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Linda Dillon MLA
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Parliament Buildings
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Our Ref: SUB-1606-2024
10 October 2024

Dear Linda

RESPONSE TO A SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION TO DEPUTY FIRST MINISTER ON 9 SEPTEMBER IN RESPECT OF ORAL QUESTIONS 6 AND 10 (AQO 728 & AQO 732/22-27)

During Oral Question time on 9 September 2024, you asked the deputy First Minister for *'...information in writing about what exactly has been done to speed up the (victims' Payments Scheme) process? Secondly, given that they are historical cases and that many of the people affected are nearing the end of their life, can we get some reassurances about what is being done to ensure that those people are prioritised in the process?'*

In relation to the average processing time, it is important to highlight the Scheme's complexities. Despite extensive efforts, the progress of each application is often dependent on the provision of supporting information from external organisations – something outside of the control of the Victims' Payments Board (VPB). Applications progress through the various stages of the Scheme at different rates. Given the historical nature of the subject matter, the passage of time may make certain records difficult or impossible to retrieve. Delays may occur where an application form is incomplete, supporting evidence is missing or there are gaps in incident disclosure etc.

Application processing includes but is not limited to; verification checks, evidence gathering, and a medical assessment. The average processing time may be impacted by the provision of medical information from GPs and Health Trusts which enable the completion of a medical assessment (carried out by Capita). Cases may also be adjourned for further information / evidence gathering or to provide applicants (or their representative) with an opportunity to comment on specific issues. Any number of these contributing factors will result in delaying progression so that VPB staff can gather as much information and supporting evidence on behalf of applicants.

There has recently been an independent review undertaken by Innovation and Consultancy Services (ICS) (formerly Business Consultancy Services) of the end-to-end processes of the Scheme. The ICS review has identified a number of opportunities and areas where processes can be streamlined to offer improved services to applicants. The Board are currently considering these and are fully committed to taking forward work to introduce changes in as timely a manner as possible. The VPB are also working with Sectoral Groups, Capita and the Department of Health to review communication processes to ensure applicants are appropriately communicated with and supported throughout the process.

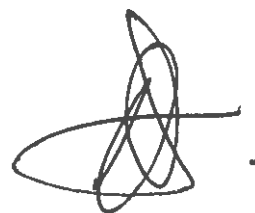
All cases for those who are terminally ill and those over 80 are prioritised. The Board is undertaking an exercise to review all Priority Cases in the system, considering ways in which the pathway for such cases can be improved. This involves engaging with the health care provider, Capita, to agree and implement streamlined processes. The Scheme is currently processing 670 priority cases.

We hope you find this response helpful.

Yours sincerely



Michelle O'Neill MLA
First Minister



Emma Little-Pengelly MLA
deputy First Minister