



COMMISSIONER
FOR VICTIMS
OF CRIME

NI VICTIM SUMMIT 26

COMMISSIONER
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Commissioner for Victims
of Crime Office
Northern Ireland

ANNUAL REPORT 2025/26

August 2026

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46 victim
meetings

Third annual
victim survey
launched

Three key
pieces of
research

One
global
victim
summit

**HIGHLIGHTS,
AT A GLANCE.**

Foreword

Listening to Victims, Driving Change

This has been another busy year for our office and I am pleased to introduce our third annual report. It tells the story of a year in which victims and families, practitioners and policymakers have all shown commitment and resilience in the face of real challenges.

Above all, it reflects the courage of those who, despite difficult experiences, have chosen to share their experiences with us and others in the hope of creating a system that treats victims with dignity, fairness and respect.

Throughout this year, I have been continually reminded of the power of victims' voices to drive real and lasting change. Victims who worked with my office and criminal justice partners to develop information explaining the parole process have helped make a complex and often opaque system clearer, kinder and more accessible. Likewise, those who supported our campaign for the right to read Victim Personal Statements aloud in court have demonstrated determination and courage in asserting that victims should be heard, not simply spoken about.

Their resilience and commitment to using painful experiences to improve the system for those who follow is both humbling and inspiring.

Evidence, Research and Reform

Over the past year, our office has undertaken a range of research to ensure our work remains firmly grounded in both evidence and lived experience.

I was pleased to see a marked increase in the number of victims responding to our victim survey. Our mapping of service provision for male victims of domestic and sexual abuse confirmed our long-held concerns about serious gaps in support. It highlighted inconsistent availability of specialist services, limited tailored provision and a lack of awareness and promotion of the limited services that are available.

I was also particularly pleased to launch our Totally Invisible report in December 2025. Undertaken by the Children's Rights Centre at Queen's University Belfast, the report shines a stark light on the experiences of domestic abuse victims and children navigating the private law family court system.

The findings highlight the need for a more victim-centred approach that prioritises safety and wellbeing.

I remain deeply grateful to the victims and survivors who shared their experiences and, in particular, to the young people from Women's Aid's Social Action Youth (SAY) Group who helped shape this work from the outset. I look forward to working with stakeholders in the year ahead to ensure its recommendations are translated into meaningful change.

Throughout the year, there has been reinforced, time and time again, a core principle which must underpin all work in this area. That all victims, regardless of gender or the crime they have been a victim of, must have access to specialist trauma-informed services that understand and meet their needs.

From Strategy to Reality

Victim care and confidence cannot and should not rest on a single agency, and it is in the spirit of shared responsibility that I particularly welcomed the launch of the Department of Justice's Victim and Witness Strategy 2026-32 – a Strategy for all in March 2026.

Co-designed with key justice organisations, voluntary organisations and victims and survivors, the vision of a system where all victims, regardless of crime type receive their promised rights and support is one this office strongly shares.

Despite increasing discussion of trauma-informed and victim-centred approaches, I continue to encounter victims who have not received even the most basic entitlements promised to them.

The collective challenge remains for us all to deliver on the promises we make so that rights are realised in practice and support is available to every victim, regardless of who they are or where the crime took place.

A System Under Pressure

It would be naïve not to acknowledge that these ambitions exist within a criminal justice system that has experienced years of under-investment and is operating under immense strain.

Across policing, prosecution, courts, prisons, probation and victim support services, dedicated professionals are managing increasingly complex caseloads amid severe resource pressures. My opportunity to accompany police officers on a ride-along and to visit the Public Prosecution Service's Serious Crime Unit reinforced both the diligence and professionalism of those working on some of society's most challenging cases and the personal toll that such demanding workloads can exact.

These experiences deepened my respect for criminal justice practitioners, while reinforcing the urgency of creating conditions in which they can consistently deliver the standards of service victims are entitled to receive.

Confidence, Trust and Accountability

Increasing public and victim confidence in the criminal justice system is a central ambition of the Victim and Witness Strategy, and rightly so.

Yet confidence is fragile: hard won and easily lost. Reports of police officers abusing their position, however small the numbers involved or however historic the incidents, cause real harm to public trust.

Such behaviour cannot be minimised or explained away. Instead, there must be transparency, robust accountability and a clear commitment to learning lessons wherever wrongdoing occurs. Only through openness and accountability can confidence be rebuilt and sustained.

The Growing Strain on the Voluntary Sector

Alongside the pressures facing criminal justice organisations, I am increasingly alarmed by the severe and growing challenges confronting the voluntary and community sector.

These organisations provide vital support to victims and witnesses, many of whom are presenting with increasingly complex and acute needs. Despite this, they are operating in a funding environment that is unstable and, in many cases, diminishing.

The commitment, expertise and resilience demonstrated by the sector are remarkable, but they cannot be taken for granted. I am already concerned that funding pressures are having a detrimental impact on service provision, with organisations facing difficult choices about capacity, staffing and the sustainability of support.



Without sustained investment and longer-term funding certainty, pressures on the voluntary and community sector are likely to deepen. The consequences will be felt first and most acutely by victims, but the effects will also extend across the wider justice system and society. Reduced support services risk undermining recovery, diminishing confidence in the justice system and creating greater economic and social costs in the future.



Progress and Reform

I welcome the progress of important legislation through the Northern Ireland Assembly and was particularly pleased to see the Sentencing Bill introduced in March 2026.

Together with the Minister's wider review of sentencing, these reforms have the potential to strengthen confidence in the justice system by helping to create a framework that is fair, transparent and responsive to the rights and needs of victims.

Lessons from the Criminal Bar Dispute

I cannot reflect on the past year without acknowledging the devastating impact of the Criminal Bar Association's withdrawal of services.

Rather than seeing improvements following earlier action, victims and families have spent much of this year dealing with the consequences of a complete withdrawal from legally aided Crown Court cases. The result has been further delays, adjournments and prolonged uncertainty and pain for people who had already waited too long.

For many victims, this has meant retraumatisation, loss of confidence and the sense that their lives remain indefinitely on hold.

While I wholeheartedly welcome the Bar's recent return following the accelerated review, I remain steadfast in my belief that this situation must never be allowed to recur. Victims of crime cannot be the ones who pay the price for systemic disputes. Their cases are not bargaining chips; they are matters that go to the heart of healing, safety and trust in the rule of law.

A Challenging but Rewarding Year

It has also been a challenging year for my office. As a small team, we have experienced significant capacity pressures, including the impact of staff turnover. Despite this, the team has worked tirelessly to keep victims' voices at the centre of public debate while continuing to deliver against a demanding programme of work. One of the year's greatest highlights was hosting our first Victim Summit, bringing together expertise and learning from across the globe. The day was powerful, thought-provoking and, at times, challenging. Most importantly, lived experience sat at the heart of every discussion.

I hope the conversations that began there will continue to inspire innovation, encourage decision-makers to learn from international experience and support further progress for victims in Northern Ireland.

Looking Ahead

Finally, I want to thank every victim and family who has engaged with our office over the past year.

Those who contacted us, met with me and my team, participated in research, or responded to our Victim Survey did so with a desire to improve the experience of those who follow. Their honesty, courage and insight are the foundation upon which this report is built.

Everything we do is driven by your experiences and by the trust you have placed in us.

Thank you.





The Inaugural Victim Summit

NI Victim Summit 2026: Global Innovation in Victim Care & Support.

My office hosted the inaugural Northern Ireland Victim Summit on 27th March 2026. Titanic Belfast provided the setting for the one-day conference, showcasing best practice and innovation in victim care & support from around the world.

If innovation is possible in London, or Paris or Montreal...why not here?

150 delegates from across the public and voluntary sectors, the legal profession and the judiciary, gathered to learn about innovative solutions to some of justice's most intractable issues. The Summit reflected on 5 core themes: lived experience in policy making, victim-centred justice, child-centred justice, domestic abuse reform, and strengthening victims' rights in the parole process. Under each theme, delegates heard powerful testimony from victims of crime whose experience of the justice system caused further harm, before learning about problem-solving approaches to improve victim experience.

Speakers came from the UK, France and Canada and we were able to facilitate a two-way knowledge exchange between Northern Ireland and visiting delegates. It was an opportunity to see best practice from around the world and to showcase innovations we are driving here in Northern Ireland, including the use of

remote evidence centres and sexual offences legal advisors (SOLAs).

One of the responsibilities of this office is to promote best practice. The Victim Summit 2026 was a fantastic opportunity to share what is done well across the world and throw down a challenge to our own decision makers here in Northern Ireland.







The first showcase was the Survivor Council model, which integrates the lived experience of victims and survivors into policy making. Mié Kohiyama, co-founder of Brave Movement France, spoke of her personal experience as a sexual abuse survivor and the importance for survivors to be given a political voice and be part of the solution.

"Survivors don't just want to be heard, they want to lead."

For Mié, while acknowledging the invaluable role that support agencies play in victim advocacy, victims must be at the table in terms of legislative and policy development:

"It is better to talk to God than his saints."

Mié's words coincide with efforts in Northern Ireland to establish a local Survivor Council. The group hopes to build upon experience from elsewhere to integrate survivor voices into discourse and, critically, action on child sexual abuse, by placing survivor expertise at the heart of policymaking.

Mathieu Lévesque, of the National Assembly of Québec, shared Québec's experience of implementing a wraparound, multidisciplinary needs assessment and advocacy service for victims of crime.

The CAVAC model is centred on building trust and creating a 'security bubble' around victims to keep them engaged and mitigate further harm from the justice process. Other elements include safety-driven spatial design of courts, therapy dogs in court settings, and state financial support for victims of abuse to relocate to safety.

The presentation gave NI justice agencies in the room plenty to ponder, as they work to develop an integrated Victim & Witness Needs Assessment Service in line with CJINI recommendations.

Anna O'Reilly from Children First reflected on implementing the Barnahus, or 'Children's House', model in Scotland. Named 'Bairns Hoose', it provides a safe, holistic support and trauma recovery journey for child victims of sexual assault. Anna shared testimony from a teenage survivor, revealing insights into child victims' needs:

"Make sure we know you're coming, and we know who you are. We need your support from the moment we have told someone what has happened.... before everything becomes out of our hands."

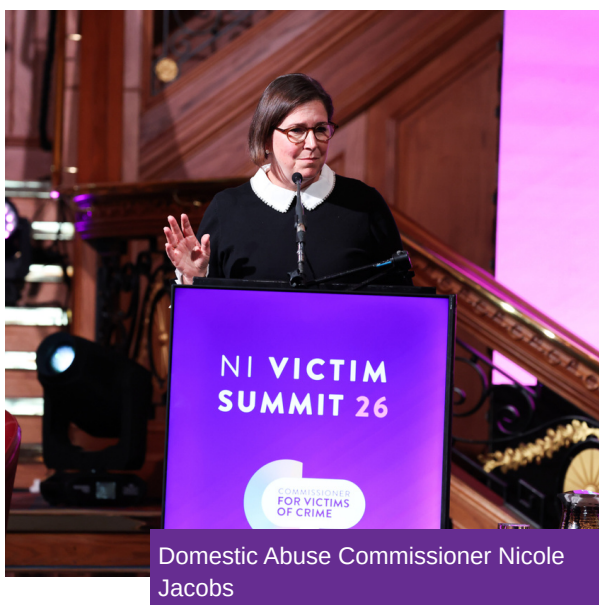


Anna provided invaluable advice for officials considering how best to introduce Barnahus in NI. Advocating a “think slow, act fast” philosophy, she recommended incorporating strong central leadership, development of a national plan with high aspiration but a phased approach to roll-out, underpinned by effective data collection and evaluation.

The Summit’s focus turned to the family court, with Domestic Abuse Commissioner for England & Wales Dame Nicole Jacobs and the MOJ’s Jacqui Frisby discussing reform to private family court proceedings. The Pathfinder pilot, introduced in GB to overcome documented failings to protect children and domestic abuse victims from harm, centres proceedings on the child’s voice and wishes.

Research undertaken by Queen’s University has revealed similar issues within NI family courts, and a multi-agency task & finish group has been convened to scope a potential pilot for NI. Chaired by the Commissioner Designate, the group will include members from Departments of Justice, Health, Finance, as well as the Courts & Tribunal Service, the legal profession, victim and child advocates, and Health Trusts.

The day’s final theme saw the Parole Board of Canada’s Shannon Dorken outline the federal approach to conditional release



Under Canadian law, victims have a right to information on the offender who harmed them, and to participation and protection in relation to conditional release decision-making.

The Canadian approach will undoubtedly enrich discourse as the DOJ consults on measures to improve Victim Engagement in the Parole Process.

The Summit showcased homegrown innovation in a two-way knowledge exchange between NI and visiting delegates. Justice Minister Naomi Long highlighted a range of reforms including Remote Evidence Centres which enable victims to give evidence remotely, and SOLAs who provide legal advice to victims of sexual offences.

Lady Chief Justice Dame Siobhan Keegan outlined her reform programme to improve transparency and understanding of the family courts as part of broader work to improve victims’ experience in court.

The most outstanding contributions came from victims of crime, who courageously shared their testimony to inspire change and help make the system better for future victims. In closing, I called those in the room to action, resources notwithstanding. **The absence of perfection cannot be an excuse for absence of progress.**



Our Objectives and Priorities

Given the decision by the Justice Minister to extend my role until 2027 to coincide with the planned passage of the Victims and Witnesses Bill and placing this office on a statutory footing, I took the decision to extend my 2022-25 strategy until 2027.

The objectives and priorities of this office have remained the same as previous years, with our driving purpose remaining amplifying the voices of victims of crime to drive positive change.

Engaging with victims

Over the course of 2025/26 my office personally engaged with 46 individual victims of crime.

The following list provides an indication of the issues raised most frequently with my office. It should be noted that this does not represent every issue raised but rather the most frequent themes arising from victim meetings.

- 1) PSNI – Poor communication
- 2) PSNI – failure to investigate/capture all evidence
- 3) PSNI – lack of updates
- 4) Dissatisfied with police investigation
- 5) Judiciary – Unhappy with how they were treated and spoken to
- 6) PPS – Prosecution counsel behaviour on the day
- 7) PSNI – changes in investigating officers
- 8) PPS – delays in making prosecution decisions

9) PPS – quality of letters (VWCU)

10) PSNI – Delay in responding to incident.

As in previous years, it is not surprising that this list is dominated by the PSNI and PPS as the “customer-facing” parts of our criminal justice system.

The crime types that were most commonly experienced by those who came to speak to me were:

- 1) Domestic Abuse
- 2) Sexual Offences
- 3) Intimidation/Harassment
- 4) Historical Sexual Abuse
- 5) Assault

Most victims come to me to discuss their experience of the whole system, not just one individual organisation.

Again, I was struck by how many individuals wanted to speak about their experiences that went beyond the criminal justice system and criminal justice organisations. It is clear that providing support to victims is a truly cross-cutting issue, important to all Executive departments and public sector organisations.



Providing the evidence

Over the course of 2025-26 I was pleased to publish a number of key pieces of research commissioned by this office.

Results from Second Victim Survey

I published the results of the second victim survey in June 2025.

The survey was conducted online with respondents completing it independently between 21 September and 23 December 2024. The survey was open to any victim of crime who reported their experience to the police since 2019 as well as those who chose not to report.

The findings show there have been some improvements in victim perceptions of the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI), the Public Prosecution Service (PPS), Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service (NICTS) and other organisations providing services to victims compared to findings of the first survey carried out in 2023 and published in 2024.

257 responses were received, which represented an increase of 55% on the previous victim survey.

Some of the key findings from this survey are:

- 82% of respondents were not confident they could receive justice by reporting a crime (compared to 88% in 2023)
- 56% of respondents felt the police did not investigate the allegations thoroughly (compared to 55% in 2023)
- 40% of respondents were dissatisfied with how they were treated by the Public Prosecution Service (PPS) (compared to 50% in 2023)
- 48% of respondents felt they were not given enough support during the court process (compared to 77% in 2023)
- Only 6% of respondents had definitely heard of the Victim Charter, despite a joint campaign between my office and the Minister of Justice in 2024. This is concerning and my office will continue to work to improve awareness of the charter.

It is positive to see some improvements in how victims view our criminal justice system, however the findings of this survey are by no means cause for celebration.

I will continue to work for long-term, strategic investment and planning, co-ordinated across Executive departments to properly support victims of crime.

The Commissioner Designate meeting (L-R) with Kelly Andrews of Belfast & Lisburn Women's Aid, Jess Phillips MP and Jacqui Durkan, then Chief Inspector of CJINI.





Family Court Research

"Totally Invisible"

In December 2025 I published a groundbreaking report examining the experiences of victims of domestic violence and abuse (DVA) within the private law family court system.

Speaking at the formal launch of the report in Belfast, I called this a "pivotal moment" to change how private law family courts work in Northern Ireland. "Totally Invisible: The experiences of domestic violence and abuse victims/survivors and children engaging with private law family court processes in Northern Ireland.", sheds light on significant challenges faced by victims seeking protection and justice and sets out the clear need for urgent reform.

Victims reported feeling unheard and unsupported, with some describing the process as retraumatising. The findings underscore the urgent need for a more victim-centred approach that prioritises safety and wellbeing.

Key Findings

The report reveals that many victims encounter barriers when engaging with private law family courts, including:

- Lack of understanding of domestic abuse dynamics among some professionals.
- Inconsistent application of safeguarding measures, leaving victims and children at risk of being harmed.
- Delays and complexity in proceedings, which can exacerbate trauma and prolong exposure to risk.
- There is a need for processes that operate on the presumption that all children are capable of sharing their views, providing a greater opportunity for them to be heard in all proceedings.

The research was carried out by Mary-Louise Corr, Alice Diver, Siobhán McAlister, Suzanne Mooney, Chloe Hanna and Alison McDonald of the Centre for Children's Rights in Queen's University Belfast.



Dr Mary-Louise Corr, lead researcher on *Totally Invisible*.



I am firmly convinced there is a better way, we can have a private family law system that truly serves the safety and well-being of domestic abuse victims and children in Northern Ireland.

I am therefore pleased that I have been able to secure commitment from the Departments of Justice, Health and Finance, along with a wide range of other stakeholders to join a task and finish group to look at how a new pilot model for private law family court might look here in Northern Ireland.

The full report is available here:
<https://www.cvocni.org/publications/family-courts-research>



Minister of Health Mike Nesbitt MLA.

The Commissioner Designate and researchers take part in a panel during the launch of *Totally Invisible*.





The Commissioner Designate meets with the Minister of Health Mike Nesbitt MLA and Minister of Justice Naomi Long MLA.

Male Services Mapping

In August 2025 I published Mapping Services for Male Adult and Child Victim-Survivors of Domestic and Sexual Abuse in Northern Ireland.

This report found that greater funding is needed to make sure that dedicated services for male victims of domestic and sexual abuse in Northern Ireland can be provided in a sustainable way.

The report was carried out to gain a clearer understanding of the current support infrastructure available to male victims of domestic and sexual abuse and identify service gaps.

Research was carried out by Dr Colm Walsh from Queen's University Belfast and Andy Bray, Dearbhaile Slane, and Jessica Scott from the Centre for Effective Services.

Full recommendations from the report can be read [here](#).

Third Victim Survey Launched

In September 2025 I launched the third victim survey carried out by my office.

While my office has not yet published the full report from this survey, I was very pleased with two key takeaways.

First, I worked closely with the Public Prosecution Service to send the survey directly to victims of crime.

Secondly, we saw a considerable increase in the number of victims responding, with 575 respondents compared to 257 for the second survey.

My office chaired a working group to develop proposals about how such victim feedback could be captured across the system. Working closely with organisations named in the Victim Charter, we identified better ways to capture victim feedback. This work is now being taken forward by the Department of Justice through a Victims and Witnesses Steering Group.

Issues Identified as being important to victims

Pushing for Change

Beyond publishing major pieces of research this office continues to play an important role in driving forward positive changes for victims of crime through influencing policy.

My team and I have met with a range of stakeholders throughout 2025/26 to highlight the needs of victims of crime and ensure their voices are amplified.

PSNI Immigration Status

The decision to end the routine sharing of victims' personal data with the Home Office is not just an administrative change. It is a clear statement of principle: that every victim of crime, regardless of immigration status, deserves safety, dignity, and the freedom to seek justice without fear. For too long, migrant victims and those who support them, have told us that the risk of immigration enforcement stops them from coming forward. This is particularly a concern for those experiencing domestic abuse, exploitation or hate crime. When reporting a crime feels dangerous, silence becomes a survival strategy. And when victims stay silent, perpetrators remain free, communities become less safe, and trust in policing is eroded.

The roundtable I convened, bringing together the PSNI, Policing Board, community and voluntary organisations and migrant support

groups was a positive turning point. The conversations were candid, sometimes challenging, but always constructive. It was through that collaboration, through that shared commitment to victims, that we were able to shape the new approach which is now in place.

This is what partnership looks like. This is what progress looks like. In this, Northern Ireland is showing real leadership, which will hopefully act as an example to other jurisdictions.

We must continue to ensure that victims of domestic abuse, trafficking, and hate crime—regardless of immigration status—feel safe to come forward.

Parole leaflet

My office continues to work with the Parole Board on improving the experience of victims in the parole process.

Streams of work are ongoing to try and improve the law, policy and practice regarding the parole process but I am also focused on working with key stakeholders to develop information that will help better explain the current parole process and the rights of victims as part of that.

Part of this work included chairing a victim roundtable to co-design a new leaflet with information on how parole works and victims' rights.

Victim Personal Statements

Throughout the year, victims continued to tell me that they wanted to have a stronger voice in the justice process.

One victim in particular spoke to me incredibly powerfully about his positive experience of reading out his Victim Personal Statement in court, and how when he looks back he will see this as the most important moment for his recovery. He said “If every defendant has the right to remain silent, then every victim should have the right to have their voice heard.” It was in 2025/26 that we received clarity that victims do have the right to read their Victim Personal Statement aloud in court at the discretion of the judge. This was a fundamental and important step in what has been a key issue for my office. I continue to work with the Department and the Judiciary to identify how to best make sure victims are aware of their rights and are able to benefit from them.

PCI

When the PSNI announced a major investigation into the Presbyterian Church of Ireland following safeguarding concerns, I stood alongside Assistant Chief Constable Beck to call for support for those victims. When an individual is failed by an institution, it can be difficult but when that institution is their church – the centrepiece of their faith – it can be devastating. I have been clear in my calls for support pathways to be available for victims who come forward to report these crimes. My office continues to work with the police to advise on how to best support victims in these cases.

Hate Crime

Sadly 2025/26, once again saw an explosion of violent hate crime across Northern Ireland.

I have been working closely with a range of stakeholders to explore how we can tackle the issue of hate crime in Northern Ireland. I met with the Romanian Consul General to discuss the impact of hate crime on Romanian-born nationals. I also travelled to Ballymena to meet with those directly supporting victims of hate crime following a spate of violence there.

In looking to the medium- and longer-term policy response to this issue I took part in a roundtable convened by the John and Pat Hume Foundation. I have also been working closely with academics in the Open University, providing support for an Evidence Café to explore the idea of a violence reduction unit here in Northern Ireland.

These conversations are ongoing and while they have been positive, more action is needed to prevent further outbreaks of the shocking scenes we have witnessed far too often.

The Commissioner Designate meets with Ivy from the Mid & East Antrim Inter-Ethnic Forum.



Visit to Montreal and Canadian Victims Week

In January 2026 I was pleased to accompany representatives from DoJ Victim and Witness Branch, PPS, PSNI and Victim Support on an exploratory visit to Montreal to explore key developments in victim care.

The key driver for the visit was to seek a greater understanding of how the CAVAC model (holistic victim support services) operated to help inform the development of a needs assessment service in NI.

In May 2025 I was honoured to be part of an online panel for Canadian Victims' Week. I took the opportunity to speak about my role, the Victim Charter and the future of victim rights in Northern Ireland.

Amplifying the Voice of Victims

Raising awareness of the role of the Commissioner for Victims of Crime, the Victim Charter and the issues important to victims of crime continues to be a key priority for this office.

Traditional Media

In 2025/26, I regularly appeared across various media platforms commenting on a range of issues that affect victims of crime.

I have proactively engaged with media, for example in publicising my research into family courts and the results of my second Victim Survey.

I regularly used my platform to call for an end to the Criminal Bar Association's industrial action which was so devastating to victims of crime.

Social Media

I have utilised social media to regularly comment on issues key to victims and victims' groups throughout 2025/26. My office also used Facebook advertising to promote my third Victim Survey. In 2025/26 I also launched an Instagram page for the office to reach a wider audience.

Stakeholder Engagement

My focus continues to be on influencing policy at Stormont.

I have regularly engaged with decision makers including elected representatives across all levels of government, the judiciary and others to make recommendations on the systemic issues impacting on victims of crime.

I have corresponded with Ministers and MLAs over the course of the year on a range of topics. The cross-cutting nature of many victims' issues means that I regularly engage with Ministers from many different departments.



The Commissioner Designate being interviewed by UTV.

I regularly speak at events to promote victims' rights and promote the office. In November 2025 I was invited to address the Government Lawyers Service Northern Ireland (GLSNI) conference in Queen's University Belfast. This was an important opportunity to highlight the role of the office and discuss key issues for victims including Victim Personal Statements.

Finance

My office remains within the accounting boundary of DoJ and reports on monthly expenditure to the Victim and Witness sponsorship branch.

2025-26 Budget: My office's budget allocation for 2025-26 was £435,000.

This was supplemented by £120,590 from the Victims of Crime Fund giving a total budget of £555,590 for the year.

The Victim Charter

Promoting and monitoring compliance with the Victim Charter is a key priority for me. Work is ongoing in this area in partnership with the Victims & Witness Branch within DoJ throughout 2025/26. My office has been working closely with DoJ in establishing a dedicated working group of criminal justice stakeholders to progress this.

To date, my office has developed and shared key performance metrics aligned to the entitlements in the Victim Charter against which each criminal justice agency should be measured.

Each agency has been tasked with exploring available data as well as identifying any gaps where data may not currently exist and that would require a mechanism to be developed to collect this data.

The work of this group will be important in informing the requirements of criminal justice organisations to provide information on Charter compliance when this office is placed on a statutory footing.

When the Victims and Witnesses Bill is passed, I anticipate that criminal justice organisations will be legally required to provide data to measure how effectively they are implementing the Victim Charter.



CONSULTATION RESPONSES

An important way in which my office contributes to the decision making process for a range of organisations and keeps victims' voices at the centre of decision making, is by responding to public consultations. You can read the consultations my office responded to over the course of 2025/26 below.

[CVOC response to DoH framework learning improvement PSI consultation June 2025](#)

[Consultation on A Safer Life Online for Women and Girls - Ofcom](#)

[Consultation on Police and Criminal Evidence \(NI\) Order 1989 proposed updates to list of qualifying offences](#)

[Consultation on Sentence Reduction for Guilty Pleas](#)

[Consultation on proposals to allow the recording and broadcasting of certain court proceedings](#)

[Consultation on draft Victims & Witnesses of Crime Strategy 2025-30](#)

[Consultation on the Draft Budget 2026-2029/30](#)

[Consultation on Single Youth Community Order](#)

[Consultation on the draft rules for the Bar Complaints Committee.](#)

[Response to CJINI Adult Safeguarding Inspection](#)

[Consultation on proposed expansion of Out of Court Disposals including Penalty Notices in the Justice Act 2011](#)

[Ofcom - Consultation on Additional Safety Measures](#)

[Consultation on 'Media Access to Family Courts' pilot](#)

[Statutory Individual Duty of Candour Bill](#)

[Victims of Sexual Crimes Trauma Mitigation Bill](#)

[Probation Board for Northern Ireland Corporate Plan 2026-29](#)

[Consultation on Practice Direction for Criminal Case Management in the Magistrates' Court](#)

[Consultation on Proposals to Criminalise Sexually Explicit Deepfake Images](#)

[PSNI Code of Ethics Review 2025 - Consultation Response](#)

[Gillen Review Implementation Team \(GRIT\) Consultation to Inform Guidance on Media Reporting of Sexual Violence in Northern Ireland](#)

Looking Ahead

Family Court Task & Finish Group

I have received commitment from key stakeholders to convene and chair a task and finish group looking at a pilot for a new model of private law family courts in Northern Ireland. This is a direct response to the *Totally Invisible* report and I am really pleased at the support I have received from Executive Ministers and others. This will be a crucial piece of work over the course of 2026/27.

Publication of Third Victim Survey Report

In February 2026 I published some preliminary findings from the third CVOC victim survey, and the full report will be made available in the second half of 2026.

Legislation

2026/27 will see the introduction of two key pieces of legislation for victims of crime in Northern Ireland.

Sentencing Bill

The Sentencing Bill will make important changes including increasing sentences for those convicted of causing death by dangerous driving. I will continue to work with MLAs from all political parties to advise on how to make this legislation work as well as possible for victims of crime.



Victims & Witnesses of Crime Bill

This Bill will place my office on a statutory footing and make changes to the process for the disclosure of private third-party information including counselling records for victims of sexual crimes.

These are two key priorities for my office, and a considerable amount of work has already been completed to advise on the powers and responsibilities this office should have and the protections victims should enjoy. I will continue to advise legislators where helpful and appropriate on how to make this legislation as effective as possible.

NI Assembly Election 2027

While this office is politically neutral, I am keen that the debate in the run up to the election looks at what can be done to make our criminal justice system work better for victims of crime.

It is my ambition for this issue to be as high on the list of priority issues as the state of our health and education systems.

As we look to the year ahead, I remain committed to working collaboratively with all those who share a responsibility for supporting victims and witnesses. Meaningful and lasting change can only be achieved through partnership, bringing together government, criminal justice agencies, the voluntary and community sector, practitioners, and, most importantly, victims and survivors themselves.

While the challenges facing the justice system are significant, so too is the collective commitment to improving outcomes for those affected by crime. My office will continue to be a critical friend, a constructive partner and an independent voice for victims.

We stand ready to support, challenge and collaborate with others to ensure that victims' rights are realised in practice, their voices are heard, and their experiences drive future reform. Together, we can build a system that delivers not only justice, but also dignity, compassion and confidence for all those it serves.





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