



NIACRO works to reduce crime and its impact on people and communities

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To: Victim Support Northern Ireland
Re: Strategy Consultation 2020-24
Date: 26th March 2020

Dear Geraldine,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input towards the VSNI Strategy Consultation 2020-24. NIACRO works towards a same aim as Victim Support, namely the reduction of crime, and therefore the reduction in the number of victims of crime. We recognise the priorities set out by Victim Support in its consultation overview, but would like to emphasis the following:

The Wider Role in Building an Understanding of the Impact of Being a Victim of Crime

Over the past number of years, NIACRO has invited a member of VSNI staff to contribute to our induction for new staff members. Whilst NIACRO supports people who have been engaged in criminal activity, we recognise that it is extremely important that our staff understand the impact of the crimes that the people we support have been involved in, on individual victims and upon society more widely. Part of the reason for doing this is to ensure that our staff are able to communicate this (as appropriate) to the people we support; to challenge and support them in their attempts to change their lifestyles. But it is also helpful for our staff to understand the impact of crime because; very often the people we support, whilst being engaged in criminal activity, are also the victims of other people's crimes.

NIACRO appreciates VSNI's ongoing contribution to informing our staff about the impact of crime and the type of support people need/appreciate in the aftermath of a crime.

Future of 'Public Information' Role

VSNI has been effective in elevating the voices of people who are victims of crime, and thus influencing criminal justice policy and public perception and attitudes towards the experience of victims of a crime, or witnesses to a crime. However, might there be a greater role for VSNI in raising the profile of the needs of people who have been victims to/witnesses of crime, within public health, social work, social care and the media? All of the developments, strategies, and research opportunities regarding trauma informed practice would serve as a relevant backdrop to much of this work.



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Victim Support Outreach Through the Entire Experience

Through our work we are often informed that there is a need for Victim Support to be just as visible through all stages of the process, from the beginning through to when the person who was responsible for the offence is being released from custody. A person who is a victim of a crime may require multiple reminders of the victim information schemes offered through PBNi and NIPS. It might be worth considering whether the current means by which information is sent out from VSNI could be updated to make best use of text messaging, e mails and social media. People may be likely to respond to informal means of communication, especially if they are struggling with mental health impacts due to the trauma of the crime.

Strengthening Partnerships

Because of the nature of NIACRO's work and our understanding of the impact of crime on people and communities, we are well placed to work with VSNI in partnership, for example, to encourage greater uptake of the victim support schemes. We are aware too that VSNI recognises the value of a restorative approach as an opportunity for a person who is a victim of a crime to articulate the harm that has been done. The approach has been demonstrated to have significant value for victims and perpetrators alike. In delivery of Get Real which provides help for those with hate crime offences, those at risk of committing such offences, and the victims of hate crime through restorative interventions, community-based education, and training for criminal justice agencies, we would encourage VSNI to link up with NIACRO to utilise this restorative approach when appropriate and to maintain a conversation with us about further relevant opportunities to work together.

We would like to thank you for your consideration of our response to the VSNI 2020-24 Strategy Consultation. Please be in touch if you have any questions.

Kind regards,

Olwen Lyner, NIACRO Chief Executive Officer



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