

Annual Report

2022-23

This Annual Report is submitted to the Executive Office pursuant to paragraph 14(1) of Schedule 1 to the Victims' Payments Regulations 2020.

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President's Foreword

I am pleased to present the 2022 – 2023 Annual Report for the Victims' Payments Board (VPB).

Between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023, the Board has engaged actively and collaboratively with victims and their representatives. I recognise their valued contribution to fulfilling the shared goals of acknowledging the harm suffered by those injured in the Troubles and promoting reconciliation between people in connection with Northern Ireland's troubled past.

The past year has been characterised by working constructively with our partners and key stakeholders to continue to develop and progress the Troubles Permanent Disablement Payments Scheme (the Scheme). We have improved our advice, guidance and information to applicants and addressed operational matters arising from processing complex individual cases. We have embraced every opportunity to learn and to enhance our shared knowledge and experience. Effective engagement remains a priority for the Board, to ensure victims and survivors in Northern Ireland and beyond can readily access the Scheme, and receive the acknowledgement and recognition they deserve.

Applicants demonstrate great courage and fortitude when applying to the Scheme. A 'listening and learning' ethos is fundamental to the provision of responsive, victim-focused services. This remains a key priority for me as President of the VPB.



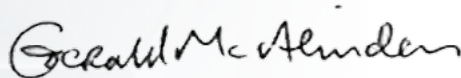
The VPB's work has been ably supported by our dedicated Secretariat and administrative teams who have worked tirelessly to uphold our guiding principles and deliver creative solutions throughout their day-to-day work.

During this reporting year, capacity to progress cases has increased significantly. However, it remains a challenge to process cases as quickly as we would wish due to the evidential complexities inherent in a Scheme of this nature. At times, delays prove both necessary and beneficial to ensure applicants' cases are fully and fairly heard. In the coming year, the VPB will listen carefully to applicant feedback, and build upon our cumulative experience with a view to further improving operational efficiencies and increasing capacity.

Board members have continued to provide strategic leadership in meeting the challenges this complex Scheme inevitably presents. They have pursued positive business developments and process improvements essential to affording recognition of the permanent disablement suffered by many victims as a result of the Troubles.

In this reporting year, additional points of focus have included raising public awareness of the Scheme by reaching out to potential applicants in other jurisdictions, as well as the development of a fair and transparent appeals process.

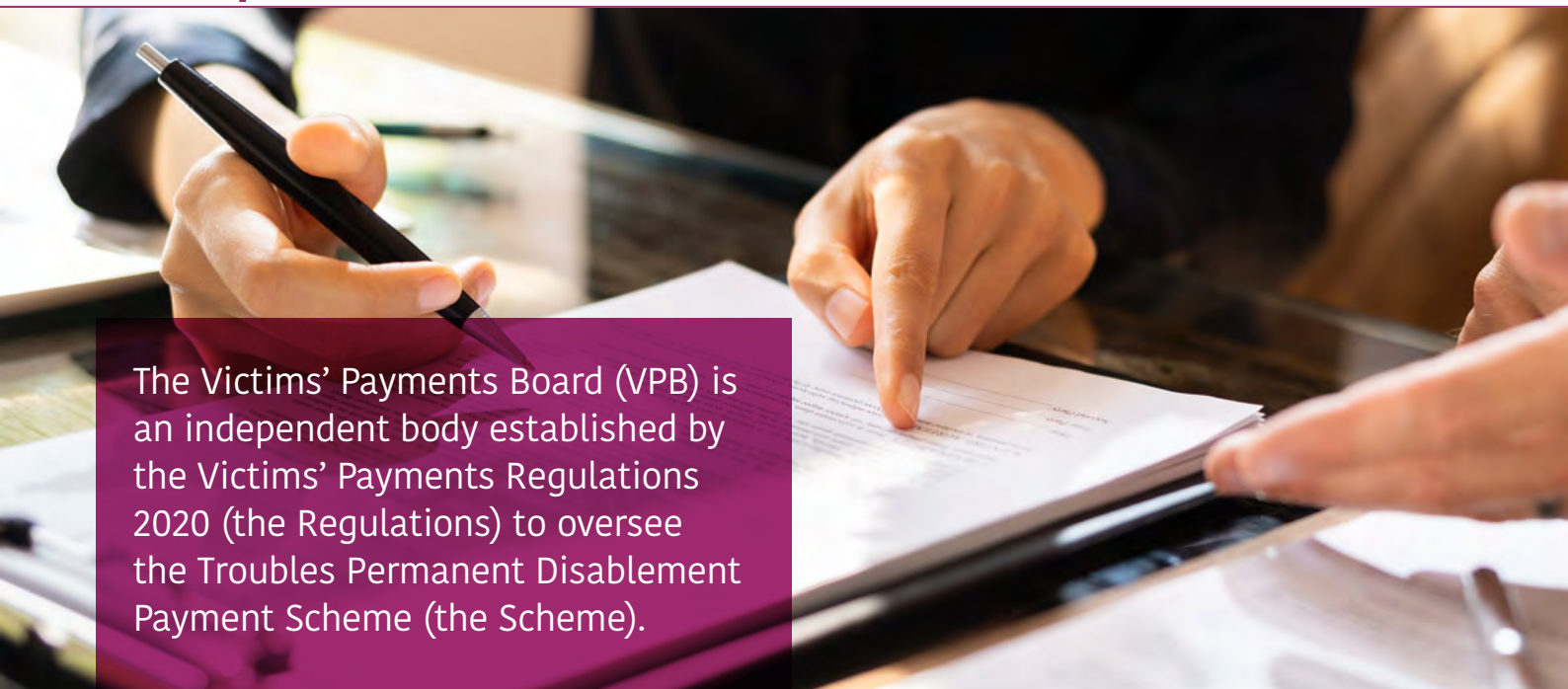
The future development of the Scheme is entirely driven by the need to keep victims at the centre of all that we do. On behalf of the Board, I restate our firm commitment to listen and respond to the needs of the victims and survivors we serve, recognising the enduring, physical and psychological harm they experience to this day.



The Honourable Mr Justice McAlinden,
Victims' Payments Board President

“Effective engagement remains a priority for the Board, to ensure victims and survivors in Northern Ireland and beyond can readily access the Scheme, and receive the acknowledgement and recognition they deserve.”

Purpose



The Victims' Payments Board (VPB) is an independent body established by the Victims' Payments Regulations 2020 (the Regulations) to oversee the Troubles Permanent Disablement Payment Scheme (the Scheme).

The Scheme's purpose is to acknowledge the harm suffered by those injured in the Troubles, and to promote reconciliation between people in connection with Northern Ireland's troubled past. The VPB is required to act in accordance with the eligibility criteria as set out in the Regulations, and it is important to emphasise this Scheme cannot, unfortunately meet the needs of all the victims of the Troubles in Northern Ireland.

The Regulations set out the Scheme's guiding principles which are:

- the need to prioritise, and be responsive to, the needs of victims of Troubles-related incidents;
- the need to be transparent and to communicate effectively with the public and victims of Troubles-related incidents;
- the need for the Scheme to be straightforward and simple to navigate;
- the need for applications to be determined without delay;
- the need for personal data to be handled sensitively.

On 26 August 2020, the Executive Office (TEO) designated the Department of Justice (DoJ) to discharge responsibility for the provision of the Secretary and staff to undertake the administrative functions of the Board. The Scheme commenced operation on 31 August 2021 under the leadership of the Board President, the Honourable Mr Justice McAlinden.

Throughout the reporting year, the Scheme received an increasing volume of applications. With the unfailing support of our staff, and improvements to our operational systems, processes and governance structures, we have worked hard to maintain high quality services and to administer applications fairly and efficiently. Working closely with our information-sharing partners, the Board is committed to obtaining as much information as it reasonably can to ensure all details are available for panels to make well-informed, fair decisions. Although this requires considerable resources and time, this is in an effort to assist applicants.

Operation of the Board

The VPB is a body corporate and operates independently of, and at arm's length from, TEO under the provisions of a Partnership Agreement. That Agreement sets out the framework for the effective governance, financing and operation of the VPB and is available to read on the [VPB's website](#).

The VPB has autonomy to operate as a separate legal entity with its own governance arrangements.

A Financial Management Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) has also been agreed between TEO and DoJ in respect of the Scheme. The MoU sets out arrangements for funding the VPB's work and the reporting arrangements between TEO and DoJ.

The VPB Secretary is responsible for the day-to-day operations and for providing effective leadership and management of the administration team and Board Secretariat.

The Board's administration team supports the President and Board members when determining entitlement to payments under the Scheme. A skilled and committed workforce is critical to the successful achievement of our corporate aims and objectives, and to meet our challenging performance measures. Staff numbers continued to increase throughout this reporting year, enabling the efficient progression of cases throughout the year.

Following an open and competitive tender process, Capita was contracted by DoJ to assess the degree of permanent disablement suffered by applicants to the Scheme. The Board monitors continuously the operation of the contract to ensure it is fit for purpose and has the needs of victims at the front and centre of all processes.

Board Membership and Functions

As President of the VPB, the Honourable Mr Justice McAlinden is responsible for the leadership and strategic direction of the Board, and for the efficient and effective implementation and delivery of the Scheme.

Having commenced operation with 26 interim Board members, the Board now comprises a total of 61 members, including 23 legal, 13 medical and 25 ordinary members. Members are appointed as judicial office holders by the Northern Ireland Judicial Appointments Commission to determine applications under the Scheme. Board members also have responsibility for assisting the President with corporate governance requirements such as policy development, quality assurance, financial and risk management.

Board members undertake regular training on a range of professional development topics. In the course of the year, Board members completed training on topics including:

- Legislation;
- Trauma;
- Board Governance;
- Capita Standardisation;
- Capacity Awareness;
- Sexual Violence.

The panel which make determinations comprise a legal member as chair, an ordinary member and a medical member with each having an equal say in the final decision. Appeals against panel decisions are determined by panel members who were not involved in the original determination.

The Board's statutory functions, duties and powers can be summarised as follows:

- to receive and administer applications made to the Scheme;
- to determine entitlement to, and the amount of, payments in respect of injury caused by a Troubles-related incident;
- to develop guidance and make arrangements for the assessment of degree of permanent disablement;
- following determination, to notify applicants regarding eligibility to, and amount of, payments as soon as reasonably practicable;
- to constitute panels to assess and determine applications and appeals, conduct further assessments and undertake reviews of determinations;
- to facilitate the provision of independent advice and support to applicants;
- to develop operational policies and procedures;
- to appoint advisors to assist the VPB;
- to provide an annual report on the exercise of its functions.

Our Board Committees

The work of the VPB is supported by three standing Board Committees. The Business Assurance, Operational and Rework Committees operate within agreed terms of reference and deal with strategic matters including governance and risk management, the effective delivery of business operations and the review and reworking of applicants' medical assessments.

The Committees comprise members of the Board and are supported by the Senior Management Team and Secretariat. Committees give detailed reports to each Board meeting providing assurance as to the adequacy and effectiveness of the Scheme.

Additionally, the Board can establish sub-committees and working groups to consider distinct issues that arise from time to time. The Board may also establish sub-committees comprising members of a number of the standing committees. These Committees focus on standalone issues and report to the Board.

In this reporting period, the VPB's three Committees undertook important work to assist the President and the Board fulfil their statutory functions. A summary of the activities of each Committee is set out in the following sections.



Business Assurance Committee (BAC)

The purpose of the Business Assurance Committee (BAC) is to support the VPB and the Secretary, as Senior Accountable Officer (SAO), in monitoring risk, controls, governance and associated assurance.

The BAC welcomed six new members in this reporting period, three legal, one medical and two ordinary members. The Committee now has five legal, three medical and four ordinary members to meet the challenges of an extensive and demanding agenda. A prioritised work plan is progressed by small 'task and finish' groups who report regularly at bi-monthly meetings of the Committee.

During this reporting period, much of the BAC's work focused on development of the Board's inaugural Business Plan and Risk Register 22/23. The Committee also delivered the following:

- Annual Report (for the 2021/22 year);
- Business Continuity Management Plan;
- Complaints Policy and Procedure;
- Board Members' Code of Conduct.

Further, the BAC considered and revised critical governance, policy and guidance documents including:

- Partnership Agreement between the VPB and TEO;
- Memorandum of Understanding between TEO and DoJ in respect of the Scheme;
- Overpayment Recoupment Policy;
- Guidance Note on Death of an applicant prior to Application Determination;
- Procedural Guidance Note on Panel Advice to applicants.

The BAC also assumed newly allocated responsibilities under delegated authority from the Board to include the oversight of complaints and handling of Stage 3 complaints; approval of Direct Award Contracts; oversight of the Write-off of Overpayments Register and reporting write-offs; review of the Members' Register of Interests and Gifts and Hospitality Register; and oversight of the application and implementation of the Members' Code of Conduct.

At Committee meetings, the Secretariat provide, formal reports of progress against the Business Plan, engagement with victims, and panel hearing statistics.

Operational Committee

The Operational Committee was established in October 2022 to support effective operational delivery of the Scheme. The purpose of the Committee is to provide oversight on behalf of the VPB of the day-to-day activities of the panels.

The Committee discharges its functions efficiently to enable the Scheme to operate within its current resourcing profile. The Committee works collaboratively with the existing Business Assurance and Rework Committees to support overall delivery of the Scheme. They provided recommendations on the processes around applications with multiple incidents.

A standing item on the Committee's agenda includes a review of the retained log of operational issues. This log is populated with issues identified by Board members and staff from the Senior Management and Administrative Teams.

This feedback process, for example, identified specific training needs for Board members in relation to regulations 19 and 20. Training was subsequently provided by the Finance Team for all Board members.

The Committee has also been taking the lead in developing a database of determinations made by panels. This initiative will provide a searchable record of decisions made to ensure fair and consistent decision-making.

The Committee places a strong emphasis on the production of statistical data to monitor the progress of applications within the Scheme, and to provide assurance it is delivering effective outcomes for applicants.

The Committee has achieved positive outcomes for the delivery of the Scheme throughout its limited operational period of six months during this reporting year and looks forward to making further progress going forward.



Rework Committee

The Rework Committee filters requests from VPB panels when it is considered the assessment of permanent disablement in an application contains errors so significant they either:

- jeopardise the accuracy of the degree of disablement; or
- risk significant harm to the applicant (such as inclusion of harmful information).

This is referred to as “rework”. During the reporting period, 20 rework requests were received, with 17 forwarded to Capita and 10 accepted for rework.

The Committee holds clinical governance meetings with Capita every six weeks. These meetings have been important to ensure regular feedback on issues relating to rework requests and assessments. The meetings also involve standardisation exercises which utilise sample cases worked through to an agreed approach and determination of what the percentage disablement might be. These exercises enable the Committee to gain insight into the Capita approach and provide a clearer understanding of the healthcare guidance in action, in addition to the training undertaken by Capita staff.

The Committee achieved the following positive outcomes over this reporting period:

- all evidence gathering attempts are now recorded by Capita assessors to enable panels to identify what evidence might still be outstanding;
- the development of a form for panels to provide constructive feedback on the healthcare report to facilitate improvements;
- modifications made to ensure the most appropriate route for assessing each applicant is chosen and recorded;
- identified the need to establish a subgroup to consider the best approach for assessing disablement caused by scarring;
- established a subgroup to work with Capita to consider amendments required to the Health Care Professional Guidance to best reflect improved practice as the Scheme evolves.



Overview and Impact of the Board's Work in 2022/23



£14,028,518.80

Total amount paid
to applicants



591

Number of
hearings held



10,684

Number of
emails handled



4,491

Number of phone
calls handled



2,063

Total number
of applications



2,024

Applications
including a
psychological
element

We increased the time spent engaging with our community and professional stakeholders, with a focus on seeking out those less obvious and hard to reach groups.

The new Communications Plan ensures the Scheme's core purpose is widely communicated.

We improved and refined our operational processes and efficiencies.

We introduced an early assessment of evidence to reduce delay.

We increased our staff numbers by 30% and secured additional office space to ensure we can meet forecasted demand.

We maintained the VPB's crucial autonomy and independence whilst building open, honest and collaborative working relationships with TEO.

Board members and staff have received expert training to ensure consistency and sensitivity in how they handle cases and individuals.

We worked with information providers to improve the quality of information provided to our decision-making panels.

We published the Board's inaugural Business Plan.

Risk management focused on fair and consistent determinations; unnecessary delays; building trust and confidence; quality assurance; and data/information security.

Communications and Engagement

Effective communications and engagement remain a priority for the VPB to ensure victims and survivors can readily access the Scheme, and receive the acknowledgement and recognition they deserve.

We have continued our formal meetings on a quarterly basis between VPB, TEO and VSS. We also regularly meet with a broad range of stakeholders and interest groups working with and for victims including:

- Commission for Victims and Survivors;
- Ashton Centre;
- Ely Centre;
- Relatives for Justice;
- South East Fermanagh Foundation;
- Victims and Survivors Service; and
- WAVE Trauma.

These meetings provide a useful forum to share feedback and highlight issues regarding the operation and management of the Scheme.

We also adopt a 'lessons learned' approach, making continual improvements to the Scheme.

Our communication and engagement work has been greatly enhanced by the development and delivery of a new communications strategy.

This strategy assists the Board to engage directly with victims and their representatives. It also aims to increase the visibility and accessibility of the Scheme, and encourages applicants and prospective applicants to engage. We also developed an effective programme of outreach to include "hard to reach" victims. This engagement has included meetings with the Veterans' Commissioner and Police Benevolent Fund. During this reporting year, we established a new Communications Team to manage sectoral engagement activities. We have also improved advice, guidance and information to applicants.



Applications to the Scheme

Applications to the Scheme are made using the VPB application form either online or by hard copy. It is important for applicants or their representatives to provide as much detail and supporting evidence as they can. Our website **Victims' Payments Board** (victimspaymentsboard.org.uk) has guidance on how to do this and VPB staff can help answer any questions before an application is submitted. We prioritise those applicants over the age of 80 or with a terminal illness.

The complexities involved in applications we receive are unlike many other schemes and so we are unable to provide a definitive timescale for applications to reach the determination stage. All applications are unique and each application is considered on its own merits. Although the burden of proof is on applicants, the VPB has committed to adopting a victim-centric approach by obtaining evidential information and medical records on behalf of applicants. The time taken for a case to progress to determination demonstrates the Board's commitment to victims. As is well known, a large volume of the applications received by the Board relates to incidents from many years ago. Many applications comprise of more than one incident, which in turn leads to a lengthy evidence-gathering process to ensure all information is on the file before progressing to the Board for determination.

For a step-by-step guide of the Application Process, see [Appendix](#).

We write to applicants to tell them when their application proceeds to the next stage or if we need more information from them. There may be lengthy periods of time between these stages while we gather information from our information-sharing partners. All our staff are trained to deal sensitively with applicants, and to deal securely with their information.

Cases with complex eligibility issues or multiple incidents may go to an eligibility panel for consideration before being referred for an assessment of disablement by a Health Care Professional (HCP). Following the medical assessment, applications are heard by a panel usually comprising one legal member, one medical member and one ordinary member. The panel will consider all the information gathered and make a determination about payments to the victim in line with the Regulations.

A panel may decide to adjourn its decision for a variety of reasons, including to obtain further information or clarification. Panels make determinations based only on the information provided to them. If an applicant is dissatisfied with the decision of a panel, they can appeal the decision within 12 months of being notified of the determination.

In the reporting year, the VPB also dealt with the first appeals against panel decisions. This required the further development of processes and administrative arrangements to ensure appeal hearings could proceed in a timely manner. There were 39 appeal hearings throughout this reporting year, with 10 appellants successful. Appeals can be brought on a number of grounds as set out in the Regulations. Appeals provide applicants with an opportunity to provide further evidence and/or submissions, including the opportunity to give evidence in person.

Typical Case Scenarios

While each case is fact-specific, we have developed **some typical case scenarios to assist and inform the public**. This is in response to feedback regarding some misconceptions about the Scheme.

These scenarios are provided for illustrative purposes only and are not based on any individual applications.

SCENARIO 1

Presence and permanent disablement

In this scenario, the applicant was badly injured as a result of a bomb explosion. The evidence indicated this was a Troubles-related incident (TRI) at which the applicant was present and suffered permanent physical and psychological injuries as a result. The case was progressed for a Health Care Professional assessment by Capita. The applicant was assessed to have a permanent disablement at more than 14%. The case was referred to a VPB panel for a determination on eligibility and payment. The panel was satisfied (on the balance of probabilities) the applicant was eligible under the Scheme and was entitled to victims' payments. The applicant was notified in writing of the panel's decision and provided with a summary of reasons, along with payment information.

SCENARIO 2

"Immediate aftermath"

The applicant's parent who was the victim of a gun attack, was taken to hospital by ambulance but sadly died shortly afterwards. Police and newspaper reports from the time confirmed the incident took place as described by the applicant. She had been diagnosed with depression as a result of the incident. The applicant was not present at the incident. Although she attended hospital after the incident, she did not see her parent at any point after the shooting. The case was listed before an eligibility panel who determined the applicant was not eligible for payments as she was not present at the incident or in the immediate aftermath of the incident. The case was determined without asking the applicant to undergo a medical assessment. The applicant was sent the panel's decision and summary of reasons as to why the applicant was not entitled to victims' payments.

SCENARIO 3**“Loved one”**

The applicant came upon the immediate aftermath of an incident in which a victim had been fatally wounded. The applicant called the emergency services. He was diagnosed with PTSD and anxiety as a result of the incident. After the application was received by the VPB, the administrative team clarified with the applicant whether he had any relationship with the victim. The applicant confirmed he had not known the victim. Media coverage and police records confirmed the incident occurred as described and provided information as to who was responsible and the reason for the incident occurring. Based on the information obtained, an eligibility panel was satisfied the incident was a Troubles-related incident. The applicant was not present at the time of the incident. Although the applicant was determined to have been present in the immediate aftermath of the incident, the person who died was not a “loved one” as required by the Regulations. Therefore, the applicant was not entitled to victims’ payments. The panel acknowledged the harm suffered by the applicant but set out its reasons as to why the eligibility requirements were not met.

SCENARIO 4**Complex evidence-gathering process**

The applicant was abducted and shot for reasons that were unclear from the initial application and information-gathering exercise. Multiple injuries were referenced in the application but the link between the incident and the injuries was unclear. The panel adjourned the hearing to provide the applicant with the opportunity to provide further information and clarification. The applicant noted it was difficult to remember things from such a long time ago, particularly as they were very difficult memories. However, the applicant was able to clarify timelines and provide further detail. In light of the additional details provided, it took a number of months to obtain further information from information-sharing partners, and to complete a medical assessment. Following this, the applicant was determined by a panel to be eligible for victims’ payments. Therefore, an application which may have been assessed as ineligible due to a lack of evidence, instead resulted in a positive determination.

SCENARIO 5**Multiple incidents**

The applicant referenced a large number of separate incidents occurring over a 25-year period. The dates and locations were not known for each incident. The VPB obtained as much information as possible regarding the incidents from its information-sharing partners. Panel eligibility hearings were adjourned on two occasions to obtain clarification from the applicant regarding particular aspects of some incidents and how they may satisfy the requirements of the eligibility criteria. The panel then determined the applicant's eligibility for each incident based on the evidence gathered. The eligibility panel determined the applicant was not entitled to payments in respect of some of the incidents. The remaining incidents proceeded to a Health Care Professional for an assessment of the applicant's permanent disablement which was caused by those incidents. Following the assessment, a determination panel decided the applicant was entitled to victims' payments in respect of those incidents, with payments issued.

SCENARIO 6**Time allowed for further information gathering**

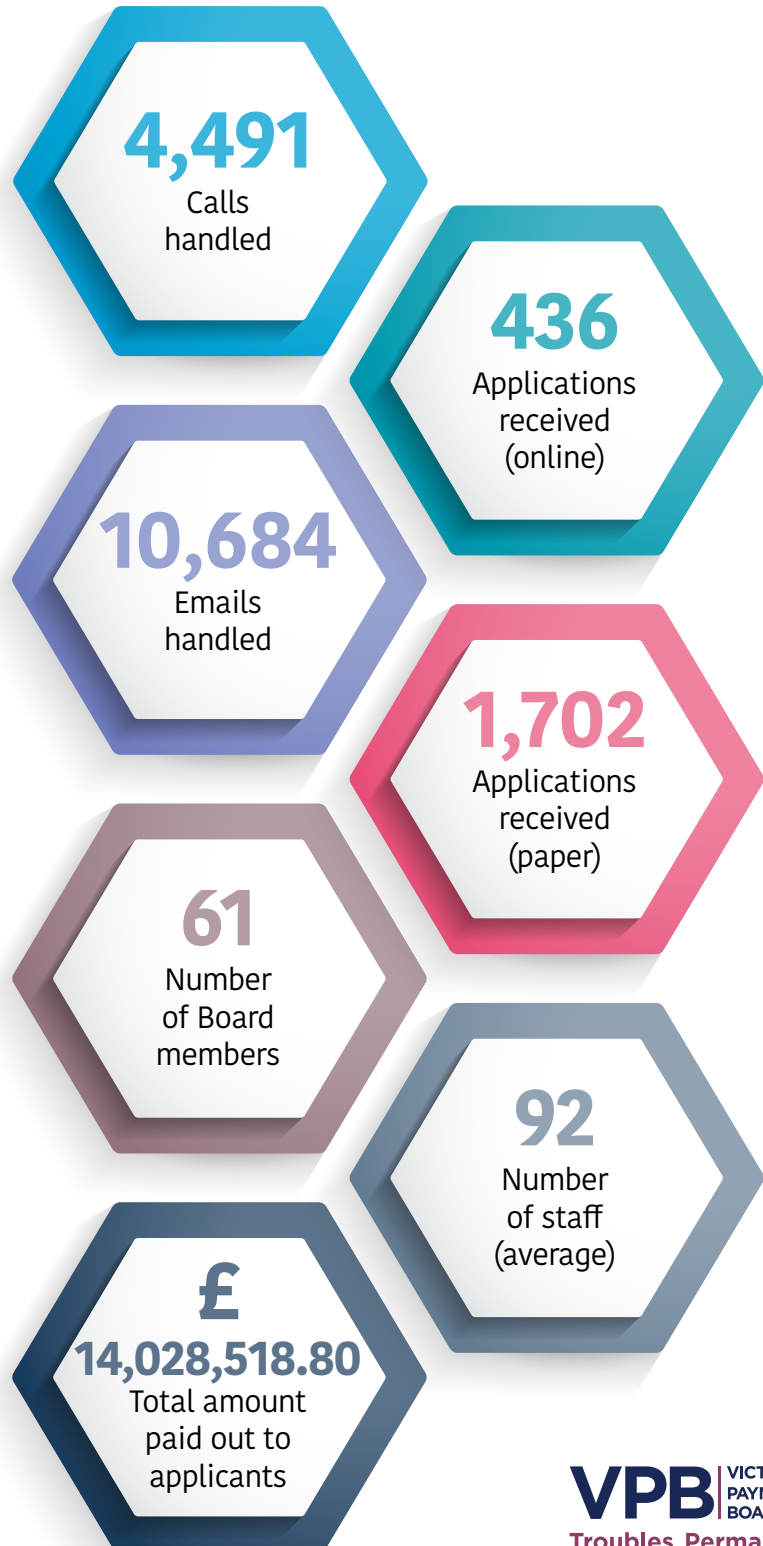
The applicant submitted an application outlining an incident she believed to be a Troubles-related incident. The application described the injuries sustained and resultant impact on daily life. A panel was appointed to consider the evidence. There appeared to be insufficient evidence regarding the incident having been carried out for a reason related to the constitutional status of Northern Ireland or political or sectarian hostility here. The panel adjourned the case to give the applicant the opportunity to address this and/or provide further information. The applicant replied but did not address the query and no further relevant information could be identified. Although an injury had been sustained due to this incident, the panel determined it was not a Troubles-related incident and, therefore, it did not fall within the Scheme.

Statistics 2022-23

The VPB collates statistics and other data to monitor the quality of service delivery; identify themes arising from applications received; assist in reviewing the effectiveness of the work completed in the reporting period; and focus attention on areas for service improvement.

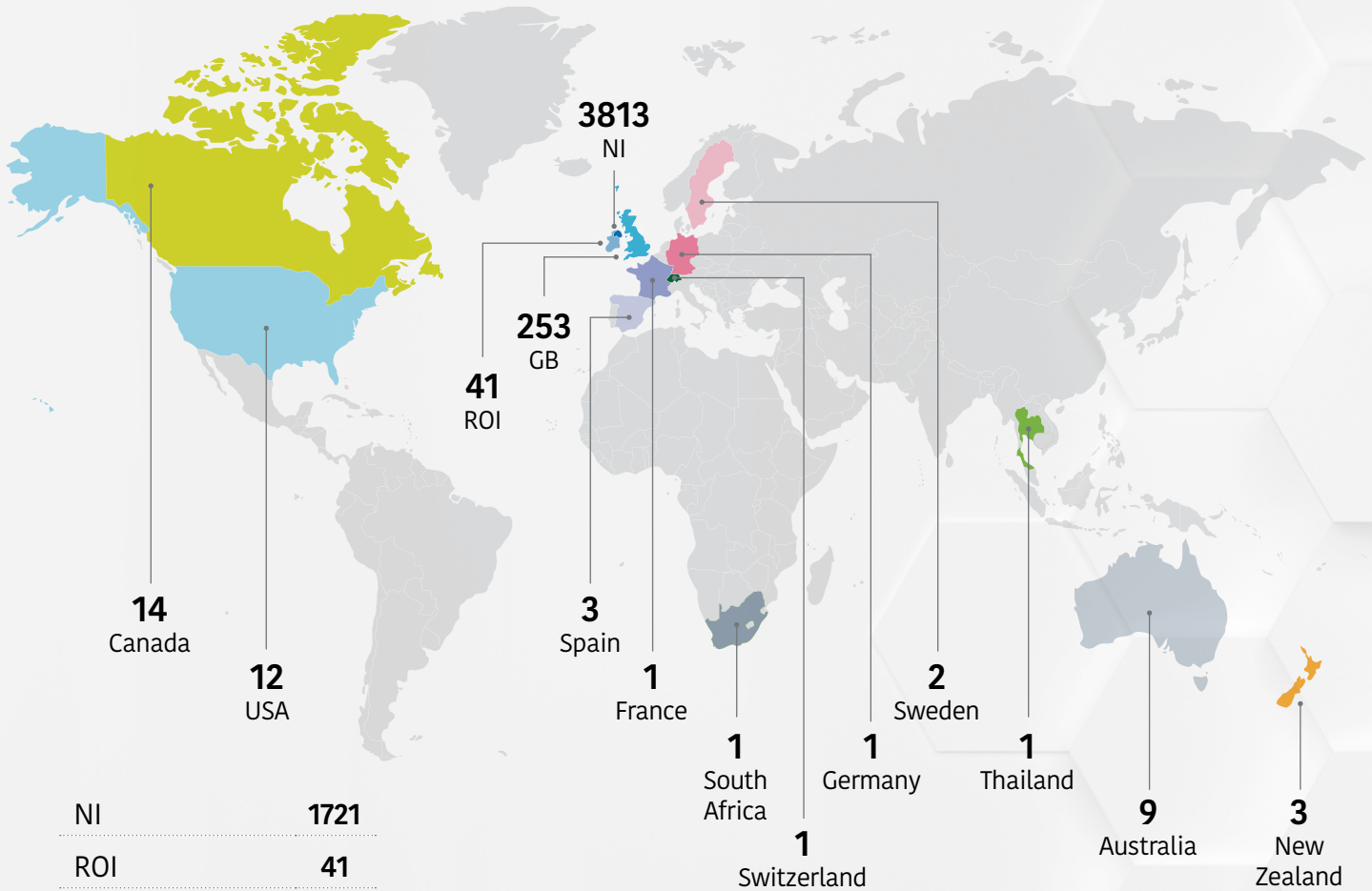
Statistics relating to the Board's key areas of work are illustrated here.

Key Outcomes



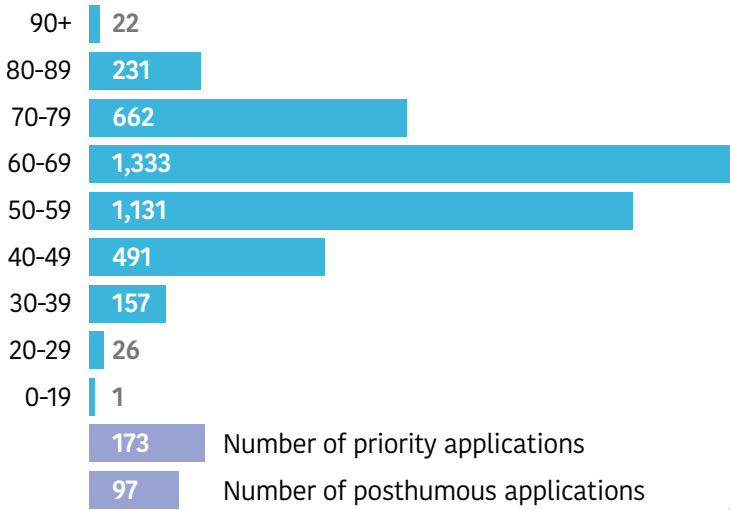
Demographics

Location of applicants



NI	1721
ROI	41
GB	253
France	1
Spain	3
Germany	1
Sweden	2
Canada	14
USA	12
South Africa	1
Australia	9
Thailand	1
Switzerland	1
New Zealand	3

Age of applicants



Panel Work and Determinations

Number of:

successful applications	261
unsuccessful applications	132
total applications considered	904
appeal hearings	66
successful appeals	10
unsuccessful appeals	6
oral appeal hearings	35

Health Related Statistics



998

Number of
psychological
injuries



73

Number of
physical injuries



1509

Number of health
assessments



352

HCP requests for
psychological
assessment



1325

Applicants claiming
psychological and
physical injuries

Eligibility / Ineligibility

110

Determined to
be present at/in
immediate aftermath
of/ responding in
course of employment
to, a TRI

81

Determined to
not be present
at/in immediate
aftermath of/
responding in
course of
employment
to, a TRI

2

Below 14%
disablement

3

Outside
scheme date
range

2

Ineligible due
to a relevant
conviction

Complaints

The VPB has established a three-stage complaints procedure providing complainants an opportunity to raise complaints formally or informally. Our objective is to address concerns and resolve matters in a timely and responsive manner, ensuring all elements of the complaint are properly considered.

The VPB views complaints as an opportunity to learn, and to improve our service delivery. The Business Assurance Committee considers complaints data regularly in order to monitor the quality and responsiveness of service delivery, and to ensure any trends are identified as early as possible.

The BAC is responsible for investigating and reporting on all Stage 3 complaints. To do so, it establishes a sub-committee with the appropriate knowledge, skills and experience to review and adjudicate on the issues raised. A detailed, but anonymised, report of the investigation, findings and recommendations is provided to the BAC for consideration and assurance sought from the Board Secretary regarding the implementation of all recommendations. A report of the key findings and recommendations goes to the next Board meeting for noting and shared learning.

In this reporting year, the Board received a total of 35 complaints. All complaints were resolved in-house at Stage 1 or 2 of the process. The complaints received mainly related to delays and communication with applicants.

In the same period, we received 11 compliments from victims, applicants and other service users. Compliments primarily related to the quality of customer service and positive staff attitudes. The Board will continue to monitor all complaints and compliments with a view to identifying service improvements, applying lessons learned and endorsing good practice.

Conclusion



This second VPB Annual Report demonstrates the breadth, complexity and importance of the work undertaken throughout this reporting period.

The Scheme was designed and implemented within a very short time frame to consider a range of sensitive and challenging applications. However, the Board is wholly committed to making continuous improvements to the operation of the Scheme and, in particular, to improving the applicant experience. In discharging our statutory duties, the VPB ensures the Scheme is victim-centred, transparent, straightforward, timely and secure.

The physical, psychological and financial impact of the Troubles on victims and survivors clearly resonates to this day. The Board continues to take a victim-centred approach, ensuring applicants are dealt with sensitively and fairly.

The work of the Board and the Secretariat has increased significantly throughout the last 12 months. We have continued to engage with and listen to applicants, their representatives and other stakeholders as the Scheme has progressed. Indeed, in this reporting period, the VPB dealt with over 20,000 individual telephone calls and email communications with applicants, their representatives and other stakeholders.

In this upcoming 12-month period, we will be focusing on improving our communications and engagement with applicants at every stage of the application process. Work is also underway to develop a new Application Form and Application to Appeal Form, with accompanying Guidance. This will provide greater clarity about the determination and appeals processes and is expected to improve the quality of information provided by applicants.

It is pleasing to note the Scheme has awarded payments of more than £14 million during 2022/23. The number of applications received by the Scheme has increased by nearly 50% and the number of hearings has increased exponentially to 644. The appeals process was first initiated in this period, and 39 appeal hearings have been held.

Going forward, we are conducting an end-to-end review of our business processes to identify areas for improvement, avoid unnecessary delays and enhance our service to victims. Furthermore, the VPB will continue to meet regularly with our information-sharing partners to improve the quality of information provided. The VPB has also introduced operational improvements to enhance the efficiency of the application process and we will be developing further initiatives in this area over the next 12 months.

Following an increase in efforts to raise awareness of the Scheme within Northern Ireland and further afield, we received over 4100 applications in this reporting period. These applications were submitted by applicants in 14 countries across the world, ranging in age from under 19 to over 90. We are committed to increasing awareness of the Scheme over the next reporting period with a particular focus on those groups that are harder to reach. Increased publicity about the Scheme will be carried out in partnership with the wider victims' sector, to include an information leaflet being provided to every household in Northern Ireland.

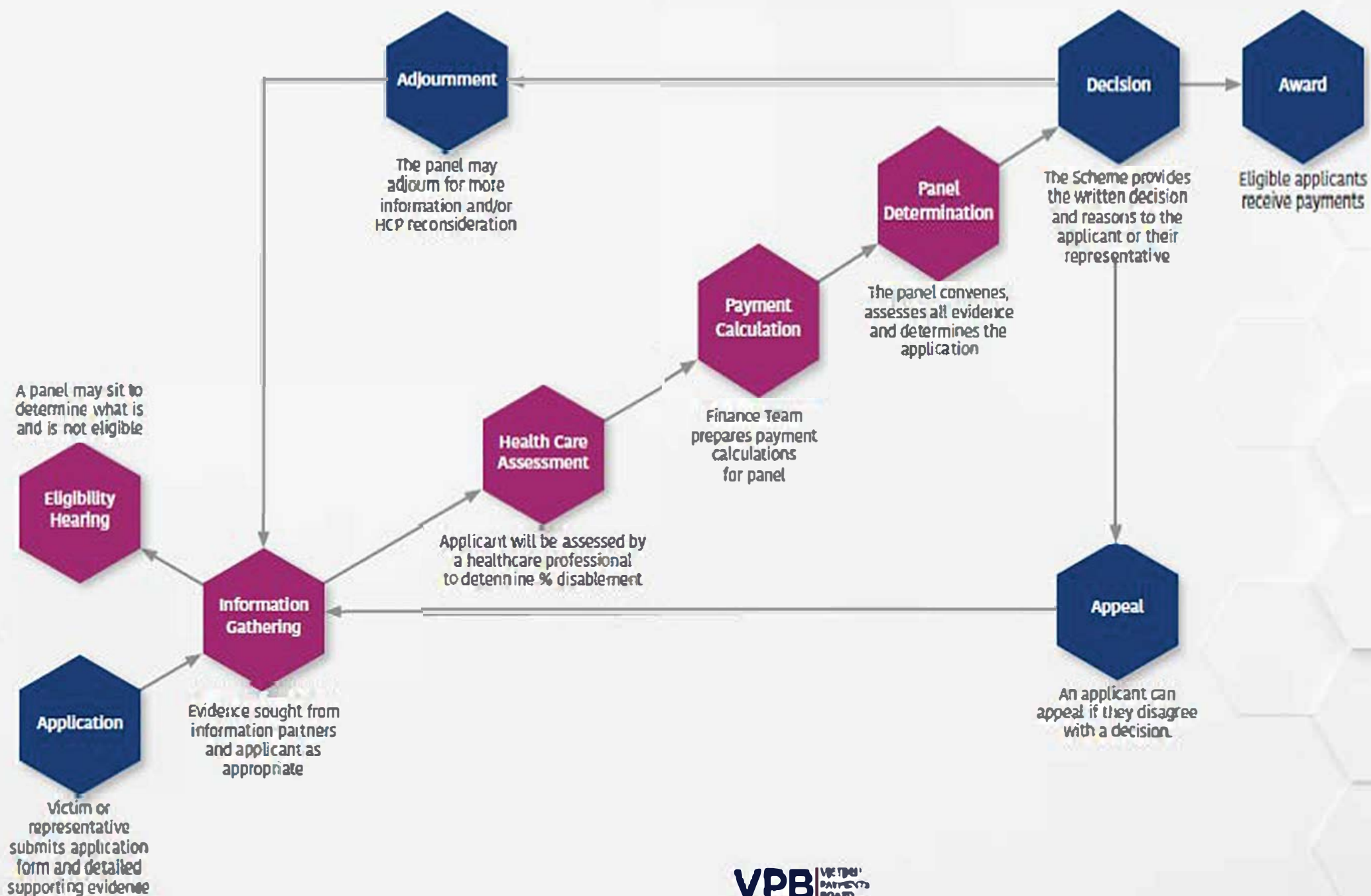
Throughout this reporting period, further development of the remit and responsibilities of our Board Committees, together with the establishment of the Operational Committee, have been critical to the efficient and effective discharge of the Board's functions and sound corporate governance.

With victims at the heart of everything we do, the VPB looks forward to the next year with determination to build on the work we have undertaken in the past twelve months.



Paul Bullick,
Secretary to the Victims' Payment Board

The Application Process - step by step guide



Further information on all aspects of the Scheme and the support available can be found on our website at:

www.victimspaymentsboard.org.uk

If you need this report in a different format or a different language, please contact us.

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