



# ANNUAL REPORT

June 2019-May 2020



The Guernsey Charity for the support of Victims and Witnesses

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# GENERAL INFORMATION

## Vision

The vision of the Bailiwick of Guernsey Victim Support and Witness Service (VS&WS) is to ensure that victims and witness of crime within our community have access to support of the highest standard.

## Purpose

The purpose of the VS&WS is to provide emotional support, practical help and information to all victims and witnesses of crime in the Bailiwick, regardless of whether or not they choose to report the crime. It provides that same service to families and friends of victims and witnesses.

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 work through their emotions. The support we provide can relate to 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 witnesses who find themselves having to attend court when perhaps they have never done so before. This can be extremely daunting and sometimes frightening, particularly for young or vulnerable witnesses. 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 during which 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. These visits enable witnesses to feel less intimidated and a little more comfortable in the court surroundings, all of which may help them provide better quality evidence. Volunteers can also accompany witnesses into the courtroom whilst they give their evidence and provide on-going support after the event. The Service also supports witnesses who have been granted 'Special

Measures' to give their evidence, i.e. via video link or from behind a screen, as well as people attending the Domestic, Matrimonial and Civil Courts.

## **Operating Highlights**

### **Staff**

Two new staff started working with us in 2019. Deputy Manager Hannah Robilliard, whose background is in social work, brings skills which complement those of the Manager and she has become a valuable asset to the organisation. We had secured the services of Sharon De La Mare to cover a period of maternity leave and were delighted that she subsequently accepted our offer of a permanent role as Administrative Assistant.

### **Volunteers**

Three new volunteers have joined us this year and two have left the service so our volunteer pool currently stands at 26 (5 male and 21 female). Our volunteers form the backbone of our services and, in an attempt to quantify their financial value to the community we are, with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2020, recording the hours they spend on VS&WS related work.

We have produced four Volunteer Newsletters and held three volunteer meetings in the past twelve months. As well as providing an overview of what has been happening at VS&WS, topics covered in our newsletters have included:-

- the appropriate use of Risk Indication Checklists (RICs) for clients
- Domestic Violence Protection Notices and Orders (DVPNs/DVPOs)
- Bystander apathy
- signposting to other services/organisations
- the States of Guernsey's online Disability Awareness Training

and speakers have included:-

- Dementia Friendly Guernsey
- GET (Guernsey Employment Trust)

We also began holding one-to-one meetings with our volunteers. These have been very well received and will continue on a regular basis.

## Other Highlights

### September 2019

The Manager and Deputy Manager met with the Bailiff, Sir Richard Collas. Sir Richard was very interested in our work and gave us a personal tour of some fascinating areas of the Royal Court building.



### January 2020

We were invited by the Guilles-Alles Library and Art for Guernsey to have a presence at 'Double Window', an exhibition of art produced by inmates of Les Nicolles Prison. A number of staff and volunteers gave up their time to attend our stand (pictured left is volunteer Denise Mansell).

When the exhibition closed we spoke to an invited audience about our work.

## February 2020

The Manager and Deputy Manager attended the UK Government's event titled 'The Victim Services Conference: Effectively and Sensitively Supporting Victims of Crime' which took place in Central London.

Speakers at the conference included the Chief Executive of UK Victim Support, the UK Government's Victims' Commissioner, a Deputy Director of the Ministry of Justice and a Chief Crown Prosecutor. As well as hearing about some very interesting ideas and initiatives, we made some useful contacts. We heard from the Jersey delegates, both police officers, that they have a newly developed 'hub' incorporating their SARC, Victim Support, the Witness Care Unit and SAFER.

## Testimonials

We offer feedback forms to all of our clients - here are some of their comments:-

*"Staff were fantastic in every way"*

(Magistrates Court witness, September 2019)

*The support from the ladies was outstanding, I would never have done it without them.*

(Magistrates Court witness, September 2019)

..... and occasionally we receive cards from grateful clients .....

*"... You put me at ease and made the whole experience better. I've done it before but it doesn't make it any easier. Keep doing what you're doing."*

(Magistrates Court witness, January 2020)

*"I cannot thank you enough for the exceptional service you provided at such an awful time in my life"*

(Royal Court witness, February 2020)

## Training

### Training Delivered

Victim support volunteer training is developed and delivered by the Manager and Deputy Manager. We have 5 training modules:-

- Victim Support
- Witness Support
- Responding Sensitively to Survivors of Childhood Sexual abuse
- Trauma and its Effects on the Brain
- Understanding Rape Trauma Syndrome

Depending on their chosen discipline(s), volunteers initially complete the Victim Support and/or Witness Support training. These mandatory modules are usually completed within a month of applying for a volunteer position and always before the volunteer commences supporting victims or witnesses. We aim to make our other training modules available twice a year and we encourage our volunteers to undertake 'refresher' training.

The Manager attended three SAFER training days to participate in the 'carousels' at which a number of agencies/charities speak to attendees about their work. This helps to raise awareness of the support that is available and attendees are able to sign-post their clients appropriately.

### Training Received

Staff and volunteers have attended various training events this year including Philippi's one-day training session titled 'The Aftermath of Rape and Sexual Trauma', Lloyds 'Digital Knowhow' event at Les Cotils and Safer's Domestic Abuse Awareness training day.

## Impact of Coronavirus Pandemic

Lockdown measures implemented by the States of Guernsey meant that the Courts were unable to operate at full capacity from late March until early June. As a result, very little witness support was required during this period. The victim support element of our service continued

but rather than speaking to clients face-to-face, staff and volunteers provided support via telephone and video calls.

As for many other organisations, the lockdown restrictions forced us to test and review our business continuity plans. We now have much greater understanding of the impact of such an event on our ability to operate effectively and the lessons we have learned will be acted upon and incorporated into our policies and procedures.

Lockdown restrictions also impacted upon our training programme so we will be rescheduling planned modules over the next few months.

## **Looking Ahead**

There are a number of areas on which we will be focusing over the next twelve months.

One of the desired outcomes of our organisation is that ‘criminal justice and social policy development addresses the needs of people affected by crime’. In recent years we have been involved in many discussions on this topic, particularly with regard to the development of a local Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC) and the reinstatement of some form of Restorative Justice provision. Both of these issues have been raised in the recently published Justice Review Report which was commissioned by the Committee for Home Affairs and which is due for debate by the States in the summer of 2020. As we expect the Report to receive considerable media attention, we have an ideal opportunity for VS&WS to demonstrate its support for, and willingness to contribute to, the progression of both issues.

The States of Guernsey have also recently debated The Sexual Offences (Bailiwick of Guernsey) Law, 2020 and we expect that this, coupled with the release of the Justice Review Report, will encourage more victims of sexual crimes to seek support. We therefore need to ensure we have a sufficient number of appropriately trained volunteers available as and when needed. This will involve expanding our specialised childhood sexual abuse training module to incorporate all types of sexual offence and inviting more existing and new volunteers to undertake this training.



We will continue to work with all forms of media to maintain a high profile within the wider community and, in order to ensure that all demographics within the Bailiwick are aware of the support available through our services, we will be liaising with secondary schools and colleges to set up regular presentations to final year students.

In terms of administrative projects, a key focus this year will be updating our Risk Register and the associated risk management process. We will also be reviewing our internal policies to ensure that we are operating in line with the latest legal and ethical guidelines.

Finally, as always we will continue to respond to the changing needs of our community by ensuring that our staff and volunteers are trained to the highest possible standard and by working collaboratively with other agencies to ensure that appropriate support is available to victims and witnesses of all types of crime.

## **Chairperson's Summary**

“We live in challenging times”, an obvious cliché but a very true description of the twelve month period covered by this Report and of the uncertainties that we face in the near future. The first nine months from June 2019 through to the middle of March 2020 saw our Charity go from strength to strength. Our staff, ably lead by Debbie Robinson, were implementing many new important initiatives to support our clients, our volunteers and our public image, whilst at the same ensuring that we continued to deliver a first class service to our clients, both victims and witnesses.

The introduction of the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown and the closure of normal operations within the Courts meant that we had to suspend our normal witness service and to adapt to a new virtual way of working with victims and witnesses. Whilst the statistics show that there may have been a fall in the numbers of witnesses requiring our service, there was little reduction in the number of victims requiring our support. I pay great tribute to Debbie, Hannah and Sharon who have handled the challenges with great ability and fortitude.

During the period of the Lockdown it was also very important that we were able to maintain contact with our great team of volunteers, many of whom were likely to feel isolated. The volunteers are the life-blood of an organisation such as ours and without their support we would

be unable to operate the services that we offer. It is great to see them all resuming the service as normal since the end of the period of lockdown.

From a financial perspective our Charity was in an extremely fortunate position thanks to the past generosity of our donors and supporters and the prudence of our financial controls. We entered the period of this Report with strong cash reserves that we have been able to deploy during the current difficulties. This means that currently we do not need to compete for funding with the many other charities that are not so fortunate. Clearly we will need to re-build our reserves for the future but we are under no immediate pressure to do so.

Finally, I thank my fellow directors and the members of our management committee for their continued support. Unfortunately, because of a change of policy by their employers, one of our Directors was obliged to stand down although they were able to continue to provide valuable input as a member of our management committee. This Director has given many years of great commitment and support to our Charity for which we are immensely grateful.

Peter Harwood  
Chairperson

# STATISTICAL INFORMATION

## VICTIM SUPPORT

Average number of victims supported each month:

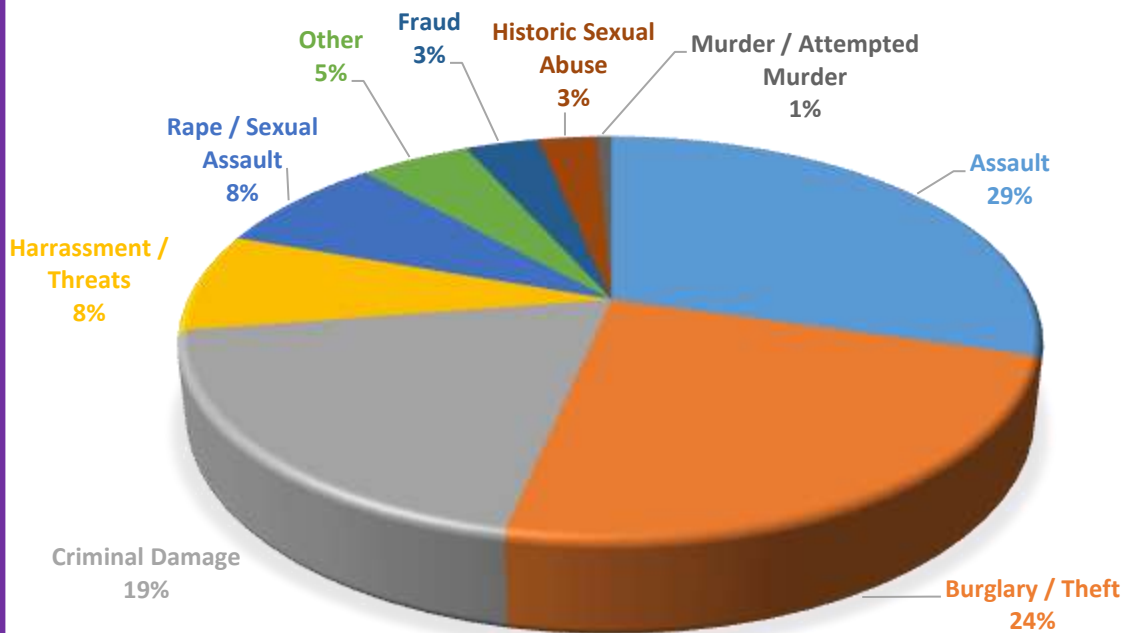
Year ended May 2017 = 26.83

Year ended May 2018 = 28.50

Year ended May 2019 = 28.67

Year ended May 2020 = 29.60

### VICTIMS SUPPORTED Y/E MAY 2020 - NATURE OF CRIME



### Victim Contact Types - y/e 31 May 2020

Email, Letter, Telephone Call, Text = 933

Home or Office Visit = 65

## WITNESS SUPPORT

Average number of witnesses supported each month:

Year ended May 2017 = 38.33

Year ended May 2018 = 36.66

Year ended May 2019 = 38.92

Year ended May 2020 = 29.42

## Witness Contact Types - y/e 31 May 2020

Email, Letter, Telephone Call, Text = 757

Home or Office Visit (incl. Pre Trial Visits) = 348

The chart below shows the courts in which VS&WS volunteers have supported witnesses during the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> May 2019.

