

Support Fund submission, 8th July 2015, pages 1+3

Advocacy support to understand what's on offer and available

What the Guidelines should consider

There are at least three sections that any information support leaflet should seek to address. The first, General information, introduces Support Fund and gives information about it..

The leaflet It explains:

- Who we are and what we do
- How we work
- What we can do for survivors
- What type of services we can support and pay for
- Broad Range of services
- Ex-gratia direct payments to be considered and available
- The general criteria for applying for services from us.
- Eligibility, Are all survivors eligible to apply?
- Are family members and others eligible to apply on behalf of those who would be classed as survivors but who may be too infirmed, elderly, deceased, etc

Victims of Crime definition

Victims of crime are defined in the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime as : 'a person who has suffered harm, including physical, mental or emotional harm or economic loss which was directly caused by criminal conduct; or a close relative of a person whose death was directly caused by criminal conduct.'

The support fund should work together with public and voluntary bodies and others to make sure that survivors get services of real benefit, and that we make the best use of the fund. The Support Fund should be wholly independent & impartial and offer equal access to anyone using its services.

What can the Support do for survivors?

It should aim to improve the wellbeing of survivors. Wellbeing is about being physically and mentally well, being socially active, connected and self-fulfilled. If you are a survivor, we offer you a dedicated service to make sure that you get services and other opportunities to improve your wellbeing.

The support will make public services more responsive to you. We will do this by advising you on your rights and options, and helping you to decide what it is that you need. We will also advocate for you and act as a broker with public services to make sure that services fit your needs. Where this is not possible, we will arrange for services to be delivered to you and will pay for those services.

- One Stop Shop, individual case management – to prevent victims-survivors being shunted around the system
- Choice and flexibility are paramount for survivors
- Empowerment and Advocacy support, victims-survivors should be encouraged and supported to exercise their Rights in accessing the Support Fund
- Integrated services and bespoke support
- Comprehensive independent and Impartial assessment of needs
- Timescale for processing applications and claims
- Independent assessment
- Criteria to be determined
- What is available
- How to apply
- Hardship fund
- Extreme hardship and exceptional circumstances individual cases?
- Family searching, tracing and genealogy. How can we support this further?
- Travel fund for those migrated and others who wish to connect with the former organisation
- Funds including travel funds to reconnect with family members separated by past institutional care policies
- Applying on behalf of an adult who cannot apply themselves
- Qualifying relatives scheme
- Dependent on someone who died
- Funeral payments, Educational grants, Child care grants, Funds and service not already available through the welfare system
- Pay for social activities not readily available through the normal channels
- What format ?
- Direct payments system
- Will there be Time limits for applying
- How long will the fund run for and be active
- What happens afterwards
- On going support
- This list should not be seen as exhaustive and other support remedies should be accessible by the Support Fund.

Trustees and oversight of the Support Fund structures, operational functions and accountability

The fund should be victim-survivor centered and should consider the structures of accountability and oversight. We believe that this can be best served by having a Board of Trustees which includes victims-survivors over the lifetime of the Support Fund.

Victims of Crime definition should be used in our view as a basis for determining the Criteria:

Criteria and limits

Do services need a professional recommendation?: If so how will you maintain confidentiality?

- Where required, if victim-survivor is accessing support services currently and wishes to continue this but have the support fund pay for such service
- Then we such applications may have to be supported by a professional recommendation, such as a registered qualified therapist. We can arrange and pay for this for you.
- Service providers must be approved by the fund:

- The support fund must approve all service providers. We will advise you on registered providers in your area. Exceptional circumstances will be considered when the service cannot be provided through normal approved channels
- Treatment and services cannot be provided by a close relative like your husband or wife, your child or your brother or sister unless approved and such a person is deemed to be a carer, or legally responsible for the person applying to the fund.
- Time limits for accessing support may have to be considered to avoid uncertainty and disappointment by late applications

Will any limits financial or otherwise apply?:

- Financial limits may have to apply to services under ‘Being well physically and mentally’. These will be in line with the rates applied by public health providers and private insurers.
- There will be no limits on the number of therapy or other treatments that we will pay for in any year. However These should be in line with professional recommendations and your own specific needs.
- Additional therapy sessions should be considered based on individual specific needs.
- The maximum payment that will be allowed in any one year for all classes, courses and local travel under ‘Being socially active and connected’ is a sum of -----??

What about individuals receiving benefits?

Can trust funds be established to protect payments?

Individuals who are currently on any sort of benefits must not be penalised in any shape or form by the dept of work and pensions. How can this be guaranteed??

What about confidentiality?

Any information that is given to support fund, for any purpose, must be treated in the strictest of confidence, and information will never be shared or discussed with another person without your specific permission.

Irish support fund negative comments

There have been some negative comments by survivors in other jurisdictions such as Ireland. A spokesman for survivors, stated “ He added that services needed for survivors should be selected by survivors, adding that direct payments of composition should be made to survivors of abuse allowing them the “freedom of decision to improve their lives as they choose”.

He said that more should be done to consult with survivors about what the money should be spent on, stating that perhaps interim payments, pension provisions should be set up. He also said they had questions about what happens to the money when if it is not all drawn down, stating that survivors have families that need supports once they pass on.