



The Guernsey Charity for the support of Victims and Witnesses



**ANNUAL REPORT TO THE
COMMITTEE FOR HOME AFFAIRS
June 2017 – May 2018**

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SECTION 1

VISION

The vision of the Bailiwick of Guernsey Victim Support and Witness Service (VS&WS) is to be the Bailiwick's leading provider in the delivery and sourcing of top quality services to victims and witnesses.

PURPOSE

The purpose of the service is to provide emotional support, practical help and information to all victims and/or witnesses of crime in the Bailiwick regardless of whether they choose to report the crime. It provides that same service to the families and friends of victims. Whilst the initial emphasis was on the victims of crime, this was subsequently expanded to include witnesses through the Witness Service.

Volunteers working with both sets of clients are trained specifically for the separate disciplines.

For victims, we help people cope with the effects of crime, we listen while they talk through their feelings and reactions to the crime and we try to help them find the way that best suits them to overcome those reactions. The support we provide can relate to both personal and/or practical issues and may include accompanying clients during visits to the police station, advocates, hospital etc., securing them access to other services, for example crime prevention, and, if they are required to give evidence in court, supporting them before, during and after the trial.

The Witness Service provides guidance and support for all witnesses who find themselves having to attend court when perhaps they have never done so before. This can be extremely daunting and sometimes, particularly for young or vulnerable witnesses, frightening. The service offers support to prosecution and defence witnesses, and their family and friends, before, during and after a criminal trial. Witnesses are offered pre-trial visits to the courtroom when the court procedure will be explained, including where they will be asked to stand to give their evidence, where the judge will sit and where all other participants will be positioned. The visits enable them to be a little more comfortable in the court surroundings and to feel less intimidated, leading to better quality evidence. Volunteers can also accompany witnesses into the courtroom whilst they give their evidence and provide on-going support after the event, which may include advising them of a verdict and explaining a sentence. Since 2008 the Witness Service has also provided support to people attending the Domestic and Matrimonial Courts and Civil Courts.

GENERAL ACTIVITY

New Staff

This year has been another year of great change. The succession planning that commenced in 2017 is now complete. Marilyn King retired a little earlier than expected in March 2018. Amanda Winkett stepped up as Manager in July 17 and Deborah Robinson was employed as Deputy Manager in March 2018.

Volunteers

All those who deal directly with victims or witnesses are trained to the highest standards – we currently have 22 volunteers (4 male and 18 female). Most of our volunteers have been with us for 3 years or more and some for 20 years. This year we have welcomed 3 new volunteers.

Other Activity

June 2017

The Service welcomed a new member on to the Management Committee board. This member is a police representative whose wealth of experience complements our existing team.

The Chairman, Vice Chairman and Treasurer held a fundraising “Paella Friday” event in the Market Square on 23rd June. This event, which was kindly supported by Café Delice, raised almost £450 in just a few hours.

July 2017

The GCF set up a third sector mentoring and support group to which the Victim Support and Witness Service were invited. The group included the managers of 13 charities and, once established, more Charity heads will be invited to join. The purpose of the group is to provide mentoring and support to each other and to talk about common problems faced by the third sector. The first seminar was held on 18th July 2017.

The VS&WS set up a fundraising subcommittee to oversee fundraising community events such as Quiz Nights and Flag Days.

August 2017

The new Justice Policy Working Group met for the first time on 1st August. The meeting was largely committed to the role and scope of the group going forward.

October 2017

On 3rd October the Manager of VS&WS and several other charities joined the GCF and guests at Christies. The theme of the evening was sustainability in the third sector. The event was very informative and included discussions on the challenges we faced, the barriers to sustainability, the services that existed in our community that we were not necessarily aware of and things that had worked or not worked for our individual charities.

The VS&WS produced and distributed its first Newsletter. This was in response to a request from volunteers that they be informed about charity matters that they may not necessarily get to know as volunteers. The Newsletter will be published 3 times a year.

On 31st October the Committee for Home Affairs visited the VS&WS. This was a positive meeting giving VS&WS the opportunity to share developments with the Committee. There were also some very supportive discussions around Restorative Justice.

December 2017

Succession planning has again formed a large part of this year’s activities as well as updating our business plan. This started with a “Team Day” on 5th December 2017 which involved staff, Directors and volunteers. The team carried out a swot analysis followed by an overview of services using the framework ‘People, Purpose, Passion, Professionalism and Partnerships’. Some key priorities were agreed, to be completed in 2017/18.

The first priority was to refresh our branding with a new logo. There are two distinct parts to the VS&WS and, following team discussions, it was felt that the Witness Service had become the focus of the charity with little training or development on Victim Support. The existing logo did not sufficiently distinguish these two very different elements of the service so a new logo was researched and agreed. Whilst retaining the “cloud and sun” feature which is recognised nationally, the new logo clearly highlights the two different elements of the service (see both the old and new logos below).



The second priority agreed for completion in 2017/18 was to develop a comprehensive training package for the volunteers. The volunteers and staff felt that the more knowledge that they had to support victims of crime, the more confident they would feel. The VS&WS now offers five training modules: basic Victim Support training; basic Witness Support training; Working Sensitively with Survivors of Sexual abuse, Trauma and its Effects on the Brain and Understanding Rape Trauma Syndrome.

In 2017/18 the Manager took part in two radio interviews on BBC Radio Guernsey. These were both related to the rise in numbers of sexual offences reported and the support available for Victims regardless of whether they chose to report the crime. The Manager also appeared on ITV's Channel News to support Patrick Rice's comments following the reported increase in sexual crimes by stating that this had more to do with the public feeling more able and supported to report such crimes.

We continue to liaise with other agencies with regard to Restorative Justice where offenders have expressed a wish to make reparation with their victims. We make every effort to contact the victims to ascertain whether they would be prepared to participate in some form of Restorative Justice, which is of course entirely victim focussed.

January 2018

The Manager attended the Criminal Court User Group meeting. The main discussion related to the video link equipment that had recently failed in court, leaving the young witness with a very negative experience of our criminal justice system. New equipment is being procured.

February 2018

On 14th February the Lieutenant Governor and Lady Corder and Principal Secretary Major Marco Ciotti visited the Witness Suite. The visit went well and the Lieutenant Governor and Lady Corder contributed to a very positive press release.

Lt-Governor learns about support for victims of crime

News | Published: Feb 16, 2018

A CHARITABLE organisation's role supporting victims and witnesses through the judicial process has been welcomed by the Lt-Governor



March 2018

The VS&WS started their final transition onto a new data platform, Daisy2. The transition onto this system has been a very long, complicated and drawn out process that absorbed many hours of staff time, including weekly meetings. Now that the transition draws to a close we are starting to see the real benefits of the new system. However, there are still some teething problems to iron out, particularly around the production of statistics.

On 7th March we said a sad farewell to Marilyn King who retired after 12 years' service. Marilyn has worked tirelessly to build up the VS&WS and ensured that over the years the experience of both victims and witnesses has been the best that it can possibly be. Her departure was marked with champagne and flowers with the Bailiff and all of the Judges that have come to know Marilyn so well. This was followed by an "open house" in the Witness Suite for anyone who wished to say goodbye. Marilyn received flowers, cards and presents and then joined 12 of the volunteers and staff for a meal out. She is greatly missed for her poise, knowledge and expertise.

On 20th March the Manager attended the Islands Forum in Belfast. It was also attended by service representatives from England and Wales, the Isle of Man, Jersey, Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland and Scotland. Prior to the meeting all delegates provided reports so that everyone could

review them prior to the meeting and prepare questions. Apparently this has not been done in previous years and worked really well. The Manager said that as well as herself, there were many new attendees, including Stuart Campbell who has just taken over as Manager in Jersey, and Kate Wallace, the new CEO for Scotland. The Forum took place over two days instead of one which everyone reported was much better and as a result, more was achieved. The agenda included discussions on GDPR, Criminal Injuries Compensation and the service's ability to attract and support victims who choose not to report the crime. A big debate was held regarding supporting cyber-crime and training was also covered. The forum also discussed the use of Office 365 as a way of sharing large documents such as training material. Geri Hanna, the NI CEO, then arranged for the delegates to go to a cookery school.

TRAINING

VS&WS Training

Victim support volunteer training is in accordance with National standards and is carried out by the Manager and Deputy Manager. In 2018 we reviewed all of our training in line with our team event priorities (see General Activity 2017-2018).

There are now 5 training modules:-

- Victim Support
- Witness Support
- Working Sensitively with Survivors of Sexual abuse
- Trauma and its Effects on the Brain
- Understanding Rape Trauma Syndrome

Initially volunteers complete the Victim Support and Witness Support training. This is completed within a month of applying for a volunteer position and it is mandatory that this is completed before the volunteer commences supporting victims or witnesses.

The other training modules are available twice a year and volunteers can choose when they attend. We recommend that volunteers refresh their training every other year. Training modules (other than those covering Victim Support and Witness Support) are updated annually.

We have also addressed training needs identified by our volunteers by asking key speakers from other charities or support agencies to attend our volunteer meetings which take place bi-annually. For example, in September 2017 we welcomed a representative of Guernsey MIND and in March 2018 the Family Proceedings Advisory Service (FPAS) provided details of their service.

Victim Support Training took place in May 2018. It was attended by 3 new volunteers who were recruited in April 2017 and April 2018.

The Witness Support training took place in June 2017 and May 2018 and was attended by the Manager or Deputy Manager and 1 new volunteer on each occasion.

The Manager and Deputy Manager delivered the training modules "Working Sensitively with Survivors of Sexual Abuse", "Trauma and the effects on the Brain" and "Understanding Rape Trauma Syndrome" to 3 new volunteers and 1 existing volunteer in June and July 2018.

Other Training

The Manager and 1 of the new volunteers attended Safer's 'Domestic Abuse Awareness' training in July 2017.

The Manager attended a 2-day Acceptance Commitment Therapy (ACT) training course in October 2017. This was arranged by MIND and facilitated by Richard Bennett who works as a clinical psychologist. ACT helps clients to engage in exploring their own values to help them explore difficult thoughts and feelings.

The Manager, Deputy Manager and Administrator attended the Guernsey Alzheimer's Association 'Dementia Awareness' training in May 2018.

In October 2017 the Manager attended a breakfast seminar held by the Guernsey Community Foundation (GCF) about sustainability in the third sector. The event was attended by approximately 80 people and featured guest speaker Paul Farmer, CEO of MIND.

During the last year the funds available to the Scheme have again been used sparingly and all expenditure has remained within the budgeted income. At annual appraisals, the Manager and her two part-time assistants receive RPIX increases only, they do not receive annual increments.

LOOKING FORWARD

We celebrate our 20th Anniversary in June 2018 and an event has been planned for 21st June in the Grand Hall of the Royal Court building.

We are responding to the changing needs of our community and also to the changing needs of our volunteers. We will continue to develop the training and ensure that our volunteers feel confident to support victims and witnesses of all crimes.

Following the Belfast Conference and the recognition that all victim support services across the UK and Islands struggle to get victims of unreported crime to engage in their services, we will be focusing on a media campaign to encourage more victims to come forward. We will also ensure that it is known that the service will support victims regardless of whether or not they choose to report the crime.

We will continue to look at opportunities of working more closely with other relevant agencies to ensure that victims and witnesses of crime get the best possible experience.

Our plan is to complete our new website and improve our social media presence by the end of 2018 and to continue to raise our profile through these platforms. We are producing new leaflets featuring the new logo and details of our training and recruitment of volunteers.

Building relationships with local businesses is also a high priority with the corporate pack as our main tool going forward.

We will be attending the Isle Of Man Islands' Conference and annual meeting for Chairmen and Managers being held in Isle of Man in June 2018.

CONCLUSIONS

With 3 part time members of staff and 22 volunteers providing a highly professional but cost effective service benefitting nearly 800 people in our community each year, it cannot be argued that the VS&WS demonstrates excellent value for money.

Our volunteers continue to be the lifeblood of the organisation, bringing many different skills and expertise to the charity. All of our volunteers show great commitment, attending training and fundraising events as well as supporting victims and witnesses of crime. Without their continued commitment and support the service would cease to exist. We ensure that our volunteers are well supported and valued as this makes it more likely they will stay longer and offer stability to the charity.

The VS&WS ensures that victims and witnesses have the best possible experience of support, on both a practical and emotional level, at what can be a very traumatic and challenging time. Crime has no boundaries and can affect any of us at any time. At the worst time of their lives, victims and witnesses will receive the very best service from our staff and volunteers. Victims' interests are as important as preventing crime. A single telephone call to a victim may be all that is needed to give initial support but the victim will be assured that more support is readily available if required at any time.

Witnesses are crucial to the administration of justice and there has been excellent feedback from other agencies and individuals who have used the services we provide. Law Enforcement Officers have found the service particularly useful in that witnesses in criminal courts being supported by the Witness Service are likely to give better Victim Support and the Witness Service is now included on the induction schedule of new Law Enforcement Officers. Law Enforcement Officers, Police Officers and interpreters are able to come in and speak with witnesses in our waiting room – it is neutral ground and a safe space.

Witnesses feel more at ease after a pre-trial visit to the court as early as possible in the process and feel more secure and relaxed waiting in the witness suite on the day of the trial. They are able to meet the prosecuting officer and read their statements quietly in our waiting room before going into court to give their evidence. After giving their evidence, witnesses are able to return to the witness suite to talk about their experience which they may have found very upsetting. We ensure witnesses leave the Court building safely and on occasions our volunteers have walked witnesses back to their places of work or their cars. We are also able to explain verdicts and sentencing, which again can affect victims/witnesses in different ways, especially if they were expecting a different outcome. In this we are able to liaise with the Probation Service who are happy to provide a detailed explanation of Probation/Community sentences should this be requested by the victim/ witness.

All of the support we offer victims and Witnesses of crime demonstrates our commitment to collaborative working.

As part of our desire to ensure that we deliver the best possible service, we now provide outcomes monitoring forms and ask service users and volunteers for feedback and comments on what they find helpful and if there is anything that we could do better. This not only ensures we are providing a service that is fit for purpose but also demonstrates clear outcomes which is beneficial when applying for future funding. We have just completed the first year of outcomes monitoring and the top 5 outcomes were:-

- feeling safe
- feeling supported
- being listened to
- feeling better able to cope

- having better knowledge of the court system.

There were many good comments on the feedback forms including:-

"A fantastic service which I was unaware of previously. Thank you for making the whole process far less stressful"

"I was scared of giving evidence but I was supported by the staff and they made feel very comfortable - the whole service was great"

"It was very comforting to have a volunteer sitting in court with me, just having them nearby helped"

"It was a safe and welcoming place to sit between court sittings"

The overall service goes from strength to strength and is an integral part of the justice system. It is more easily accessible to both victims and witnesses and the support received from the Bailiff and all other court staff is exceptional.

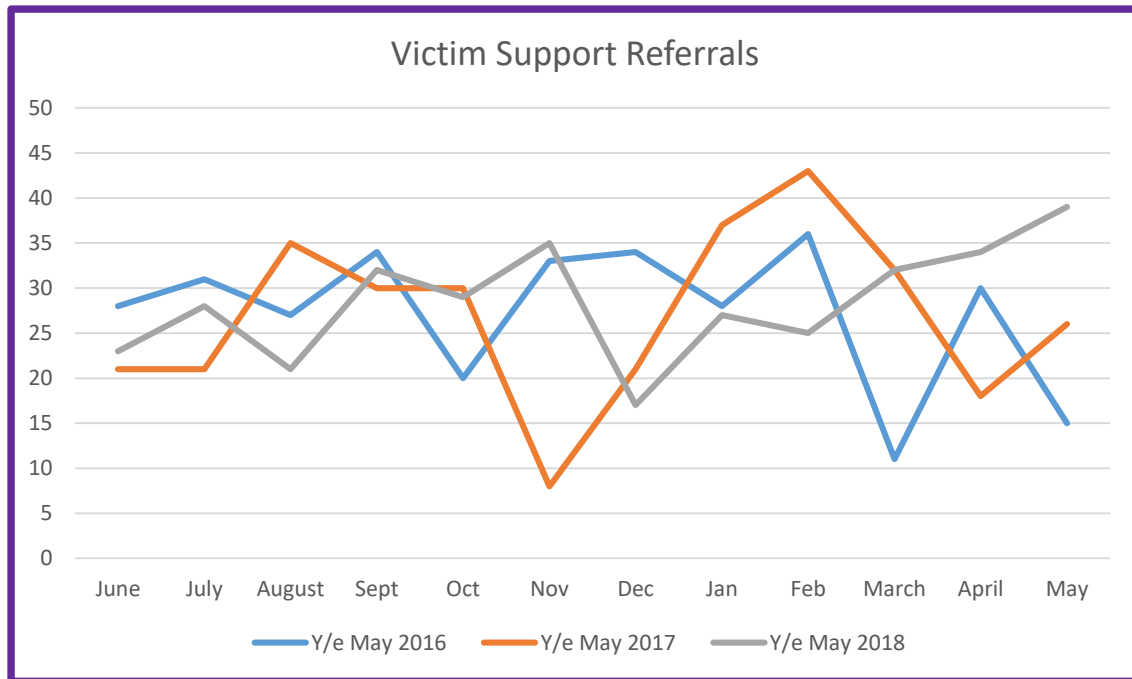
The support from the Committee for Home Affairs is much valued and the budget provided is used very wisely to ensure best value for money from the service.

The whole VS&WS team continues to be totally committed to the work it does for the benefit of the people of the Bailiwick. We will strive to continually improve our service into the future.

Peter Harwood, Chairman
June 2018

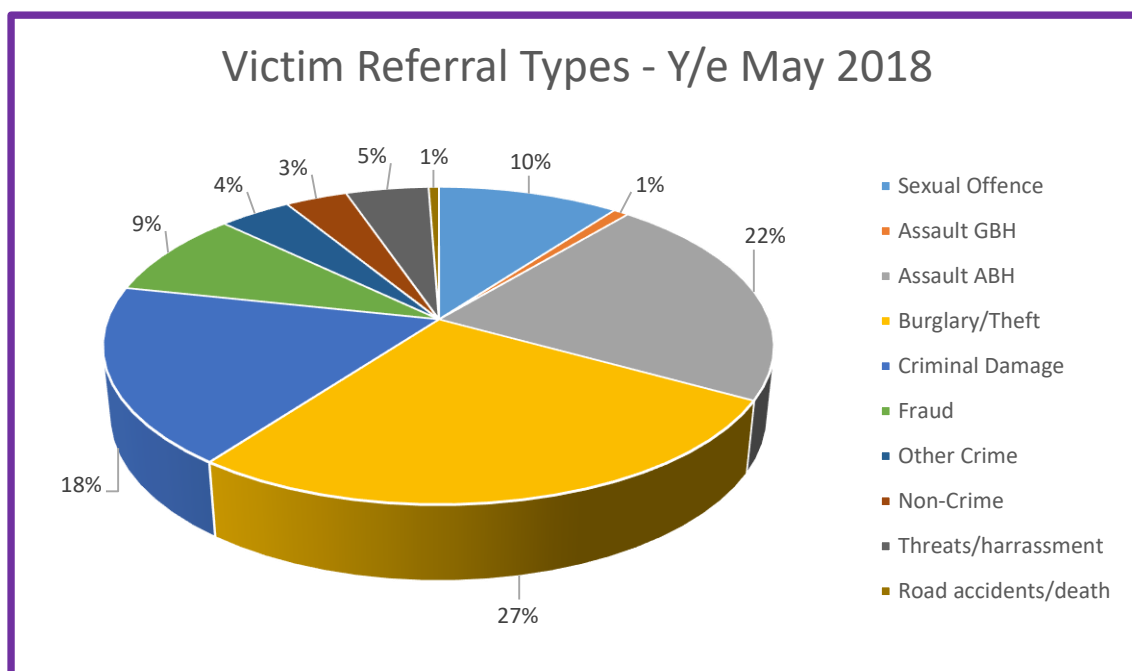
SECTION 2 - STATISTICS

VICTIM SUPPORT

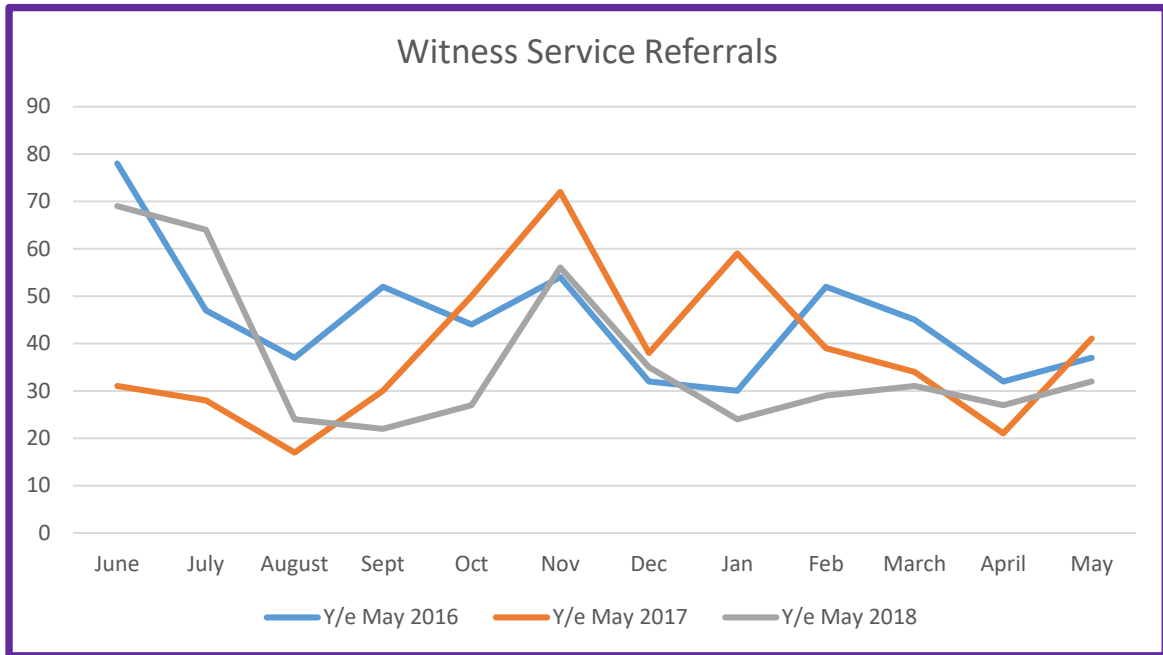


Average monthly Victim Support referrals:

- Year ended May 2016 = 27.25
- Year ended May 2017 = 26.83
- Year ended May 2018 = 28.50



WITNESS SERVICE



Average monthly Witness Service referrals:

- Year ended May 2016 = 45.00
- Year ended May 2017 = 38.33
- Year ended May 2018 = 36.66

