something unless you accept it.

“You’ve got to resolve these things, most victims will tell you that a lot of us don’t understand why, what or any of the reasons that these things happen.”

Although Stephen feels that the truth must be told regarding atrocities carried out during the Troubles he recognises that it isn’t always simple to do so.

“I think that you’ve got to understand that truth can be very, very dangerous. Yet you can’t reconcile without the truth.

“If you think that somebody next door killed your dog, then you can’t really be that friendly with them until you find out ‘did they actually do this?’ But the truth in a lot of the cases from the conflict is so toxic that it’s a responsibility knowing these things.

“What definitely has to happen is that there must be an acknowledgement by people who committed these crimes.

“Whether it’s loyalist or republican or state crimes, there must be an acknowledgement that they did it and there must be help and when warranted there must be compensation by the people that were impacted by this.

“There must be an acknowledgement and not just an acknowledgement by the state but an acknowledgement by both societies that terrible, terrible things were done either in their name or that they turned a blind eye to. If we’ve learnt nothing from the past 50 years then it will happen again.”

The ReMastered episode on the Miami Showband massacre will be available to over half a billion viewers worldwide this March.
Allowing patients to tell their own story

Brendan O’Hara, a programme manager at the All Ireland Institute of Hospice and Palliative Care in Dublin, examines the impact of the legacy of conflict in Northern Ireland in the provision of palliative care

While there has been significant research into the mental health impact of ‘the Troubles’, there has been little, if any, research on the impact of the legacy of the Northern Ireland conflict in palliative care.

When a person living with a life-limiting condition is suffering, could the cause of pain be related to a legacy issue from the conflict? Could the cause of pain be missed, and a person’s quality of life diminished, because the professional care giver, and/or the patient, are unable to address the issue causing the suffering?

Recognised as a specialty of medicine in 1987, palliative care aims to improve the quality of life of patients and their families facing life-threatening illness. This care encompasses the treatment of pain and other problems, physical, psychosocial and spiritual.

With a professional interest in palliative care, and a personal interest in peace-building, I wanted to find out if and how the legacy of the Troubles may be encountered in palliative care and what potential impact this could have for palliative care practice.

As part of postgraduate studies in 2016, I had the opportunity to interview nine professionals with experience in palliative care - three nurses, two doctors, a welfare officer, a social worker, a complementary therapist and a chaplain.

Those interviewed were from across the region and all had lived through the Troubles. None of them had any specific training referencing the context of working in the Northern Ireland conflict environment. The social worker’s comment that the Troubles is “something you just didn’t talk about … and don’t really talk about” was representative across a range of interviews.

Patient histories recalled during interviews gave an insight into the working environment. A complementary practitioner spoke of a conversation about “unfinished business” she had with a client coming to the end of her life. This client - a woman in her 50s - vividly recalled her father being shot dead when she was in her late teens. The conversation with the complementary practitioner was the first time this woman had talked about her father.

These professionals were working in a context where people still “have a kind of antennae”, as one of the doctors described it, and work out what “it might not be safe to say” due to perceived religious or political background. The healthcare professionals also acknowledged the difficulty of managing potential disclosure (or non-disclosure) of things not officially known. The same doctor said people are living with knowledge that they can’t share which is “painful for victims who can identify perpetrators but can’t openly identify perpetrators. And for perpetrators who are troubled and confused and would like to be able to talk more about this but don’t have the space to do that”. She remembered a man, when he became very ill, alluding to his involvement in events which had led him to leave the country, and regrets, but “there was never any open disclosure about that”.

The complementary practitioner recalled, from 2007–2008, a young man with lung cancer ‘silencing himself’ when they talked about what he thought might have been the cause of his disease: “Exploring a little bit more with me, he told me that he was involved in a paramilitary organisation at that time, and he was fighting for ‘the cause’, in inverted commas. And I said, is there anything that he felt that he needed support around that, and he says, we’ll just leave it there.”

It would appear that the silencing and denial, which predominated throughout the Troubles, remains a feature of Northern Ireland life. This has implications for palliative care practice. The sensitivities about the Catholic and Protestant divide, the silencing, and restricting opportunities to talk about Troubles-related trauma could prevent people from having the right care, if the reason for their suffering is hidden.

The importance of personal histories of people receiving palliative care and end of life care is summed up by a palliative care consultant interviewed who said that in her first meeting with a patient “the most important thing that I do is to get them to tell their story in their words”. The language of legacy, narrative, life story and peace-building is one which the palliative care community understands.

An increased awareness of the potential for suffering at end of life, arising from the legacy of the Troubles, both among healthcare professionals and wider society, could help ensure that such issues are addressed. A failure to address these issues could diminish the quality of life for those being cared for and for those bereaved by their deaths.
By Jonny McCambridge

The families of those killed and injured in the Sean Graham bookmakers massacre had hoped that 2019 was the year when they would finally get closure.

Five Catholic men were murdered when UFF gunmen opened fire in the south Belfast shop in February 1992 in one of the most notorious incidents of the Troubles.

The victims’ relatives have long been convinced that the security forces colluded with the killers. In 2015 PSNI Chief Constable George Hamilton apologised after an assault rifle used in the atrocity was found on display at the Imperial War Museum, after police had previously claimed it had been disposed of.

Police Ombudsman Michael Maguire had been due to publish his long-awaited report into the bookies’ murders before his retirement this summer, giving the families fresh hope that their search for the truth could finally be over.

But in February they were dealt a devastating blow. Dr Maguire revealed that the PSNI had failed to reveal “significant information” found on police computers about the loyalist gun attack to his investigators. Some of the files relate to covert policing. It means the Ombudsman report into the loyalist murders will now be delayed while he assesses the new material. Senior police blamed “human error” for the mistake.

But for Tommy Duffin (57), whose father Jack was gunned down in the shop, this is an explanation he cannot accept.

“We have dealt with this for years, every time it looks like we are getting close to some closure in this case there is a new obstacle put in front of us, another attempt to knock it back. Dr Maguire is due to retire in July and we don’t know who we will get after him or how long this will take. This has infuriated the families, there was an element of disgust and dismay, not knowing what is going to happen. We were very angry and very despondent.

“But we still live in hope that the truth will come out. We already know the facts and when we say there was collusion we know that there was. All the evidence points the finger at the State.

“We are not interested in convictions or money, we are only interested in the truth, an admission that there were agents involved and that there was prior knowledge that this was going to happen. Someone has to be held responsible for this.”

Tommy tells how his father had recently retired from his work as a stone mason in 1992 and was looking forward to a quieter pace of life.

“My dad was a happy-go-lucky man. He hadn’t been out for a few weeks and had just decided to do a bet that day. He was looking forward to the rest of his life with my mother and was just in the wrong place at the wrong time. My dad and I went everywhere together, Gaelic matches, for a drink together, we were so close.

“Initially, just after it happened, it was very hard to cope. But then my second son was born and I called him Jack after my father and you have to move on, to get on with things.

“But when the families all sat down together and started to ask questions about what happened we knew that something wasn’t right. We’ve had help from solicitor Niall Murphy and Families for Justice and we won’t give up.

“Innocent people from both sides were killed for no reason because of collusion. That is why we keep fighting, we are hopeful that our case will bring up a new law or lead to something that means that this can never be allowed to happen again.”

Justice campaign: Tommy Duffin whose father Jack was shot dead in the Loyalist gun attack
Relatives call on Karen Bradley to resign

Mark Thompson, Chief Executive of Relatives for Justice, says that recent remarks by the Secretary of State represent “a consistent mindset within the British cabinet that is all pervasive, which is to protect their own no matter what they did”

On Wednesday, March 6, the Northern Ireland Secretary for State Karen Bradley stood up in the British parliament and made an appalling statement that all killings at the hands of the RUC and British army during the conflict were “not crimes” and that those responsible had “acted under orders” and “in a dignified and appropriate way”.

Three hours later Ms Bradley made a slight “clarification” without retracting her remarks in full or making an apology despite the inaccuracy and hurt they caused.

The “on the record clarification” was self-serving as she could justifiably be accused of exceeding her reach as a cabinet minister to influence imminent decisions concerning prosecutions for Bloody Sunday. Her apology, much later, was not on the official Hansard record but more an attempt to assuage public opinion, which it most certainly has not.

It is true that in many instances state forces were, as Karen Bradley said, acting under orders and instructions to carry out killings — political instructions. And therein lies the conundrum for the UK government when it comes to accountability especially around collusion.

That is why the remarks represent a consistent mindset within the British cabinet that is all pervasive, which is to protect their own no matter what they did including who ordered such wrongdoing. It is about minimising reputational damage. For the DUP it is more about protecting a warped and equally self-serving narrative of the conflict that is threatened by truth, hence the resistance to rights while all the time retreating behind what republicans did when challenged by logic. Though the often heralded and offensive numbers game “we're only responsible for 90 percent of killings” doesn’t stack up when we examine collusion.

Defending the indefensible and presenting British soldiers or other state actors who are asked as voluntary attenders to account for killings they carried out or were involved in as victims is as equally odious as Karen Bradley’s remarks. And that is precisely why the primacy of the rule of law must be applied concerning every aspect of legacy when addressing egregious violations no matter who the perpetrator.

It is the application of rights and law driven by families, NGOs and lawyers around past abuses that has exposed official state impunity.

Political agreements and promises are either regularly broken or rarely implemented and this past few weeks have demonstrated that it is the rule of law that matters. There must be no amnesty — general — or otherwise.

We were humbled last week when Relatives for Justice and the Pat Finucane Centre accompanied four ordinary relatives whose loved ones were killed by state forces to confront Karen Bradley in an appropriate and dignified way regarding her comments. Emmet McConomy, Collette Deviney, Patricia Burns, and Frances Meehan were extraordinary as they each recounted the deaths of loved ones at the hands of state forces.

Emmet presented three pictures of his brother, Stephen who was only 11-years-old when shot dead by soldiers in Derry; the first showed Stephen in a school picture, the second only a few weeks later as he lay in hospital on a life support machine, and the final picture in his coffin.

Stephen was one of over 80 children killed by state forces; 367 people were killed directly by the British army and the RUC. All four relatives looked Karen Bradley in the eye and told her she needed to resign.

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The remarks she made have demonstrated beyond those affected by state violence and collusion that the British government are incapable of being impartial concerning legacy.

They also demonstrate that it is only by upholding rights and by applying the rule of law that justice and accountability can be achieved.
It’s an absolute disgrace that people who were severely injured in the Troubles are still not getting a pension

Former Policing Board vice-chairman Denis Bradley talks to VIEW editor Brian Pelan about the ongoing dispute over the definition of a victim

In 2009, when the two leading figures of the Consultative Group on the Past, Denis Bradley and former Church of Ireland head Robin Eames, unveiled a report which made more than 30 recommendations about how to deal with the legacy of decades of violence – only one of them was to capture the news headlines.

It was the recommendation to pay £12,000 to all families, including the relatives of paramilitaries, who suffered bereavement during the Northern Ireland Troubles. It produced a furious reaction from some victims’ groups, Unionists and the Conservative Party, and the proposal was never implemented.

I recently met Denis Bradley in the City Hotel in Derry and asked him did he have any regrets about the reaction.

“I would actually stand over it stronger now. I have very little tolerance for the on-the-surface, shallow interpretation of the £12,000 proposal.

“In the report there were a number of suggestions. The report said that it was the group’s opinion that our politicians in the north of Ireland are not capable of doing it. The only people who can really take this on and do it are the Government. Because it is too raw and there is too much at stake for our local politicians to do it. That has proven to be true.”

He argued that all measures which were implemented in “sensitive areas” such as policing and decommissioning came about because of the work of the British and Irish governments.

Mr Bradley said: “The people who were suppose to implement the Consultative Group on the Past were the two governments and both governments ran away from it.

“The core problem about all of this is the definition of a victim and that issue is being fought today as it was then. It hasn’t been solved.”

After our meeting, Mr Bradley further addressed the issue when he addressed severely injured victims of the Troubles at an event in the Guildhall in Derry, organised by the WAVE Trauma Centre.

“There is a way in which our past can swallow you up. And it can be impossible to get away from,” he told those present.

“The Consultative Group on the Past report was an incredible report.

“There were a few insinuations that we dealt with those who were killed but not those who were injured. That’s not true. Also the definition of who is a victim is blocking everything.

“When you deal with the totality of this situation you have to work within the law. And if the law is not good enough then you have to change the law. And the only law available to us is the one which defines what a victim is. This law was passed by the Westminster parties.

“It says that anybody who was killed in the Troubles is a victim. There is no definition which says if you blew yourself up then you are not a victim.

“There is no definition which says if you’re a terrorist then you are not a victim. If the DUP have problems with this law then let them change the law.

“I’m challenging anyone within the unionist community who wants to keep blocking this to change the law or to take on board that every mother’s tears are the same.

“It’s an absolute disgrace that these people here who were severely injured are still not getting a pension. Please stop this fighting about the definition of a victim.”
Why we deserve to have a better future

Kate Turner, Director of Healing Through Remembering, argues that we must educate our children about the conflict in Northern Ireland to ensure that they never have to endure what so many in our society have in healing and collectively moving towards a viable and peaceful future.

We must acknowledge the individuals that have carried the greater burden of pain, silence, and trauma associated with the conflict

Those principles are divided into three key areas – society, process, and the individual. All three of these layers are important, and all three are interlinked and interdependent. This is what we have learned:

First, while ‘dealing with the past’ may be daunting and uncertain, it holds positive potential for restoration, growth, and better relationships. While there is a moral duty to consider and respond to survivors’ needs, dealing with the past is not restricted to specific groups of people, or only those most affected or involved – it is a moral, ethical, and social responsibility that we share as members of this society.

Second, the processes that we develop and put in place to tackle the challenges we face must work constructively and with an integrity of purpose. It is only on this basis that we will develop approaches to dealing with the past that can truly support and meet the needs of society, both in remembering and
Peter Heathwood pointed to a quote from George Santayana which is pinned to a board on his kitchen wall. It reads: ‘Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.’

He was paralysed in a loyalist shooting in his home in north Belfast in 1979. His father arrived at the house just as paramedics were carrying him in a body bag to the ambulance. They couldn’t get a trolley into the house. When his father, Herbert, saw the body bag, he cried out “Oh, my poor Peter” and dropped dead from a heart attack beside the ambulance.

“I was the lucky one that night – two seconds and I was out of it. My wife, Anne, was pulled screaming down the hall by her hair, saw her husband shot, her father-in-law dying and the kids screaming. Patrick was six, he kicked one of the gunmen in the leg in the hall, Anne Marie was four-and-a-half.

“Poor Anne, she died in 2006 at the age of 51. She never recovered from the trauma.

“I used to ask her why we can’t just get past all this. She would always repeat the same thing, ‘It was me who opened the door to the gunmen’.

“I joined the WAVE Trauma Centre in 2008 and I’m now on the board. The campaign for the pension is a really big thing for us. “There are 500 people left seriously injured and the state must recognise our campaign for a pension to keep us living independently into old age. I see it as recognition. People say the Troubles are over, but we live with our injuries every single day. For us it doesn’t go away. “The Northern Ireland Office is well aware of this and recognise the pensions issue, but our worry is if something gets started this spring to come into force in autumn, what effect might Brexit have on it all? It could be Groundhog Day all over again.”

Peter was originally a history teacher and has a lifelong fascination with Irish history.

“When I got out of hospital and got my criminal injuries claim in 1981, there was this new invention - the videocassette recorder. I thought right, I’ll have one of them. It was the size of a suitcase, and the tapes cost around £10 each.”

So, on May 7, 1981, Peter made his first recording.

“There it was, Bobby Sands’ funeral. He had died on May 4. “I remember thinking this could lead to civil war so I decided to record all the news I could for posterity.”

Peter’s archive is available for consultation at CAIN (Conflict Archive on the Internet) which is based at the University of Ulster, Magee).

However, funding to transfer or transcribe his material has been frozen for some years, although Peter has kept cataloguing and recording the news.

“That was the start of it”, he said, “letting it wither on the vine.”

Peter, who is a CAIN stakeholder, said he was told earlier this year by the Ulster University that there is now a consultation on the future of the CAIN archive. The university claim that CAIN is financially unsustainable in its current form.

“The consultation closes on May 2, so there isn’t much time left to fight for CAIN’s survival.

“I had a Chinese student in touch with me recently. She hadn’t heard of the Good Friday Agreement, but she had heard of the CAIN archive.

“CAIN must be kept open and fully funded. Not just for all the international victims of communal violence, not just for all victims and survivors here, but for generations to come, so they can all remember the past – but will never repeat it.”
How we address the legacy of our past has long been debated and there will never be a singular agreed way of doing this.

The job of the VSS is not to try and shape any sort of narrative around the past, but to make sure in the most practical ways possible, that the needs of the many forgotten victims and survivors are addressed.

In the past year, we have provided support directly to over 6,000 victims and survivors alongside a broad range of health and wellbeing services to over 12,000 victims and survivors through our network of 55 community partners.

We focus on practical things that make a day-to-day difference in the lives of victims and survivors. This includes things like psychological therapies, persistent pain, disability aids, educational opportunities and befriending in addition to advocacy support in the areas of welfare reform and truth, justice and acknowledgement.

We are often asked – do we still need services for victims and survivors for events which happened more than 30 or 40 years ago?

The answer to this straightforward. We do. Many victims and survivors are living today with the ongoing effects of physical and psychological injuries, post-traumatic stress, depression, anxiety, and addiction. There is a large part of our population who haven’t healed or are still in a healing process. They need support and services.

The establishment of a comprehensive range of legacy mechanisms and institutions remains outstanding. This means health and wellbeing needs today cannot be disentangled from the wider needs of truth, justice and acknowledgement about our past.

Dealing with the past has been a long process. It has taken time for trust to be built post-1998 and for people to come forward and seek help. We must respect the pace set by individual victims and survivors and adapt our services to ongoing and changing needs.

We have recently changed how we deliver services away from a grant-led system to a needs-based approach, with a focus on health and wellbeing outcomes for victims and survivors and enhanced monitoring and learning. Alongside academic research, this practical knowledge has allowed us to better understand the transgenerational impact and the wider impact on families, communities and society today.

The statistics speak for themselves.

• More than 3,720 people lost their lives as a result of the Troubles/Conflict. 91% were men.

• The burden of pursuing truth and justice is often carried by widows into old age, and is now frequently passing on to the next generation to children, siblings, and grandchildren, with a rippling impact throughout the whole family and community.

• 52 legacy inquests into 93 of these deaths remain outstanding at this late date. Bereaved families have a right to this due process, and the delays involved continue to have a negative impact on the psychological and physical health and wellbeing of all affected to this day.

• Among the more than 40,000 physically injured, and many more psychologically injured, more than 4 out of 5 carers are women. There are over 600 long term carers with VSS today. We have witnessed how, with the focus on ‘holding it all together’ at the time, women and other carers within families often did not prioritise their own health and wellbeing, and became disconnected from statutory support and services. As a result, poor physical and mental health, and frequently a reliance on prescription medication, are reported today as systemic issues by carers and the bereaved.

• The direct financial consequences of bereavement and serious injury over the period 1969-1998 (and beyond) have included loss of income and loss of pensions. The affected children, siblings, parents, and spouses – overwhelmingly women – have had to adjust their life plans and aspirations to accommodate these financial impacts.

• A pension for the seriously injured remains outstanding. Many of those injured have far outlived the lifespan that was projected for them at that time on the basis of their injuries in calculating compensation and medical needs. Their suffering has been compounded by deteriorating mobility, health, and wellbeing, becoming more serious as they age. Many are in severely declining health, suffer persistent pain, and require daily care and support. The impact on family and carers has been significant. Tragically, dozens have already died without the opportunity of a properly supported and dignified quality of life.

• To find out more about the Victims and Survivors Service, please visit www.victimsservice.org

Talking about our past is difficult and many would prefer that we leave it there and ‘move on’. However victims are not living in the past. Their needs are real and remain here in the present. There is much we can learn from them to bring healing to our society.
The burden of grief carried by all bereaved families who lost loved ones in the conflict is endless. But those with unanswered questions carry a second burden – trying to get answers.

The last thing that any bereaved relative needs is a half-truth or speculation – least of all propaganda-inspired claim of collusion.

The Pat Finucane Centre, which offers advocacy services to anyone bereaved in the conflict, does all it can to get the evidence-based answers that families are desperately seeking.

Our investigations are strictly fact-based. We start from the premise that a half-truth is as bad as a lie.

Many families have been fed so many half-truths that they need to see the evidence for themselves, to touch and feel the truth. And who would blame them?

Yet so much of the truth they need is kept under lock and key in archives and vaults – places from where people like us are locked out.

Until transitional justice mechanisms are in place, organisations like ourselves seeking truths are forced into the arcane precincts of the courts, the dust of the archives, the shadowy world of the whistle-blower.

The families are left waiting, waiting, waiting for inquests, for their day in court, for the answers they hope, fear and trust are out there somewhere.

Their anger grows as they grow older and realise just how much of their short span on this earth has been affected, even dominated, by their search for truth.

When the Pat Finucane Centre’s Lethal Allies was first published in 2013, we fulfilled at least part of our obligation to the families of the 120-plus people killed by the so-called “Glenanne Gang”.

We told at least part of their story. The film now screening throughout Ireland – and beyond – Unquiet Graves tells the same story in documentary form.

But both these were only possible because of ten years work in the newspaper libraries of Ireland, of working alongside Mr. Justice Henry Barron in his inquiry into the Dublin Monaghan Bombings of May 1974.

They were only possible because of whistle-blowers like former RUC Sergeant John Weir and former British Army press officer, Colin Wallace. And because of the integrity of individual retired police officers in the Historical Enquiries Team (HET).

It was, in short, because of our comparative good luck and because of the hard work of many volunteers over a decade of determination. Others have not been so lucky.

Along the way, we were forced to tell one family that the man who killed their beloved father was, secretly, a serving RUC officer. Another that the man who killed both their parents was a serving UDR man.

Three sons were told the RUC could have saved their mother by the stroke of a pen and another family that the gun which killed their father was taken from a British Army arsenal in a raid where there was evidence of collusion that was never followed-up.

All of that was hard to hear. But not one family has ever told us they wished they had been kept in the dark.

The truth confers a modicum of respect to families whose lives have been torn apart.

Occasionally, you hear people descending into a bottomless well of cynicism in saying that the people of Northern Ireland can have either peace or justice – but not both.

We turn that on its head and say that neither peace nor justice is possible, one without the other. That reconciliation, without an honest attempt to get to the truth about the past, is impossible.

Since lawyers acting for the Glenanne families began seeking to force the state to abide by its obligation to conclude the thematic report that the HET begun, no fewer than 17 close relatives have died.

Is that the kind of legacy that London wishes to leave to those who lost their loved ones? Is ‘Deny, Delay and Death’ the only answers the State have to those it wronged so egregiously?

Perhaps, but they will have to fight us, and those who come after us, to do so.
I spoke at a conference recently organised by Queen’s University’s ‘Victims and Dealing with the Past’ project team to launch a new set of media guidelines. Following extensive consultation with victims and survivors and journalists and editors, two sets of guidelines – one for victims and survivors on media engagement and one for journalists, editors and educators on how to engage with victims and survivors and report on legacy issues – were produced.

I fully welcome these new guidelines for both victims and survivors and for those who represent the media.

They are a long time coming and we need to thank everyone involved in their production.

There is an inherent need for such guidelines because for many decades there was, is, and will be an interaction between those affected by the violence and those who seek to discuss and disseminate these effects.

We only need to pick up our daily newspapers, stick on the radio or watch our local news bulletins and political programmes to see the past in our present. And realistically we know that this will continue into our future.

What runs through these guidelines is the necessity to treat victims of the conflict with respect and dignity. To ensure that we do no further harm to those who have been harmed in the most grievous ways in the past.

These guidelines warn against unscrupulous and unskilled reporters inflicting further wounds on those affected by (and I quote) “inappropriate earlier media coverage, public indifference, failure to investigate by the police, perceived injustice in the courts or perceived rewarding of perpetrators through a peace process.”

The concept of doing no harm should be priority of all ethical journalists and is quite frankly, a no-brainer. So, if we take this responsibility as a given, what else are we to make of these guidelines? Are they asking journalists and those in the media to consider something more? Should they inspire journalists and our media to not just do no harm but to also do some good? I say yes.

I believe that they should counter the effects of “inappropriate earlier media coverage” that I just mentioned with media coverage more suited to the needs of victims and survivors. They should tackle the aforementioned “public indifference” by helping the public to understand and empathise with those most affected. They should challenge the police who had earlier and are even now currently failing to investigate the crimes of the past in an effective human rights compliant fashion. They should shine a light on how the courts meted out further injustice upon those who sought accountability. They should give voice to those who feel that a peace process has left them behind.

In effect the journalist of today and the future should seek to remedy those who had been badly treated by the media in the past.

I am not seeking to pin blame or condemn those who came before and may still work in the media today but I am asking that with these guidelines comes a new and more appropriate way of dealing with our fractured society. I am asking that our media draws its line in the sand and moves on from its past.

I am asking that they do their job as the Fourth Estate and to really be the advocates for those without voice against the dominant systems of government and bureaucracy. They need to utilise their ability to frame political issues for victims and not for the governments. They need to embrace their indirect but powerful social influence and hold government to account.

Now this comes natural to many of our current journalists. Investigations into political corruption, incompetence and duplicity are tackled with the vigour it deserves. Journalist win all sorts of awards and plaudits for shining their light on these issues and rightly so but when it comes to some of the reporting on the legacy of our conflict many are left wanting.

They run for cover under the security blankets of media neutrality and impartiality when instead they should be partial when they see continuing injustice being meted out against those who have been harmed in the past. They should be focusing on the needs of the little old lady whose child was killed in the 1970s with the same vigour as they do for the little old lady who faces eviction from their nursing home.

They should be asking the questions of government as to why they have not brought forward measures to deal with all victims instead of asking those victims who have seen movement in the courts to comment upon the actions of the various actors in the conflict; and what should be done about them. There is no whataboutery when they are dealing with the concerns of the little old lady in the nursing home. They don’t ask her to empathise with the worries of a CEO in the local Health and Social Care Trust as they try to balance their budgets, do they?

This is the challenge for the journalists of today and the future. Are you willing to throw off the practices of the past and help rebuild a future we can all be proud of? You all have an important part to play in calling out injustice and have the power to shine a bright light into the dark parts of our past.

With the help of your stories, told in an open and honest way, free of political interference, we as a society can better understand the harms of the past. You can show us how it still affects those who were there, those who were left behind and those who are still yet to be born.

Now is the time to embrace this opportunity.

An unlikely friendship

VIEW editor Brian Pelan talks to Jo Berry, whose father, Conservative MP Sir Anthony Berry, was killed in the IRA Brighton Hotel bomb attack in 1984 and Pat Magee, the man responsible for causing the explosion. The two of them discuss their unusual friendship and why they have travelled the globe to deliver a message of reconciliation.
I am never going to forget that Pat planted the bomb that killed my father. But he is also the man who has travelled with me to Rwanda and to Palestine to talk about conflict resolution.

It is the most unusual interview I’ve ever carried out in more than 30 years of journalism. I’m sitting in a private room at a Belfast hotel. Directly opposite me is Jo Berry. And sitting beside her is Pat Magee – the man responsible for causing her father’s death in the Brighton Hotel bomb attack in 1984.

Coffee, tea and cups have been laid out in the room along with little tins of mint sweets. Everything seems ordinary and yet all three of us are aware that it is a very strange scenario and one that many people would grapple to get their heads around.

After the IRA bombing which killed five people, Berry said she has dedicated her life to conflict resolution. She met Magee for the first time in 2000, a year after he was released from jail under the terms of the Good Friday Agreement.

The two of them have since engaged in a number of speaking tours about the themes of reconciliation and conflict resolution at a number of venues throughout the world, including Belfast.

Berry is calm and composed as she explained how they first met and the work that they have undertaken. “It was only two days after I lost my dad I thought if I can bring something positive out of this, if I can bring some peace, I can change the future because you can’t change the past.”

“Part of the work that I do with Pat is about what can we learn from the past in order to move on.”

I asked Magee what he thought about Alan McBride’s remarks as guest editor in this issue when he wrote: “The achievement of a peaceful and just society would be the true memorial to the victims of violence.”

Magee replied: “I have been involved in politics for most of my adult life. The aim was always to achieve such a society. We felt that this was lacking and it had caused the conflict. To achieve justice and rights would be a victory. Anything short of that means that the struggle continues.”

“I see my work with Jo and others as a way of addressing the legacy of the Troubles and the pain that the Republican movement caused.”

“On a personal level I could never see myself as a victim. If you were involved in any way of fighting back it’s hard to wear the mantle of a victim.”

Berry added that her life has been shaped because of what happened to her. “It opened me to the effects of violence. I care deeply about hurt and trauma. We need to support the needs of victims.”

I asked both of them about the concept of ‘forgiveness’ and what did the word mean to them?

Magee said: “If you feel guilt there is a part of you that would like to be forgiven. My involvement in the conflict was very conscious and I knew what I was getting involved in. How can I seek forgiveness for that?”

Berry said she no longer knows what forgiveness means. “The most important thing to me is that Pat has listened to me about the impact of what he did. He has always listened and cared about the effects on me.”

Both of them laughed when I described their relationship as ‘strange’. Berry admitted it was ‘unusual’. Magee added: “There isn’t a word that fits it.”

I said to both of them that many people would have a difficulty in accepting their ‘friendship’.

“I’m not expecting anybody to understand it,” said Berry.

Magee added that their relationship is strained at times. “You are meeting someone you hurt. There have been times when both of us have said we can’t do this anymore. But there is a deep value to knowing each other.”

Berry, who has set up her own charity called Building Bridges for Peace, added: “I completely understand that people find our relationship to be challenging. I am never going to forget that Pat planted the bomb that killed my father. But he is also the man who has travelled with me to Rwanda and to Palestine to talk about conflict resolution.”

Magee said: “Before I went to meet Jo for the first time I did ask myself how would I react if someone had killed somebody close to me. I am very careful to try and maintain my relationship with Jo because it matters to me.”

“You can’t undo the impact on your own life of being involved in conflict.”

As our interview drew to a close. Berry spoke warmly about her relationship with her father. “A few months before he was killed he told me that he understood my unconventional views on life. The memory of those words are very special to me.”

They both then left the hotel room to continue their very unconventional journey.
Forget your perfect offering

Playwright Jo Egan writes about the daunting challenge she faced when writing her drama The Crack In Everything which deals with the stories of six children who were killed in the Troubles.

March 8 2018 is a quiet rainy afternoon. The phone rings, its Elaine Forde offering me the position of International Theatre Artist in Residence with the Playhouse, Derry. I’m over the moon. At the first meeting, Artistic Director, Pauline Ross mentions a possible theme: that of children who’ve been killed in the Troubles – and my soul sinks.

Often plays created with communities have at their heart a mission to connect to a wider public – a mission: to connect meaningfully, to be understood. Something unseen is recognised, heard, witnessed, valued. The playwright is expected to mine the subterranean core of the issue and create a work of art encapsulating multiple narratives. I’m not confident I can deliver on this but a series of unbelievable coincidences, (that often happen when a play is coming into existence), convinces me that Pauline is right in her belief that now is a good time to try. It’s at this stage the line from the Leonard Cohan song, Anthem reminds me to: “forget your perfect offering”. And so I do. It’s the only way to approach the project without fear consuming me. From the minute I signed the contract, fear keeps me awake at night. Anxiety is my constant companion – and driver.

By June we identify six families who want to be part of the story-gathering process. I interview over 20 people. All of them detail the events leading to the child’s death, details of the impacts of trauma on the family members. The stories are gathered in Castlerock, Carndonagh, Derry, Drumahoe, Belfast and the West of Ireland. During the interviews, apart from the grimness, the stories electrify – they’re intensely moving and heartstoppingly real. Yes, they’re desperately sad but there are insights never spoken aloud before. And the fight for justice unravels like a detective story.

At the start of July, I sit at the laptop with the transcriptions and the interview recordings. I play them over and over as I read through the transcriptions, editing and shaping the stories and interweaving testimonies.

As the project continues, I meet people who ask, “What are you working on?” And their faces immediately grimace or they step back as I tell them. There’s a pain that consumes us when we lose people we love. Something that’s even more unbearable when associated with children. Something we perceive as so overwhelmingly destructive to the human spirit we don’t want to call it to our door.

Each day there are points where I am upset by the interviews. When I return home, I am brought to tears by the news. I devour a rubbishy TV box set obsessively on my days off. I sob watching it. Towards the end of the three months I refrain from visiting my small grandsons for fear I’ll bring death to their door. But I know this for what it is. I’ve been here before. Nearly every community theatre process has brought me to my knees. At least now I know this is just a consequence of the work. I welcome the tears as a tension diffuser and I observe my responses as merely a manifestation of fear and exhaustion: the enemy of any artistic process. Also and most importantly, I regularly attend a psychotherapist.

Without a structured truth and recovery process the arts in all genres are bringing human experience and hard-won insights to light. In the past stories of paramilitaries or state forces took precedence in the narrative but now stories of those who were randomly caught up in the maw of the “Troubles” monster are crucial to moving forward. How these families deal with their tragedy goes beyond words such as courage, bravery and endurance. We might not be able to change past events but we can change how we see them.

The children

The stories being shared are those of:

- Damien Harkin, eight years old, was killed by a British Army lorry in the Bogside, Derry, on July 24, 1971;
- Annette McGavigan, 14 years old, fatally wounded when the British Army fired into a crowd of bystanders at a riot in the Bogside on September 6, 1971;
- Julie Livingstone, 14 years old, died on May 13, 1981 from injuries sustained after she was shot by a plastic bullet fired by the British Army;
- Kathryn Eakin, eight years old, died in the Claudy bombings, carried out by the IRA, on July 31, 1972;
- Kathleen Feeoney, 14 years old, shot and killed on November 14, 1973 when an IRA sniper fired at a British Army checkpoint and killed Kathleen by mistake;
- Henry Cunningham, 16 years old, a passenger in a van fired on by three UVF gunmen on August 9, 1973.
Addressing the legacy of the past

Cahal McLaughlin, Professor of Film Studies at Queen’s University Belfast, looks at the work of the Prisons Memory Archive and why oral history can play a vital role in examining the legacy of our violent past.

The Prisons Memory Archive is a collection of filmed recordings back inside the Maze and Long Kesh Prison and Armagh Gaol, with up to 180 people recorded, including prison staff, prisoners, teachers, chaplains and probation officers.

Filmed in 2006 and 2007, the project used three protocols to address the political and psychic sensitivities of the Troubles period. Firstly, co-ownership shared authorship with the participants so that they retained a strong sense of agency in their own stories; secondly, inclusivity ensured that as wide a cross-section of the people who passed through the prison’s gates were included; thirdly, we used life-storytelling, which avoided leading questions and encouraged participants to set their own agenda of what to talk about and, just as importantly, what not to talk about.

The project has been primarily funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, both in its initial stages and more recently when an agreement was reached to preserve and make accessible over 300 hours of audio visual material, as well as thousands of photographs and documents, from the archive at the Public Records Office Northern Ireland. This is a three year project, with some material already available at PRONI. There are also two documentary films, edited from the archive, that are available for public screenings and libraries.

Addressing the legacy of the past has been a difficult journey for many, including the political parties at Stormont, who have so far failed to implement the Stormont House Agreement, which included three strands – judicial enquiry, truth recovery and an oral history archive. Of course, vacuums are filled and many community groups and NGOs have stepped into the breach, including WAVE, Healing Through Remembering, and Accounts of the Conflict. The PMA is one such group, focusing on the prisons which were iconic – both influenced by and influencing the outside political world. Telling this story is an important, but not necessarily the most important, story.

We have organised several screenings and workshops and have concluded that for oral history to play a role in addressing the legacy of our violent past such work must be collaborative with survivors of violence who wish to tell their story. Because there is a risk of retraumatising storytellers, it is important to share authorship with them – it is well known that trauma fragments your sense of wholeness, e.g. memory and identity, so it is important to help restore the sense of authorship over one’s story, of who you are and where you have come from. Given the current production model of broadcast radio and television, which, because of its political economy, tends to rush in and out with an immediate consent form handing over copyright to the producer, an oral history archive should establish the principle of collaboration, so that no-one should sign off on their consent form until they have seen the final edit before being made public. As one prison officer said to us, ‘I once did an interview for television, but I didn’t recognise myself on the tele’. Participants should be co-authors of their own story, at least up to the point of public exhibition.

As one prison officer said to us, ‘I once did an interview for television, but I didn’t recognise myself on the tele’. Participants should be co-authors of their own story, at least up to the point of public exhibition.
Trauma invaded our very marrow and bones while healing has remained desperately elusive

Eamonn Baker, a community activist in Derry working with the Towards Understanding and Healing project, believes the legacy of ‘The Troubles’ continues to haunt Northern Ireland

In our time, political speech and writing are largely the defence of the indefensible. Political language has to consist largely of euphemism, question-begging and sheer cloudy vagueness. Such phraseology is needed if one wants to name things without calling up mental pictures of them. (George Orwell, Politics and the English Language, 1946).

Almost immediately after the firebomb outside Bishop Street Courthouse on January 19, the media, in its various manifestations, appeared in numbers to drain every drop from this emergent story. A familiar refrain sounded in diverse broadcast interviews: “We don’t want to go back/be taken back to the dark days.”

I remember the late Willie Donaghy teaching O Level English Language at St. Columb’s College and encouraging discussion arising from our reading of Orwell’s essay, Politics and the English Language. We were 16 years of age. It was 1967, years after that essay was published and a year before the Duke Street civil rights march.

For me, then, “the dark days” were rising early, my daddy getting the fire set ahead of us stirring, him already out at the coal shed drawing in a bucket of coal, lamenting that none of us were up to that task, always and only him those early January mornings. He would soon be tempted to chalk arrows pointing towards the coal shed in case any of his four sons had actually lost their bearings.

Orwell’s trenchant analysis of how language can be debased to serve politics was mulled over with Mr. Donaghy – dubbed “Cheyenne” behind his back – and that dialogue must have seeped deep down into my core. Now, I wonder, how come we so readily reach for those relatively dull phrases – “the dark days”, the “bad old days” – almost as if those days weren’t really that “dark” at all or those “bad old days” were a kind of country and western soap opera that didn’t cause us too much harm, really. Many of us, or, at the very least, some of us, prefer that shorthand “bland-speak” to considering the awful, bloody grotesque reality of what happened here over the period referred to so universally and so euphemistically as “The Troubles.”

I remember the shocking sight of a bloodied Jackie Duddy laid out in the courtyard behind the Roseville Flats on another January day. What would have prepared that innocent enough 20-year-old me for screaming gunfire on the relatively recently re-developed streets of the Bogside where I had kicked football in the old Joseph’s Place using the width of the Cattle Marketgate for one goal, the width of the entry into St. Joseph’s Close for the other.

I can remember waking up in our back Creggan bedroom to glimpse an IRA gunman laid out on the roof of that same coal shed from where my daddy ferreted coal, the shooter’s rifle trained on any British Army movement in the cemetery behind that grey perimeter wall. The abnormal, daily, was becoming the normal. Khaki-clad visitors would knock us about, jack up our floorboards, kick us in the testicles, shoot dead Annette McGavigan, Kathleen Thompson. Neighbours in Creggan would themselves become shooters, bombers, killers. Death-laden ideologies flourished almost whichever way we turned.

As all of us of that generation know “the dark days” meant atrocity after atrocity, whether it was 14 killed on and after Bloody Sunday (January, 1972), two killed in the no-warning bombing of the Abercorn Restaurant and Bar (March, 1972), five killed in the Miami Showband massacre (July, 1975), 10 killed in the Kingsmill massacre (January, 1976), 12
killed in the La Mon firebomb (February, 1978), or eight killed at Loughgall (May, 1987).

Total fatalities in this horrific but short list was 51.

And then there were the killings where individuals were gunned to death in their kitchens; on their doorstep; dandering home; shot dead in their cars and literally thousands more really terribly injured, maimed, disfigured and, without exaggeration, so many families and communities terribly traumatised.

Atrocity followed by howling pain was too often met and murked in lies, deceit, denial and, savagely, further atrocity, language as “tit for tat killings.” The civilising quest for truth and justice was (and is) most often stamped upon.

Trauma invaded our very marrow and bones while healing has remained desperately elusive.

“The dark days” were dark, utterly dark, without light, unless the curiously flecked light of black humour. Was it left to our poets and artists to hold up their mirror to what occurred here?

I recall Seamus Heaney’s words from the poem, Punishment, reflecting here on a “tarring and feathering”:

“I who have stood dumb when your betraying sisters, cauled in tar, wept by the railings, who would connive in civilised outrage yet understand the exact and tribal, intimate revenge.”

Maybe what happens with us now is that our words fail us in the face of the horror. Maybe what happens with us is that we need a convenient shorthand to enable us to hold that horror at bay. Maybe, for some, these phrases – “the dark days”, “the bad old days” – are convenient verbal props enabling the speakers, either consciously or unconsciously, to mystify what actually happened and, so, deny accountability.

Is it possible that our euphemisms and “bland speak,” in deflecting from an unbearable reality, could serve to re-ignite the very horror they appear to cloud over? For some, could there even be a hint of intrigue and glamour in the use of such phrases?

Professor Siobhan O’Neill, of Ulster University, reports that “39 per cent of the population of Northern Ireland experienced some sort of traumatic event during the period 1968 until now and research has demonstrated the magnitude of the mental health needs of the population here.

“However, progress on meeting those needs and providing the effective evidence-based treatments for complex trauma-related illnesses has been slow.” Professor O’Neill continues: “There are increasing concerns about the intergenerational transmission of trauma and mental illness and more needs to be done to mitigate against the effects of this. This means providing resilience and mental health programmes in schools and youth centres.”

Meanwhile recently, in our city, in Ballymagroarty, the “dark days” continued with two men shot in so-called punishment-style shootings.

The PSNI said it was “treating both incidents as paramilitary-style attacks; attacks that were brutal and vicious and will leave these two men with both physical and psychological scars; some people malingering in the shadows might murmur, “Good enough for them, they didn’t get it for nothing” and feel justified. Not all of us, however, “connive in civilised outrage.”
The conflict was a significant and distinctive stressor in the life of the community in Northern Ireland for over 40 years. The world mental health survey found that whilst around 71.5 percent of the population have minimal levels of mental illness, the mental health difficulties of at least half of the remaining 28.5 percent (approx. 213,000 adults) appear to be directly related to the Troubles (Bolton, 2017; McLafferty et al., 2016; O’Neill et al., 2015). The same study showed that 39 percent of the population experienced a traumatic event that was related to the Troubles. Such events included bombings, shootings, and witnessing killings and mutilations.

The research demonstrated the depth and scale of the mental health needs of the Northern Ireland population, however progress on meeting those needs and providing the evidence-based treatments for complex trauma-related illnesses has been slow. In the meantime, the consequences are manifest in the form of social unrest and high rates of suicide (O’Neill et al., 2014) and prescribed medication (Benson et al., 2018).

Mental illness stifles healing and empathy. Psychological therapies can help individuals make meaning from their experiences, which not only reduces their suffering, but also allows them to place the

Ulster University professors Siobhan O’Neill, left, and Brandon Hamber argue that understanding the effect of the Troubles related trauma, including transgenerational trauma, is vital for fostering peace building in Northern Ireland.

Addressing the legacy of Northern Ireland’s past

Six key recommendations

• The institutions should adopt a victim and survivor-centred perspective. The process should be scrutinised from the perspective of the victim, and their journey through engagement with one or more of the structures.

• Support for victims through the process should be standardised and offered on an equal basis to all survivors across the legacy institutions.

• A process of demand profiling and impact assessment should be undertaken prior to the commencement of the work of the institutions.

• The institutions should adopt a trauma-informed approach that: Realises the impact of trauma and understands potential paths for recovery; Recognises the signs and symptoms of trauma, responds by integrating knowledge about trauma into policies, procedures, and practices; and seeks to actively resist re-traumatisation. (SAMSHA, 2018). This particularly means that the legacy structures and processes should screen people for trauma-related conditions and facilitate them in receiving treatment.

• We recommend that a Mental Health Advisory Group with an expert chair, is convened to oversee and monitor the implementation of all four institutions.

• We need to protect the mental wellbeing of those who work within the institutions particularly those who witness the testimonies of the victims and survivors and those tasked with delivering justice and establishing a level of need.
experience in context, to foster recovery. Such processes at both a personal, and community level can promote peace-
building, and potentially create the environment for peace.

For victims and survivors of trauma, the issues of truth, justice, accepting responsibility, compensation and official acknowledgement are also part of this “meaning making” and are interwoven with healing (Hamber, 2009).

In fact, healing, often promoted by addressing wider victim issues such as truth and justice, in such circumstances may provide the conditions for post-traumatic growth (Joseph, 2015).

The opposite is also true, that failing to address the wider needs of survivors (such as a desire for justice or truth) can have negative psychological consequences into the long term (Hamber, 2009).

We made these points in response to the consultation on the proposed legacy institutions (O’Neill and Hamber, 2018), and also noted that the institutions will have a profound impact on the mental health of the individuals who engage with them, those who for whatever reason choose not to, and those with existing trauma-related conditions who either participate, or hear about them from the media and other sources. It is vital that the mental health of those affected is protected through this process.

References


Research: Thirty nine percent of the population in Northern Ireland have experienced a traumatic event that was related to the Troubles. LEGACY INSTITUTIONS

The consultation – ‘Addressing the legacy of Northern Ireland’s past’ – includes proposals to implement the four new legacy institutions set out in the 2014 Stormont House Agreement (SHA) and the Government’s manifesto for Northern Ireland 2017.

A key element of the Stormont House Agreement is that all of these bodies will be under statutory obligations to act in ways that are balanced, proportionate, transparent, fair and equitable.

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