

Network of Associations of Victims of Terrorism (NAVT) & Survivors of Terrorism

RESPONSE PROTOCOLS IN EMERGENCIES

The Voice of Victims

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RESPONDING TO LEARNING & EXPERIENCE

Addressing Medium to Long Term Needs

*Seán Coll, Community Victim Support Officer
Western Health & Social Care Trust, Northern Ireland*

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen

May I begin by thanking the conference organisers for their kind invitation to address this year's conference. Having been in London myself five years ago to the day and witnessed the euphoria of just having won the bid to host the 2012 Olympics change within hours to the horror, pandemonium and hurt caused by the events of the following day, I am honoured and humbled to make this presentation today.

I would like to preface my remarks this afternoon with a quotation:

**When we cast our bread upon the waters,
we can presume that someone downstream,
whose face we may never see,
will benefit from our action**

Maya Angelou, "Wouldn't Take Nothing for My Journey Now"

There is a wide range of complex issues to be addressed within a continuum of various service provisions in the aftermath of acts of terrorism.

In determining these issues, there is a need to actively listen to victims and survivors when they articulate what **they** perceive to be their emerging needs and requirements - not just in the immediate aftermath but also in a continuing process of engagement for an appropriate period afterwards.

To paraphrase the sentiments of the first Northern Ireland Victims Commissioner, Sir Kenneth Bloomfield in his report, "We Will Remember Them", published in Belfast in 1998, re-echoed in the Northern Ireland Social Services Inspectorate Report, "Living with The Trauma of The Troubles" - also in 1998 - and resonating constantly in the work of practitioners in Northern Ireland:

“Each fatality or injury can be compared with a heavy stone dropped into a pool of water with ripples extending far and wide... in some cases, after the initial trauma of an incident and effective treatment, individuals suffer no serious long-term consequences. In other cases, the degree of enduring physical disability may be very severe and, in yet others, the lasting psychological effect may be profound.”

In many respects, in the aftermath of a major incident, there should be a formalised multi-agency forum established with appropriate terms of reference to encourage dialogue and mutual learning especially among victims and survivors, their families and/or carers, rescue workers and responders, professionals and policymakers. This forum would look at the determination of needs and pro-actively ensure that they are addressed.

There is a real danger of assuming that the “professionals” know everything and that medium to long term planning should be left solely in their hands. This should not be the case. A top-down approach is not appropriate and neither is a purely bottom-up approach either. I would contend that addressing medium to long term needs should be a holistic process, the grassroots up and the top down coalescing, involving a wide range of statutory and third sector stakeholders and responders, but including victims and survivors, their families and those who have to care for them.

No two incidents are the same and there is no “one-size-fits-all”/“off the shelf” response to any major terrorist attack even though there might be striking similarities between previous events. However, it is important to say that the learning garnered from previous events can and should shape the development of good practice for the future.

What I recommending is a process for looking at medium to long-term needs which puts the individual at the heart of a transparent and streamlined process.

Geographical, socio-economic, cultural and demographical considerations have to be taken into account when addressing needs in the short term and these must be carried through when looking at the medium to longer term response.

Dillenburger et al wrote in The Pave Project Report from Queens University Belfast in 2007:

“Recovery from trauma is not merely a medical problem but an interactive process that has to happen in multiple contexts” (Para. 22)

So what are these contexts? From my own personal experience of working with victims and survivors in Northern Ireland over the past ten years, and having

engaging with others in dealing with major incidents elsewhere in Europe and further afield, I can identify nine potential broad areas of need within a responsive framework. I recognise that the list is not exhaustive and the needs may actually interlink with one another:

- SAFETY

- This is especially pertinent in the immediate aftermath of a terrorist attack or a natural disaster but also in the longer term.
- The expectations of the community should be articulated with regard to violence and safety and addressed accordingly within available resources.

- RECOGNITION & ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

- What do we mean by the terms 'recognition' and 'acknowledgement'?
- In its recent Advice to Government on Dealing with the Past (June 2010), the Commissioners for Victims and Survivors in Northern Ireland said that *recognition occurs when someone feels that others have become able to see them as they see themselves, known for the person they are or, perhaps, whom they have come to be. Through recognition, victims feel that they are properly known and understood by the rest of society. [Section 3.1 #77, p. 22]*
- The Commissioners, in the same document, go on to say that *acknowledgement occurs when the actions of others are informed by recognition of who the victim and survivor really is ... the working out of recognition in everyday lives of victims. A society that truly knows and understands the victims and survivors of its own conflict develops sufficient insight to orientate services and make provision for its stricken citizens. [Section 3.1 #78, p.22]*
- There is desirability for a mature approach and a need for sensitivity especially when addressing remembrance issues.
- Good practice and learning from elsewhere should be considered when addressing this category of need in terms of story-telling, cultural diversity, advocacy etc.
- The concepts of Truth, Justice and Acknowledgement are difficult ones to address, but need to be addressed appropriately in the given circumstances.

- PRACTICAL NEEDS

- These may include financial, housing and employment needs - the oversight responsibilities for which must lie with key central, regional and local governmental departments.
- There has to be recognition that hardship and lost opportunities in life may emerge. In addition, pre-existing and concurrent hardships

and other practical problems can accentuate needs arising from traumatising experiences.

- INFORMATION & ADVICE NEEDS

- There has to be a focussed, accessible, enabling, confidential, competent and relevant information service, which should be able to advocate and facilitate the securing of services.
- Such a service should have the capacity to cater for differing levels and standards of information and advice.
- Welfare Support needs to encompass benefits advice and assistance, debt advice in addition to the practical needs referred to earlier.
- A One-stop Shop Inter-Agency Approach to act as a resource for victims/survivors and responders alike might be an appropriate response.

- SOCIAL SUPPORT & CONSOLATION NEEDS

- The value and strength inherent in pre-existing family- and community-based support mechanisms has also to be recognised as well as whatever appropriate and validated “Third Sector” structures develop after an incident such as an act of terrorism or a natural disaster.
- The role of Faith Communities through pastoral and transformational roles in reflecting the universality of grief and suffering cannot be underestimated.
- Perhaps one response would be the development of less intensive but valuable listening ear and befriending services which would need to be validated against relevant evidence based standards and run alongside standard counselling and/or other psychotherapeutic provision in its many guises but not against or in competition with it.
- Irrespective of which service[s] is/are provided to address medium- to long-term needs, it goes without saying that provision by accredited and trained personnel is essential.
- There needs to be consideration given to respite provision, social networking and confidence building.
- Bereavement and loss issues may have to be considered with loss encompassing a range of issues such as loss of property, business, security, personal injury etc.
- The Latin writer, Juvenal, once wrote in one of his Satires - “*Sed quis custodiet ipsos custodies?*” - “*But who will care for and protect the carers?*” This raises the need to identify the needs of carers and their issues which can often be overlooked.
- The Department of Health, Social Services & Public Safety in Northern Ireland (DHSSPS) has recently published a strategy for the

development of psychological therapy services (June 2010). The strategy acknowledges that *carers need psychological support, to maintain and improve their mental health and to assist them to look after their loved ones with long-term physical, mental health and learning disabilities.* [p.4]

- Again, when looking at social support and consolation needs, what is good practice for ceremonies and rituals?

- **DISABILITY & PHYSICAL PAIN-RELATED NEEDS**

- In Northern Ireland this is largely addressed (though not exclusively) by statutory sector services.
- The ageing profile of victims and survivors needs to be factored into the determination of levels of pain relief and associated psychological and physical care, especially when dealing with a significant number of individuals.
- The value of complementary therapies cannot be underestimated either, though there is little empirical research - to the best of my knowledge - into the efficacy of such interventions while there is plenty of anecdotal evidence to support their effectiveness.
- Again, provision by accredited and trained personnel is essential.

- **PSYCHOLOGICAL NEEDS**

- The development of early intervention programmes would, in my view, predicate further mental health service provision in the medium- to long-term phase.
- Again there is the necessity for clear evidence-based protocols.
- There is also a need for an effective communications strategy which runs through all the themes to a degree.
- Psychological therapies refer to *interpersonal processes designed to modify feelings, cognitions, attitudes and behaviour which have proved troublesome to the person (or society) seeking help from a trained professional.* [DHSSPS, p. 18]. They play an integral part in any mental health and well being strategy.

- **EDUCATIONAL NEEDS**

- This relates to the lost opportunities many experienced due to terrorism or natural disasters which have an impact on key foundational education which may not have been undertaken or completed particularly but not exclusively by those affected at younger ages.
- Disability or psychological injury, bereavement and caring responsibilities might also impact on opportunities for further education or caused some to disengage from education.

- Recovery and readjustment to experiences of terrorism or natural disasters might lead to life choices involving the need for further education and re-training. There would have to be engagement with relevant educational authorities when addressing education, training, and personal development needs.
 - Programmes of personal, professional and organisational development should be considered.
- TRANSFORMATIONAL NEEDS
 - This is about recognising the possibilities of personal growth following traumatic experiences and the need to facilitate such a process.
 - Whilst it might not be possible to make up or compensate for loss etc arising from an act of terrorism or natural disaster, opportunities for personal, group and communal or community development and growth can enable mastery and adjustment and should be made possible.
 - Personal and collective hopes and objectives for acknowledgement, for meaning, for forgiveness, for justice strongly suggest a need for these aspirations to be recognised and acted upon, where possible, by those in authority.
 - Transgenerational issues also need to be considered and addressed.

In addressing these needs and taking guidance from the DHSSPS strategy I referred to earlier, the range of interventions and services implemented should be

- Effective and outcome focussed
- Easily accessible
- Evidence-based to embed research findings into the design, commissioning and practice of services
- Delivered by appropriately trained and supervised personnel with equally appropriate management and governance structures in situ
- Informed by engagement with key stakeholders
- Safe
- Cost effective
- Comprehensive
- Co-ordinated and user-friendly
- Adequately advertised so that professionals and service users know of the range of services that are available and how to access them
- Commissioned and delivered to a standard consistent with national and regionally agreed standards and guidelines; and

- Evaluated so that outcomes can be measured in terms of access to services, improved service user outcomes in terms of health and wellbeing, promotion of social inclusion, improvement in general social status and service user satisfaction and experience.

I wish to conclude with a quotation from Danieli and Dingman's book, "On The Ground After September 11", published in 2005, which highlights the need for some proactive and forward planning in this regard:

"In reality, terrorism is most often discussed in its political, legal and, indeed, military aspects. There is a need to put the human dimension fully into the picture. The variety of potential experiences proves the need for close collaboration and co-ordination before an event occurs in order to initiate and manage an effective response afterwards"

Thank you again for the invitation to be here and for your attention this afternoon.

**Seán Coll, Community Victim Support Officer
'Victim and Survivor Matters' Programme
Primary Care & Older People's Services Directorate
Western Health & Social Care Trust
15 Elliott Place, Enniskillen, Co. Fermanagh, Northern Ireland BT74 7HQ
Telephone: + 44 [0]28 66 344240
Fax: + 44 [0]28 66 344079
Mobile: + 44 [0]784 1970561
E-Mail: vsm@westerntrust.hscni.net**