



# Bailiwick of Guernsey Victim Support and Witness Service

**Annual Report 1 June 2016 – 31 May 2017**

## **VISION**

*The vision of the Service 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 Scheme is to provide emotional support, practical help and information to all victims or witnesses of crime in the Bailiwick. 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.

The Witness Service provides guidance and support for all witnesses who find themselves having to attend Court when perhaps they have never attended the Court before. This can be extremely daunting and sometimes, particularly for young or vulnerable witnesses, frightening. 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 less intimidated, leading to better quality evidence.

The Service offers support to prosecution and defence witnesses, their family and friends before, during and after a criminal trial.

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.

**More information regarding the history of Victim Support and Witness Service can be found at Appendix A**

## **New Staff**

This year we have seen a change in the staff structure as we commence our succession planning in preparation for the retirement of Marilyn King who has been in the Managers Post for almost 12 years.

Amanda Winkett was recruited as Deputy Manager with a view to take on the Managers role on Marilyn's retirement. Amanda has 15 years' experience in the voluntary sector including 8 years in Senior Management posts in the Voluntary Sector and holds a higher professional diploma in counselling and psychotherapy and training qualifications. Amanda has worked for many years in the field of Sexual Abuse, Mental Health and Childhood Bereavement and brings a wealth of experience in this area.

The succession plan means the Manager will step down from her post in June 2017 and the Deputy Manager will step into her role. This period of time from now until June 2018 will ensure that a thorough handover will be completed allowing the new Manager to continue the good work. Further succession planning will include the recruitment of a new Deputy Manager at the beginning of 2018.

### **Volunteers:**

All those who deal directly with either Victims or Witnesses are trained to the highest standards – we currently have 19 volunteers (3 male and 16 female). 2 of the male volunteers are Witness Service only volunteers with the remaining 17 (1 male and 16 females) supporting both victims and witnesses.

### **Victim Support and Witness Service Training:**

Victim Support volunteer training is in accordance with National standards and is carried out locally by an accredited trainer and former Jersey Probation Officer.

Witness Service volunteer training is carried out by the Manager.

Victim Support Training took place in October 2016. It was attended by the then Deputy Manager as well as the 3 new volunteers who were recruited in May 2016. It was also attended by 2 prison staff members.

The Witness Service training also took place in October 2017 and was attended by the Deputy Manager and 3 new volunteers.

### **Other Training:**

The Deputy Manager and two of the new volunteers attended Domestic Abuse Awareness training in June 2016. This training was delivered by Safer.

The Deputy Manager attended a 3 day Restorative approaches training course in July 2016. This was facilitated by Tony Walker an ex-police inspector from the UK.

The Deputy Manager delivered two half day workshop in June and July 2016 on the Impact and Effects of Childhood Sexual Abuse. It was attended by 16 Volunteers and two staff members over the two day period.

The Deputy Manager and 1 of the new volunteers attended a workshop run by Zoe Lodrick, and provided through Safer on "Supporting Victims of Sexual Violence."

The Deputy Manager has been working closely with Community Mental Health and delivered two evening workshops to the Aspen Project in January and March 2017. The Aspen Project supports women who were sexually abused in childhood. The training was developed as a means of self-help to develop self-awareness and help the group to better understand their reactions and behaviours. The workshops included a session on "Trauma and the Brain" and "Understanding the Unconscious Mind" These sessions will continue to be offered to the group on an on-going basis.

### **General Activity June 2016 to May 2017:**

Succession planning has formed a large part of this year's activities as well as looking at our business plan, updating it and making it specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timely (SMART). The staff and Directors have discussed our funding strategy and the need to have a clear plan in light of the difficulties that voluntary sector organisations are currently experiencing in order to ensure that we can continue to run the service. The Deputy Manager has formed an "Outcomes Monitoring" template to ensure that we can demonstrate the positive effects of our support in the community to potential funders.

When the Victim Support and Witness service applied to the Guernsey Community Foundation for funding in 2016 we were declined funding. One of the recommendations from the GFC was for the charity to look into collaborative working with other agencies. In October 2016 Allister Langlois carried out a feasibility study to investigate the current service offer and aspirations of both the victim support and witness service provided by the charity and the Police witness care unit provided by the Guernsey Police with a view to an improved service to victims and witnesses as this was deemed a suitable match for collaborative working.

The study aimed to draw conclusions regarding the fit of the two services, any areas of overlap and duplication, unique benefits that must be retained and the financial and efficiency implications of those comparisons. The purpose of the study was also to evaluate the feasibility of closer collaborative working whilst maintaining the independent status of the Bailiwick of Guernsey Victim Support and Witness Service and make recommendations for a project to construct a detailed transformation plan if such a change is deemed appropriate. Initial conversations were held with the Chairman and other members of the Board of Victim Support and Witness service in order to agree the terms of reference

A desk study was made of a range of relevant documents providing the background to the Charity's existing services.

Individual conversations were held with some sixteen people who have involvement with the Charity and the police witness care unit.

The outcome of the study revealed that there was no duplication of service. However the potential for joint management of volunteers who contribute to the Witness Care Unit at the Police Station and the volunteers who work with the Charity, even though their roles are different, was the only area identified as a potential area where savings could be made. However, on further investigation it was felt that there would be a cost incurred by the charity in terms of training, support and coordination of Witness Care Unit volunteers but no significant change in victim/ witness experience. Furthermore there were some practical issues such as the use of different IT systems. It was therefore agreed that currently things would remain as they were and we would continue to work closely with witness care unit but with no change in roles. We continue to look at other potential collaborations that would further support our work.

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.

The support we provide to the domestic, matrimonial and civil courts has remained at about the same level as in 2015-2016. Many of these cases run for multiple days and often need more support particularly if special measures for vulnerable witnesses are in place.

On the 13 July 2016 a staff member and Director attended the Victim Support Islands Conference in Jersey. The Conference was opened by the Bailiff of Jersey followed by presentations from Lucy Hastings, Director of Engagement & Enterprise, VS England and Wales on Victim's Rights- Implications of a European Framework Directive. Robert McRae QC, Jersey Attorney General on guideline's regarding contact with prosecution witnesses before trial. Glynis Johnstone OBE, Independent Chair of Jersey Safeguarding Adults Partnership Board on Raising Awareness of Elder Abuse.

On 26 July 2016 Safer held a breakfast Seminar at Les Cotils and was attended by the Hub, the Child Contact Centre, the Hampton Trust and Victim Support. Politicians were invited to spend 5 minutes with each organisation to find out about the various support services available. Lady Corder attended and was very interested in the Victim Support and Witness service. Jonathon Le Tocq, Chris Green, Gavin St Pier, Michelle Le Clerc, Emilie Yerby, Barry Paint and Rob Prow and Dr Nicola Brink were some of those in attendance who spoke with our manager about our service.

The Islands Child Protection Committee, Domestic Abuse Strategy & Drug & Alcohol Strategy Conference Agenda took place on 13 October 2016. The conference was attended by one of the Victim Support and Witness Service Volunteers. The Conference looked at what works in promoting good outcomes for children living in families experiencing parental substance misuse, domestic abuse and mental ill health.

In April 2017 two new members joined our Management Committee as Volunteer representatives. They both originally joined as volunteers in 2016. They bring a wealth of knowledge not only as volunteers but also through their previous careers/ education in health and psychology.

On the 2 May 2017 the Manager attended the AGM for Association of Guernsey Charities held at the Peninsula Hotel. Chairman (outgoing) Peter Rose expressed his concern that more charities were asking for grants to help with salaries, he wondered if this was because of FTP and/or charities taking on more work. Peter Rose said that there has been no measurable action by the States towards fostering and encouraging the development of the Third sector since the Compact of 2014. He felt States grants should increase year on year instead of remaining the same and there should be stability for charities to know grants are safe. At the AGM it was also stated that The Guernsey Registry should be given enough money to build a better register for charities. The Bailiwick would not work without charities of which there are currently 296 active members of AGC. There are 140 regular volunteers on volunteer.gg

AGC are still working to have Gift Aid, Payroll Giving and disposal of the Private Lottery Fee.

AGC would like Guernsey to be the same as Jersey who give all Christmas Lottery money to charities. 94 charities are using giving.gg and so far this has raised about £35,000.

Throughout the year we continue to give short presentations to attendees of the Safer Domestic Abuse Awareness training days.

The weekly visits to the criminal justice unit office at the police station continue as does the excellent working relationship with the Judiciary and Court staff, Probation Service, Police, Guernsey Border Agency (GBA), Family Proceedings Advisory Service (formerly Safeguarder Service), Social Security Department, the Womens Refuge, Action for Children (formerly NCH) and other voluntary and statutory agencies.

We continue to attend the following meetings:-

Justice Policy Working Group

Fortnightly MARAC (multi agency risk assessment conference) meetings as and when necessary

MAPPA (multi agency public protection arrangements) meetings as required

Quarterly Domestic Abuse Strategy Task Group (work schedule permitting) (formed in April 2012)

Bi-annual Criminal Court Users Group (remit is to work together to ensure the speedy and efficient administration of justice).

DAISY (data information system) User Group meetings

#### Financials:

During the last year the funds available to the Scheme have again been used sparingly and all expenditure has remained within the budgeted income. The Manager and her two part time assistants at their annual appraisals receive annual RPIX increases only, at the discretion of the Management Committee; they do not receive annual increments.

An emergency account balance is held which is used for any victims in urgent need of, but unable to afford, such items as home security devices, injunctions and overnight emergency accommodation. This has been used on one occasion to date for the purpose of having security lighting fitted at the home of a victim.

### Looking Forward:

There are more historic sexual abuse trials scheduled for 2017 and the victims and witnesses, their families and friends in these cases are so very grateful for the continued support they receive from our service. We offer Impact and Effects of Childhood Sexual Abuse training for all new volunteers in order to help them better support this client group.

We are looking at opportunities of working more closely with other relevant agencies, the Community Mental Health Teams, Aspen Project, the HUB and MIND feature in our future plans.

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.

2018 marks our 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary and we have plans to celebrate this in the Grand Hall on 21 June 2018, this will coincide with Marilyn's retirement the following day.

The Bailiwick of Guernsey Victim Support and Witness Service website at [www.gov.gg/victim-support-witness-service](http://www.gov.gg/victim-support-witness-service) is updated to include information leaflets and links to other agencies' websites as well as our annual reports.

We continue to update and amend the information leaflets we provide in order to incorporate Bailiwick information.

### Conclusions:

With 3 part time members of staff and 19 volunteers providing a highly professional but cost effective service benefitting nearly **1000** people in our community each year, it cannot be argued that this demonstrates excellent value for money.

Our highly trained 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 events 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.

Succession planning ensures the long-term viability of the Charity and our strategic plan will ensure sustainability going forward.

The Victim Support and Witness Service 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 have the very best service provided to them by 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.

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.

Law Enforcement Officers, Police Officers and interpreters are able to come in and speak with witnesses in our waiting room – it is neutral ground.

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.

As part of our desire to ensure that we are providing an excellent 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 ensures we are providing a service that is fit for purpose but also demonstrates clear outcomes which is beneficial when applying for future funding.

The overall service goes from strength to strength and is an integral part of the justice system. It is more highly accessible to both victims and witnesses and the support received from the Bailiff down 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 Scheme.

The whole Victim Support and Witness Service 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 and ensure that we are meeting the changing needs of the community..