



**REVIEW • MAY 2021**

# KENOVA VICTIM FOCUS GROUP REVIEW

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## 1: The Kenova Strategy

To provide an effective, efficient and independent investigation that seeks to be Article 2 European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) compliant into those matters set out in the Kenova Terms of Reference. The investigation will apply transparency wherever possible with a focus upon and due consideration towards the victims and families of the offences being investigated. The investigation will apply an equal and fair approach towards all those that are to be engaged with, treating everyone with courtesy and respect.

## 2: The Kenova Vision

To be trusted by victims and their families. To establish the truth of what happened. To gain the confidence of the communities and stakeholders. To be unwavering in the search for the truth with each agency, department, political party, other organisation or individual that/ who might seek to prevent the truth from being established.

## 3: Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report by the Kenova Victims Focus Group (VFG) is to review the Kenova Strategy and Vision to determine if the current strategy supports the rights of victims and families. In doing this the report seeks to:

Inform the Officer in Overall Command (OIOC) of any areas of good practice demonstrated by Kenova and any areas that could be improved upon;

To review Kenova's engagement with victims and family members and whether that engagement was victim focused;

Establish if the Kenova strategy has supported and facilitated victims and families to access their rights;

- 🌐 ECHR - [https://www.echr.coe.int/documents/convention\\_eng.pdf](https://www.echr.coe.int/documents/convention_eng.pdf)
- 🌐 EIRE - [https://www.ihrec.ie/download/pdf/ihrec\\_human\\_rights\\_explained.pdf](https://www.ihrec.ie/download/pdf/ihrec_human_rights_explained.pdf)
- 🌐 UK - <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1998/42/data.pdf>

- Provide recommendations on the development of a victim/family strategy which might support any future unit set up to carry out Legacy Investigations in Northern Ireland or elsewhere.

In producing this report, the VFG has drawn information from its own survey of families in 2019. In addition, the VFG has drawn from two interim reports (2019 and 2020) by Alyson Kilpatrick LB who is conducting an Independent Review of Article 2 compliance and a review by the National Police Chiefs Council Homicide Working Group (2021). Evidence about

Kenova presented to the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee Inquiry into the Government's new proposals for addressing Northern Ireland's legacy of the past (2020) has also been referenced.

The VFG has, throughout the Kenova investigations, had regular updates and discussions with the OIOC and his team. In 2017 the VFG held a private meeting with family members who responded to an invitation to all of the families engaged with Kenova at that time. All of the above sources, in combination, form the basis for conclusions reached in this report.

## **4: The establishment, role and work of the Victim Focus Group (VFG)**

Families are at the centre of Kenova's strategy and its vision. Many of these families feel strongly that, in the past, the authorities have failed them; often they had no contact with the police following the murder of a loved one. In some cases, families were not made aware that an inquest into the death was due to be, or had been, held and had to learn about how their loved one died from media reports and second or third-hand information. Key, therefore, to Kenova's approach, and articulated to the VFG by OIOC, is that a positive and trusting relationship with families is actively sought through engagement, openness and transparency.

To this end, in the autumn of 2016, the OIOC invited a number of international and local experts to form the Victim Focus Group (VFG). The members were approached based on their knowledge, skills, diversity of work and their ability to represent a global and local understanding of victims' rights.

There is no regulatory or statutory requirement for a Victim Focus Group. It was established in order to facilitate transparency, oversight and reassurance for victims' families with regards to the adoption of a victim-centred investigation. Information on members of the VFG can be viewed at;

 <https://www.kenova.co.uk/meet-the-vfg>

The VFG is, and will remain, completely independent of Kenova. Its overriding duty is to victims of crime; their rights, needs and interests. The aim of the VFG is to identify best practice on what information, support and protection should be provided to victims of crime.

### **4.1: A rights-based approach**

The VFG is aware that victims have experienced trauma, fear and isolation and that this can prevent them from being able to access their rights in practice. Key to the VFG approach are victims' rights as set out in the EU Victims Directive of 2012 and subsequently enacted as legislation;

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32012L0029>

These rights are also outlined generally in the Northern Ireland Department of Justice Victim Charter and can be viewed at:

<https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/doj/victim-charter.pdf>

Article 2 European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) - The Right to Life- has a critical importance for Kenova. This Article requires the State to initiate an effective public investigation by an independent official body into any death occurring in circumstances in which it appears that one or other of the substantive obligations has been, or may be, violated, and it appears that agents of the state are, or may be, in some way implicated. Furthermore the ECHR specifically states that Article 2 compliant investigations should be independent, effective, prompt, open to public scrutiny and involve the next of kin.

Many of the families of victims included in the Kenova caseload have fought in the courts for decades to have their case independently investigated in an Article 2 compliant way. In the Barnard case, the Northern Ireland Court of Appeal held that those families have a **legitimate expectation** that an independent police team carry out and report upon such an analysis ('the Barnard Judgment' dated 5 July 2019). The Kenova model has embodied a robust and innovative approach to Article 2 compliance and best practice learning from this is reflected on in our report.

Whilst the legal implications of Article 2 compliance extend considerably beyond the remit of the VFG, the issues of independence and involvement of the next of kin are central to a victim centred approach. Therefore the VFG has considered the review of Kenova's compliance with Article 2 by Alyson Kilpatrick BL in preparing this report.

## 4.2: Terms of Reference

The VFG's first task was to develop terms of reference, in consultation with the OIOC. As a priority, they engaged with victims and used their input to finalise the terms of reference which can be viewed on the Kenova website at:

[www.opkenova.co.uk/vfg-terms-of-reference](http://www.opkenova.co.uk/vfg-terms-of-reference)

The VFG has also reviewed and endorsed the investigative team's Family Liaison Strategy;

[https://www.opkenova.co.uk/FLO%20STRATEGY%20OP%20KENOVA.V3%20\(002\).doc](https://www.opkenova.co.uk/FLO%20STRATEGY%20OP%20KENOVA.V3%20(002).doc)

Throughout the investigation a range of issues affecting victims have arisen on which the OIOC has sought input and advice from the VFG. Regular feedback and discussion have helped the group maintain a broad oversight and provide guidance to retain a victim-centred approach.

The importance of the VFG is reflected in Alyson Kilpatrick's interim Independent Report on Article 2 Compliance:

*“They (the Kenova team) have been assisted greatly by the other oversight group set up to engage victims and victims’ relatives – the Victim Focus Group (VFG). The VFG also comprises individuals with unmatched experience of working with victims and is representative of all those affected by the investigation. The VFG has enabled the team to reach people who had not engaged previously and eased the Kenova team’s passage to retrieval of information”*

## 5: Background and Context

‘The Troubles’ lasted almost 30 years and has had a fundamental impact on society in Northern Ireland.

- In 2017, 26 per cent of the Northern Ireland population said either they or a family member, continue to be affected by a conflict-related incident;
- Between 1966 and 2006, 3,720 conflict-related deaths occurred leaving these families mourning the loss of a loved one;
- 40,000 people have been injured;
- 213,000 people are experiencing significant mental health problems.

The impact of harm on this scale on a population of roughly 1.7 million has been profound. Behind statistics are individuals affected by Troubles-related bereavement, physical and/or psychological injury or by providing care for a loved one.

Twenty-two years after the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement, Northern Ireland’s society is still substantially divided along sectarian lines and this has a negative impact on economic, social and political development.

One of the most difficult and controversial issues remains how to address outstanding investigations into Troubles related deaths. For the families and loved ones of those who died there have been decades of delay, during which some families have sought every legal avenue to achieve access to a justice process.

There are a considerable number of these cases; The PSNI report (see written evidence submitted by the PSNI to the NI Affairs Committee 2017) that their Legacy Investigation Branch holds 923 open cases concerning in excess of 1,100 Troubles-related deaths. In addition to this, the former PSNI Historical Enquiries Team reviewed a further 1,615 cases which are also likely to be included.

The resources to address this do not exist within the current system, and the UK Government has promised new measures to do so. In this context Kenova presents a critically important opportunity to learn what can be achieved for families within scope of

this investigation, and to develop a best practice approach that can be applied in principle to other cases.

Historical investigations are a significant part of acknowledging and addressing the harm that was inflicted on victims and survivors. It is therefore of primary importance that victims are at the very heart of the suite of investigations of Kenova, with the overriding priority to discover the circumstances of how and why people died - to establish the truth regarding those offences covered within the Terms of Reference. For the many individuals, families and communities affected across Northern Ireland, Great Britain and the Republic of Ireland there is still pain and loss which is now accompanied by a strong sense that they have been ignored for decades by those with the power to act. This is true across the very different constituencies.

The Kenova suite of cases are made up of three investigations and one review:  
Operation Kenova was announced in June 2016 into the alleged activities of the alleged agent known as Stakeknife. The terms of reference can be found at;

 [www.opkenova.co.uk/operation-kenova-terms-of-reference](http://www.opkenova.co.uk/operation-kenova-terms-of-reference)

A total of **22** deaths are currently included within the Terms of Reference of this investigation with **32** family members supported by Operation Kenova. In addition, a further **27** deaths are being considered as potentially coming within the terms of reference with an additional **33** family members being supported.

In 2019 two other cases were included.

**Operation Mizzenmast** - the investigation into the death of Jean Smyth-Campbell in 1972. Terms of Reference can be found at;

 [www.opmizzenmast.co.uk/op-mizzenmast-terms-of-reference](http://www.opmizzenmast.co.uk/op-mizzenmast-terms-of-reference)

**Operation Turma** - the investigation into the murder of three RUC officers in 1982. Terms of Reference can be found at;

 [www.opturma.co.uk/operation-turma-terms-of-reference](http://www.opturma.co.uk/operation-turma-terms-of-reference)

In 2020 a further large-scale review was added to the Kenova caseload.

**Operation Denton; The Barnard Review** - the review of the so-called Glenanne Gang series of murders. Terms of Reference can be found at;

 [www.thebarnardreview.co.uk/barnard-review-terms-of-reference](http://www.thebarnardreview.co.uk/barnard-review-terms-of-reference)

Operation Denton is currently reviewing 185 deaths and approximately 358 casualties. 115 families have been identified of which 85 have so far engaged with the team and as with all Kenova family engagements this continues on a regular basis according to the individual family's wishes. The inclusion of approximately 59 deaths and 46 casualties in the terms of reference for the operation is under consideration.

## 6: VFG Survey

In early 2019, the VFG completed an independent survey of family members to determine whether their needs, rights and interests were being met by Operation Kenova.

It is important to note that the application of the survey did not extend beyond the investigation which commenced in 2016 into the alleged activities of the alleged agent known as Stakeknife. A total of 24 deaths were included within the terms of reference of this investigation with 31 family members supported by Operation Kenova.

The survey drew a response rate of 21 per cent. The VFG, accordingly, has decided not to refer to specific numbers, figures or percentages in order to ensure confidentiality and anonymity. However the survey provides detailed qualitative information and the VFG has considered this alongside other external reports, (in particular the review of Article 2 Compliance conducted by Alyson Kilpatrick who also interviewed a number of family members) in drawing their conclusions.

The survey was completely voluntary, anonymous and confidential. The data from completed surveys has been used to improve the experiences that victims and survivors have with Kenova.

The VFG liaised with international experts in order to seek their advice in the best manner to conduct the survey, with particular consideration to ensuring confidentiality, anonymity and the risk of secondary victimisation. Other aspects which the VFG considered were the use of plain language, what questions should be asked, its length, the format by which the survey should be conducted and what support could be offered to the families participating in the survey.

It was agreed that the best way to achieve this was via an anonymous online survey. However, it was identified and acknowledged that some victims and survivors may not have access to the internet and may need a physical copy of the survey provided to them. It was therefore felt that both an online survey and a copy of the survey should be provided to the families.

The survey was reviewed by the Irish National Adult Literacy Agency [NALA] to ensure it was in plain language, in accordance with Article 3 of the Victims Directive, the right to understand and be understood.

Consideration was also given to ensuring that appropriate support was available for victims, to limit the risk of secondary victimisation. An independent organisation was identified which could provide support should anyone completing the survey. The Victims and Survivors Service (VSS) agreed to offer this assistance. VSS is not directly



involved in supporting Kenova families and therefore has a degree of independence. The survey was tested prior to being sent out to families.

A brief summary of some of the results is referenced below.

**Access and accessibility – The importance of the Family Liaison Officer (FLO) role** - The survey results indicated that all family members knew their FLO and had contact information for them. The vast majority of respondents had contact with their FLO more than seven times in the previous year, and additionally had contact more than seven times in the year from other members of the Operation Kenova team. Almost all respondents stated that this level of contact was sufficient for them.

**Being listened to** - All respondents stated that they felt able to express their wishes and needs and views on how Operation Kenova should work. Victims were asked whether they were aware that they could make a complaint to Operation Kenova. Most victims were aware that they could. The majority of those surveyed indicated that if they had to make a complaint, they were confident that Operation Kenova would deal with it. A small number indicated that they would be somewhat confident.

**Being informed** - While the majority of the results were positive, a small number of results indicate that family members would have preferred more regular information from the FLO and in some instances the results indicated that information received was not easy to understand.

**Being supported** - A large proportion of those who completed the survey indicated that they had not been referred to victim support services by the investigation. VFG members know that absorbing often complex information about something as traumatic and personal as the death of a loved one is extremely challenging, however clearly this information is given. Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) in this field can support individuals in preparing for and reflecting on their interactions with the investigative team.

Feedback from the survey was provided to the OIOC by the VFG that in some cases more could be done to ensure that the information is provided in a timely manner in plain language. This response was reviewed with the Family Liaison Coordinator and information passed to them to ensure that all families receive the highest level of service from Operation Kenova. The OIOC also initiated a system for confirming that families have, or are offered, appropriate support from NGOs.

The OIOC has regular and direct contact with families, as a part of which he confirms that the level of support and contact is at the level they require.

The OIOC, in our opinion, took a proactive and innovative approach to this extremely complicated investigation to ensure the victims were informed, considered and supported. The survey results indicated to the VFG that Operation Kenova has been considering the

needs and rights of victims and that the FLO team has been enabled to carry out its critically important role with families.

The complexities of this type of investigation and the sharing of issues and solutions identified will be of assistance to other investigations worldwide.

As outlined in the VFG Terms of Reference, the voices and views of victims/survivors are paramount to a successful victim-centred approach.

The survey and interactions have indicated that overall, victims are satisfied with the process, their engagement with the investigation team and the activities of the VFG. There remain some areas for improvement, though results suggest that levels of dissatisfaction are low and perhaps more related to individual cases rather than systemic failings.

This is an ongoing process and the VFG reiterates the importance of incorporating a victim-centred approach to the needs and rights of victims in the short, medium and long term. The needs of victims/survivors change over time, and it is important that Kenova is cognisant that regular outreach is needed to ensure that the changing needs of victims/survivors are identified and that they have access and are referred to appropriate supports. The VFG is committed to engaging with Kenova to ensure that that victims and survivors rights continue to be considered and addressed.

## 7: Independent Review of Article 2 Compliance carried out by Alyson Kilpatrick LB

In 2019 the OIOC commissioned an independent examination of Operation Kenova's compliance with Article 2 ECHR conducted by Alyson Kilpatrick BL. The importance of this issue cannot be overstated; in Ms. Kilpatrick's words;

*“Where allegations include collusion with State agents over a passage of time during which victims’ relatives have been disappointed by inordinate delay and have lost trust in the system, the securing of evidence can be extremely difficult. That is why establishing credibility and trust in the investigation is crucial. It is more than a moral imperative; it is a legal requirement. If there is no trust, there will be no sharing of information, relatives will disengage thereby depriving investigators of a source of evidence and eye witness testimony. Those who have engaged with the Kenova team are unlikely to ever do so again if obstacles are put in the way of the investigation”*

In preparing this report the VFG has considered the findings of Ms Kilpatrick's interim report published in June 2020 and a further update delivered in January 2021. The interim review is published on the Kenova website and can be viewed at;

<https://www.kenova.co.uk/OpK%20Update%20jan%202021%20AK.pdf>

As noted above the legal implications of Article 2 compliance extend considerably beyond the remit of the VFG, however, Ms Kilpatrick's reports provide a valuable external commentary which is clearly relevant to our review of Kenova's approach to families and from it the VFG has gleaned themes which emerge from the different sources considered.

## 7.1: Independence

Ms Kilpatrick's reports, in specifically addressing Article 2 compliance, provide commentary on a number of ways in which Kenova has sought to embed independence in its structures, policies and practice; something which is fundamental to building trust with families, many of whom have spent years in legal action to achieve this. The VFG is aware that some families feel strongly that in the past the authorities have failed them and that a positive and trusting relationship with families must be achieved in order for Operation Kenova to achieve its aims. The VFG notes Ms Kilpatrick's conclusion that:

*"... I have observed exceptional dedication to the imperative of an article 2 compliant investigation of matters of the utmost importance, sensitivity and complexity."*

## 7.2: Oversight framework

In particular the reports reflect the importance of the VFG and other oversight bodies which have been embedded in the investigative approach from the outset:

*"Kenova's oversight comprises many bespoke independent elements, which combined satisfy the Article 2 requirements for public scrutiny. There are too many levels of oversight to list in this interim report but by way of example, there is an Independent Governance Board, an Independent Steering Group, and a Victim Focus Group, all of which can comment publicly on the human rights compliance of the investigation. The Kenova Officer in Overall Command also routinely engages with the widest range of established victims' groups and representatives. That engagement is meaningful and transparent. Additionally, as a barrister in private practice I have been appointed to conduct a review of the investigation from a human rights perspective. My review will be published when complete."*

It is the view of the VFG that this approach to assuring families of the independence, fairness and transparency of the investigative process is key to the ability of Kenova to demonstrate results in an almost uniquely complex and challenging investigative context.

### 7.3: Leadership competencies

Ms Kilpatrick's reports also emphasise the importance of the leadership competencies demonstrated by the OIOC, in particular the extent of his engagement with an unusually wide range of stakeholders, his personal accessibility to families and commitment to the independence of the investigations. The VFG shares her view that this has built the confidence of victims, survivors and families in this investigation.

It is the view of the VFG that the leadership competencies demonstrated by the OIOC are central to the effectiveness of the Kenova approach and that this is something from which learning can be drawn for other investigations.

### 7.4: Resources

Ms Kilpatrick's reports emphasise the importance of adequate resourcing. The lack of resources to pursue cases or to communicate with families is a barrier which has historically been presented to families seeking access to investigations, to inquests and to the Police Ombudsman function. It is also something which has been a subject of discussion with the VFG in the context of the expanding scope of the Kenova suite of investigations and the risk that resources will not be sufficient to deliver the level of communication and support to victims and family members that is central to the Kenova approach. Ms Kilpatrick's report echoes this concern:

*“I observed, in my first update, the potential obstacle to Article 2 compliance presented by funding arrangements. Funding, i.e., decisions concerning funding, is critical to fortifying or emasculating the effectiveness and independence of an investigation.”*

## 8: Northern Ireland Affairs Committee (NIAC)

It has been clear from the outset that Kenova presents an opportunity to form a prototype for the development of a victim/family strategy for any future unit set up to carry out legacy investigations in Northern Ireland. This is important to Kenova families who do not want to see others, like themselves, suffer harm without access to justice. It is also within the remit of the VFG to identify learning to inform future practice.

Mr Boutcher's appearance before the Westminster Parliamentary Northern Ireland Affairs Committee (NIAC) in September 2020, was an important opportunity to share learning at the most strategic level and has been reviewed by the VFG in preparing this report.

Mr Boutcher's opening statement to NIAC is published on the Kenova website and can be viewed at:

 <https://www.kenova.co.uk/NISC%20JB%20opening%20remarks.pdf>

On 21<sup>st</sup> October 2020, the committee published its interim report:

<https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/3186/documents/29458/default/>

The committee devoted an entire chapter of its report to Kenova, stating ‘The evidence that we received suggests that the Government can learn lessons from Kenova when designing its own legacy system.’ Among the Committee’s recommendations were that ‘The Government must examine;

- a. How Kenova has engaged with victims’ groups and families;
- b. Whether Kenova could be scaled up to deliver across the piece;
- c. Whether aspects of Kenova’s approach could usefully be replicated or reinforced in any new legacy body or bodies, including its use of investigative governance and victim oversight mechanisms to provide independent scrutiny and build public confidence and the way in which it has fostered positive and trusting relationships with families.’

It is also the view of the VFG that the significant learning from Kenova in all of these respects must be disseminated and incorporated into future investigations of this nature.

## 9: KENOVA; A Thematic Peer Review by the NPCC Homicide Working Group January 2021

The NPCC reports have also been reviewed by the VFG and provide further in-depth information relating to the themes under consideration in this report.

The NPCC Review endorses the findings of Alyson Kilpatrick’s interim reports that the approach taken by Kenova is:

*“An impressively victim-centered one which has led to a considered understanding of what victims’ families and survivors seek. This is a fundamental driver within the culture and ethos of Kenova which is understood by the entire team, whether or not they perform a ‘front facing’ role or have contact with those affected.”*

The NPCC review reflects other sources in endorsing the governance framework for Kenova and its highly evolved system of oversight and peer support.

*“From the outset, the OIOC has recognised the need for a comprehensive approach and has devised and led the implementation of multi-layered and independent Governance structure.”*

The NPCC review also considers the question as to whether Kenova might offer a ‘scalable’ model upon which to build any future legacy investigative capability for Northern Ireland. The review team concludes that Kenova would form the best possible foundation for this purpose.

## 10. Conclusions; Emerging themes gleaned from VFG review and Recommendations

**There are three consistent themes** emerging from all of the sources that have contributed to this VFG report. These can be seen as inter-related pillars that have enabled Kenova to establish legitimacy and build trust with families are identified and are central to the success of Kenova.

### **Victim/family focus and engagement**

Embedding the rights and needs of victims, survivors and families into the Kenova model and to its organisational culture has been key to its ability to build trust and conduct effective investigations. The aims, vision, procedures and structures established at the beginning of the operation reflect this, not least in terms of leadership style and organisational culture. Critically, the behaviour of the OIOC and his team in engaging with families has, based on the knowledge before the VFG, remained consistent with these aims so that they are listened to, understood and have a voice.

Embedding experienced FLOs at the beginning has also been key. The strength of the engagement by the FLO team is clear from the responses to the VFG survey, from other external reports and reviews, and from our own interactions with them at meetings with the Kenova team. We note the ongoing training and continual professional development provided, some by members of the VFG, and endorse the recommendations of the NPCC report for further bespoke learning and accreditation.

The nearly unprecedented level of access and accessibility for victims, survivors and families to not only the FLO team, but also the OIOC is a feature that stands out in all the external reviews of Kenova. It has given a strong message about the level of commitment to families and to ensuring that they are respected, supported and informed. It is something which should be integrated into the model for any future investigations of this nature.

### **Independence (procedural fairness)**

Ms Kilpatrick's reports, in specifically addressing Article 2 compliance, provide commentary on a number of ways in which Kenova has sought to embed independence in its structures, policies and practice; something which is fundamental to building trust with families, many of whom have spent years in legal action to achieve this.

The VFG is aware that some families feel strongly that in the past the authorities have failed them. In this context the experience of an investigation that is independent and fair, in itself, can deliver a benefit and an acknowledgement of the harm that they have suffered.

The way in which an investigation interacts with the victims and survivors, families and the public will shape the public's views of the criminal justice system, as well as other outcomes. This is reflected in the presentation by Mr Boutcher to the Westminster Parliamentary Northern Ireland Affairs Committee:

*“When families and stakeholders trust a legacy process as being independent and fair they will provide evidence and information that can lead to cases being solved.”*

*“Where Government agencies are reassured about the information handling and security arrangements of a legacy investigative body they will share information that will potentially enable cases to be solved.”*

*“Legacy reviews or investigations that do not reach out to and connect with families and stakeholders or that do not relentlessly pursue the records held by agencies relevant to these events, will fail to identify investigative opportunities.”*

### **Openness to public scrutiny (Transparency)**

The Kenova model has oversight built into its structures. In addition to the independent Victim Focus Group there is an independent Governance Board and an Independent Steering Group, all of which can comment publicly on the investigation. The Kenova OIOC also routinely engages with the wide range of established victims' groups and representatives. That engagement is meaningful and transparent. Additionally, a barrister in private practice has been appointed to conduct a review of the investigation from a human rights perspective.

It is the view of the VFG that this approach to assuring families of the independence, fairness and transparency of the investigative process is key to the ability of Kenova to demonstrate results in an almost uniquely complex and challenging investigative context.

### **Leadership**

In addition to these consistent themes, the importance of the leadership by the OIOC emerges from all of the sources that have contributed to this VFG report. It has clearly been central to the success of Kenova in building a focus on families, on fairness, on independence and transparency into the structure, ethos and practice of its investigations.

Ms Kilpatrick's reports also emphasise the importance of the leadership demonstrated by the OIOC, the extent of his engagement with an unusually wide range of stakeholders and his personal accessibility to families, as well as his commitment to the independence of the investigations.

It is the view of the VFG that the leadership competences demonstrated by the OIOC, and his commitment to a victim-centered approach, are central to the effectiveness of Kenova and that this is something from which learning can be drawn.

### **Resources**

The potential lack of resources is a concern which has been a subject of discussion with the VFG in the context of the expanding scope of the Kenova suite of investigations. It is essential that resources are sufficient to deliver the level of communication and support to victims and family members that is central to the Kenova approach. Ms Kilpatrick's report echoes this concern; The VFG will continue to monitor and review the sufficiency of resources committed to delivering the level of communication and support to victims and family members that is central to the Kenova approach.

