

Victims' Forum

Terms of Reference

1. Purpose and Objectives

Purpose

The purpose of the Victims' Forum is to facilitate engagement and collaboration between: civic society organisations working with victims of crime; the Department of Justice; other Government Departments and agencies; and other stakeholders working to support and protect victims of crime, to support healing and to ensure effective, accountable, consistent responses and enhanced outcomes for victims.

Objectives

The Victims' Forum will:

- a) Facilitate collaboration and development relating to:
 - Challenges, solutions and opportunities relevant to the journey of victims of crime
 - Good practice and innovation in service delivery to victims of crime, locally, nationally and internationally
 - Rights and supports for the victims of crime, including identifying service gaps and ensuring there is coordination, consistency and a clear and transparent funding process
 - Promoting awareness on victims' rights, challenges and supports, and ensuring approaches which raise awareness with marginalised groups and new communities
 - National policy and legislative developments relevant to the victims of crime
- b) Agree appropriate mechanisms for victims' voices to be heard and acknowledged:
 - through a two-way process of engagement with the Department of Justice, other Government Departments and agencies and other stakeholders on policy, planning and legislative issues
 - including by providing a platform for a diversity of victims' stories to be told through case studies and research

- c) Focus on practical, strategic and trauma-informed approaches to improving victims' experiences of, and access to, the criminal justice system and support pathways

2. Membership

- a) Membership of the Forum shall include the following:
- Civic society organisations
 - Department of Justice
 - Other members of the Victim's Charter 'Network of Champions'
 - Other Government Departments and agencies, as relevant
- b) An up-to-date Forum membership list will be maintained on the Forum website, and will include address/location and contact details.

3. Meetings

- a) The Forum will convene at least twice annually
- b) The following will be invited to attend Forum meetings:
- at least one representative of each civic society member organisation
 - at least two members from the Department of Justice
 - other members of the Victims Charter 'Network of Champions'
 - other Departments and agencies, as relevant
- c) The Forum will convene through alternate online and in-person format but will convene at least once a year in person
- d) The location of in-person meetings will be determined following consultation to facilitate inclusion, and will have regard to accessibility, transport links and hybrid technology options
- e) Presentations will be circulated to members with the minutes of the meetings and where possible, a recording of the presentation should be taken and circulated to members after online forum meetings.

4. Co-Chairpersons

- a) The Forum will be co-chaired by:
 - a representative of the Department of Justice, as identified
 - a representative of civic society organisations, as elected
- b) The role of the Co-Chairperson is to:
 - Co-chair Forum meetings
 - Formulate draft Forum agenda
 - Meet at least twice between Forum meetings to support progress on action items and to plan for following meetings
 - Act as Forum spokesperson
- c) The process for electing the civic society organisation Co-Chairperson is as follows:
 - The Department of Justice will seek nominations for the role from civic society member organisations
 - An online poll, to include a short biography on each candidate proposed, will be held to elect the Co-Chairperson
- d) The term of the Co-Chairpersons will be two years, with the option of a third year

5. Agenda

- a) Where possible, agenda items for the following meeting will be identified at the end of each meeting
- b) The Co-Chairpersons will formulate the draft agenda for Forum meetings
- c) Draft agenda will be circulated to members at least two weeks in advance of Forum meetings to facilitate members' input
- d) As a standing item, to underpin transparency and accountability, the first agenda item (after minutes and matters arising) will be an update on action points from the previous meeting. This will be provided in the form of a summary bullet-point briefing
- e) The second item on the agenda will be an update from the Department of Justice on recent or upcoming legislation of relevance or interest to the Forum

6. Minutes and Follow-Up

- a) Forum minutes will include an action table with a list of agreed decisions and/or actions, lead organisation and timeframe
- b) Within one month of Forum meetings, draft minutes will be issued to Co-Chairpersons for review in advance of circulation to members

7. Sub-Groups

- a) The Forum may establish sub-groups, when agreed as relevant, to examine and progress agreed issues
- b) Sub-groups will nominate a Chairperson
- c) Sub-groups will report to the Forum in plenary session with findings and recommendations, where relevant

8. Review

The Terms of Reference will be reviewed annually by members in plenary session to ensure they remain fit for purpose.

Appendix 1

Code of Conduct

This Code of Conduct is intended to ensure that a collaborative, respectful environment is fostered by the Victims Forum

- a) Members will provide constructive input and feedback at meetings

- b) Diverse perspectives, voices and experiences are encouraged and valued

- c) Where members or Co-Chairpersons are unable to fulfil their role in accordance with the tenets of the Code of Conduct and Terms of Reference, they will be requested to vacate their position on the Forum

Appendix 2

Membership of Network of Champions

- Crime Victims Helpline
- An Garda Síochána
- Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission
- Courts Service
- Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions
- Prison Service
- Parole Board
- Probation Service
- Oberstown Children Detention Campus
- National Forensic Mental Health Service
- Legal Aid Board
- Coroner Service
- Criminal Injuries Compensation Tribunal
- Department of Foreign Affairs