

FRAMEWORK FOR THE FUTURE



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Victim Support helps people affected by crime.

Crime affects people in different ways: the impact may be psychological, physical, financial or social. We understand that each person reacts in their own way and that this reaction is not predetermined by the nature of the crime itself.

Our support is given through three main services known as:

- Community Service
- Criminal Injuries Compensation Service
- Witness Service

Foreword

There is a strong sense of the future about our review of 2007-08. This is reflected in our theme, in some of our objectives and in steps we've taken to prepare for the challenges ahead.

Before looking forward, I'd like to comment on performance and achievement.

As this report shows, Victim Support is driven by objective-linked planning and every year we strive to reach ambitious objectives.

We didn't achieve every target in 2007-08, but I believe it was a good year for Victim Support and for people affected by crime, not least because of preparation for the future by Victim Support and others. Overall 64% of our Business Plan objectives were achieved and 31% part-achieved. In relation to the conditions of grant objectives agreed with our main funder, we achieved 64% and part-achieved 25%. In a year of major change and development this was a creditable level of performance.

For example, our Witness Service expanded from a relatively small base to cover all Crown, Magistrates', Appeal and Youth Courts, within a demanding timescale. This was achieved while exceeding customer expectations. Similarly, customer satisfaction levels in our Community and Criminal Injuries Compensation services were ahead of target. As our central task is to provide an

understanding, responsive service, it is good to report that we have the approval of our service users.

There were important volunteer training developments. People who give up their time to volunteer for Victim Support can now obtain a valuable qualification, as our training is accredited at Level 3 by the Open College Network. This puts volunteers in a position to gain additional qualifications. I can never say enough to praise and thank our volunteers. They are exceptional, indispensable people and nothing says more about their commitment than the fact that Victim Support volunteers provided a total of 16,514 hours service in 2007-08. We believe that our accreditation initiative helps us to acknowledge their achievements and will help to attract new volunteers.

In September 2007, the Northern Ireland Office (NIO) Strategy for Victims and Witnesses was launched.

We contributed to this important policy and see it as another step in the ongoing work to improve the treatment of victims and witnesses in our Criminal Justice System.

Victim Support is about local people supporting local people. We are a charity with a voluntary Board of Trustees and volunteers deliver most of our services. From this constant base it is our duty to listen and challenge ourselves to best meet the needs of people affected by crime.

That's why we looked to the future. As well as launching a new Strategic Plan, we worked upon our skills, structure and processes to ensure that we are in a position to continuously improve.

In anticipation of a new charity commission for Northern Ireland, we completed a review of corporate governance. We briefed local political parties about the impact of crime and the actions needed to mitigate its effects on people's lives – by supporting individuals and developing the Criminal Justice System.

We look forward to the devolution of Criminal Justice, as it will give the NI Assembly the opportunity to give local people the benefits of a cross-departmental approach to meeting the needs of victims and witnesses.

“ Victim Support is about local people supporting local people ”.

Victim Support NI is now part of a twenty-country network of non-government organisations across Europe which support victims of crime. In future, we will draw upon this fertile information source and our own research to ensure that the development of our services reflects best practice and is evidence-based.

Finally I'd like to thank the individuals and organisations that do so much to support our work, including the Police, Courts, Public Prosecution, Compensation Agency, Criminal Injuries Compensation Appeals Panel, Probation and Prison Services. We would especially like to thank our main funder, the NIO Community Safety Unit for their consistent support. We have many other partners and will continue to reach out and extend our network, to ensure that victims of crime know that we are here to help.

Joseph Dunne
Chairperson
Victim Support Northern Ireland



Services

Victim Support is a charity for anyone affected by crime.

We are independent and are not part of the police, courts, legal profession or government.

We know how the Criminal Justice System works and feedback from victims and witnesses indicates that our services help people to deal with the many consequences of crime.



Community Service

This service is often the first point of contact with Victim Support. When people contact us they'll speak to someone who really understands how crime can affect lives. As well as providing emotional support, we provide objective advice and practical help. This helps people to deal with the personal effects of crime, as well as dealing with the police, courts, legal professionals and making a compensation claim.



Witness Service

This service helps adult prosecution witnesses before, during and after they go to court. Most witnesses are unnerved by the thought of going to court and the Witness Service helps witnesses through what can be a frightening and bewildering experience. It does this with pre-trial visits to court, by doing as much as possible to explain what is happening and providing support during and after the trial. With the help of the Court Service, safe, quiet waiting areas are available.



Criminal Injuries Compensation Service

People who are injured as a result of violent crime may be entitled to compensation. This service deals with all aspects of making a claim, from completing the application form, to representation at reviews, appeals and hearings. Our service is free and people who use it will avoid legal fees as Victim Support does not take a percentage of any compensation payment.

We are pleased to say that measures of Customer Satisfaction taken in 2007-08, along with the achievement of key Customer Service targets, indicate that our work is benefiting the people who use our services.

	Target	Achieved
Community Service		
Customer Satisfaction	80%	91%
Criminal Injuries Compensation Service		
Customer Satisfaction	80%	87%
Witness Service		
Customer Satisfaction – established Crown, Appeal & Magistrates' Court services	90%	94%
Customer Satisfaction – new Magistrates', Appeal & Youth Court services	75%	94%

Customer Service and Satisfaction

Providing an understanding and responsive service to the people who look to Victim Support for help is our most important task. This means that feedback about our work and standards from those who use our services is vitally important.



Key Developments

For victims of crime 2007-08 was a year of important developments...



‘Bridging the Gap’



The new NIO Strategy for Victims and Witnesses was launched on 18th September 2007. This could be a landmark day, as it marked

the start of what we see as an ongoing process to improve the treatment of victims and witnesses in our Criminal Justice System.

The Way Ahead

At Victim Support we launched our own Strategic Plan for 2008-11. Its aim is to make sure the voice of victims of crime is heard, that the criminal justice system gives more attention to their needs, that

support services evolve with victims’ needs and that Victim Support as an organisation is adequately equipped to meet changing circumstances. Our Strategic Plan sets out 13 aims within three Strategic Areas – the Voice of Victims, Quality of Services and Organisational Development. Copies of the Plan are available on request.



ABOVE LEFT: VICTIM SUPPORT REPRESENTATIVES AT THE NIO STRATEGY LAUNCH INCLUDED VOLUNTEERS TOM PATTEN, PAUL DEVLIN, BRIAN MCCLELLAND AND BILLY BEGGS. **ABOVE RIGHT:** NI MINISTER OF STATE, PAUL GOGGINS MP (CENTRE), HELPS SUSAN REID AND JOE DUNNE TO LAUNCH VICTIM SUPPORT’S STRATEGIC PLAN.



NI MINISTER OF STATE, PAUL GOGGINS MP AND LESLEY COWAN, NIO (RIGHT) CELEBRATE THE EXPANSION OF THE WITNESS SERVICE WITH AUDREY MCCANN, LINDA BLACK AND SHARON HANNA.

“ The growth of the Witness Service included the establishment of two new centres ”



THE OPENING OF NEW OFFICES FOR THE FOYLE WITNESS SERVICE.

Witness Service Expands

2007 was a ‘big year’ for Victim Support’s Witness Service and a good year for the people who use it. The service grew to cover all Crown, Magistrates’, Youth and Appeal Courts in Northern Ireland: a very large and demanding expansion programme which was completed on schedule by 31 August 2007. Find out more about the expansion of the Witness Service on page 8.

Central Management: Local Benefits

The organisation went through significant change which has given us an improved focus on the needs of crime victims and witnesses. Over the last year we’ve had a careful look at the way we work. For the first time we have a volunteer development role and all elements of our Community, Witness and Criminal Injuries Compensation services are now managed from our central office. This means that staff in local offices can concentrate on service delivery to a much greater extent, with obvious benefits for customer service and satisfaction. Overall we believe that this structure will help us to be more responsive to the ever changing environment in which we work.

Information Leaflets

To make it as easy as possible for people who contact us to find out what we do, we completed work on a range of strongly branded and distinctive information leaflets in 2007. Many of these have been assessed and “Crystal Marked” for their use of clear language by the Plain English Campaign.

Shaping Services

We know that the circumstances and needs of people affected by crime will change. As a result of a review of the support we offer victims and witnesses carried out in 2007, we are in a better position to make sure our services evolve to meet existing and emerging needs. The future of Victim Support services will be shaped by research and by evidence from other countries about what works best – for example we are aware that people in Northern Ireland have not had the opportunity to benefit from some of the developments in the

criminal justice systems in England, Scotland and Wales. We are also focusing on achieving best practice and in 2007-08 we secured membership of Victim Support Europe, which has helped us establish links with sister organisations in 19 countries across Europe. Research and evidence from these sources will help us to raise awareness of the needs of people affected by crime among elected representatives and policy makers.



VICTIM SUPPORT VOLUNTEERS AT A VOLUNTEER FORUM MEETING.

Volunteer Development

Volunteers play a central role in the delivery of our services. We value our volunteers and want them to know they are valued. That's why we worked to gain Open College Network (Level 3) accreditation for volunteer training. Victim Support volunteers can now obtain a recognised qualification that reflects their skills and knowledge.

Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) Critical Friend Analysis

The PSNI in South Belfast invited Victim Support to act as a 'critical friend', by observing and

assessing the level of service and care the police provide to victims of crime and witnesses when they attend an incident. We interviewed victims and witnesses to hear their views about police response, observed police interviews, looked at their call management process and looked at police practice at crime incidents. This research – which has clear potential for future expansion - is being used to develop a learning module for the police and improve the service provided to people at a time of crisis.

Prison Service DVD

The Northern Ireland Prison Service invited Victim Support to contribute to a training DVD. We used this opportunity to show Prison Officers the severe impact that crime can have and how important it is to work with prisoners to prevent reoffending and the creation of more victims.

Corporate Governance

For a charity like Victim Support, the Board of Trustees is very important, to give advice and guidance, monitor performance and confirm that we are complying with legal and other obligations. With valuable support from Denise McCann of NICVA, our Board of Trustees revised Victim Support's Memorandum and Articles of Association, developed new governance procedures and looked at fresh ways of attracting new Trustees and bringing new skills into our organisation at Board level.



Expansion of the Witness Service

The growth and development of our Witness Service was a key corporate objective and one of our major achievements in 2007-08.

This expansion programme was part of our response to the Criminal Justice Review 2000 and the Evaluation of the Belfast Magistrates' Court Witness Service 2003.

Our aim was to provide prosecution witnesses with access to the same service at all courts in Northern Ireland. The development programme began in July 2006 and was completed successfully in August 2007, on schedule, on budget and within a demanding timeframe. Throughout the project we worked closely with, and reported to, a Witness Service Steering Group representing the NIO, Police, Public Prosecution Service, Court Service and NSPCC.

Before July 2006, we provided a Witness Service at 12 Crown Courts and had a pilot project at Lagside Magistrates' Court in Belfast. We now have a service at all Crown, Magistrates', Youth and Appeal Courts in Northern Ireland – a total of 20 courts.

The growth of the Witness Service included the establishment of two new centres: the Craigavon and Foyle services. Our new service model is founded upon the provision of a single Witness Service for people attending all forms of court. To comply with this structure, our separate services for the Crown and Magistrates' Courts in Belfast were amalgamated.

A number of new positions were created. These included two Witness Service Co-ordinators, two Administrative Officers and two entirely new roles based at Witness Service Belfast – a Deputy

Co-ordinator and an Administrative Assistant. One Co-ordinator's position became redundant as the result of the realignment of our Belfast service.

A task like this inevitably involves challenges. These included the need to find suitable accommodation, often in old, heavily-used premises some of which are listed buildings. Staff from our Witness Service worked closely with the Northern Ireland Court Service (NICtS) to overcome many obstacles and Victim Support wishes to thank the NICtS for their ongoing cooperation and strong support.

Recruiting new volunteers and providing all volunteers with an appropriate skill set were both major challenges. This process continues, as Victim Support continues to grow and respond to the needs of victims and witnesses.

Victim Support - and therefore people affected by crime - now has a much stronger presence in Northern Ireland's courts and work to refine and develop our new Witness Service is continuing. For example, we are working with the Public Prosecution Service to agree an automatic referral process for prosecution witnesses and our future aims include the provision of a support service for defence witnesses.

These themes were linked to 8 general aims and 90 specific objectives in our Operational Plan for 2007-08. This detailed document and a report on progress against each of these objectives is available on request. In broad terms, 64% of the 90 objectives were fully achieved, 31% were partially achieved and 5% were not achieved.

Conditions of Grant Objectives

Within this complex list of aims, particular emphasis was placed upon a smaller number of Conditions of Grant objectives agreed with Victim Support's major funder, the NIO Community Safety Unit.

These 28 core objectives fell into four areas:

- 8 Cross Service Objectives
- 7 Community Service Objectives
- 7 Witness Service Objectives
- 6 Criminal Injuries Compensation Service Objectives

In broad terms, 64% of these aims were achieved, a further 25% were partially achieved and 11% were not achieved.

The following pages consider our core objectives in more detail.

Objectives and Achievements

Strategic Themes and Operational Plan

Victim Support's activities in 2007-08 were guided by 8 strategic themes:

- Development of Services
- Quality of Services
- Influencing Public Policy
- Communicating Effectively
- Training and Human Resources
- Information Technology
- Finance and Fundraising
- Governance



Cross Service Objectives

Our corporate aims included a mix of operational, policy and inter-organisation objectives.

In operational terms, we assessed the number of volunteer hours needed for service delivery and took steps to ensure that Victim Support had the number of active volunteers required to meet the needs of the people who use our services. We also developed a PR and Marketing Strategy which will be used to inform future policy in this area. Our operational performance was monitored and reported upon on a quarterly basis and we implemented the recommendations of an operational and management review.

The high levels of customer satisfaction achieved by all services are a tribute to the personal and professional qualities of the superb volunteers who give up their time to support people affected by crime.

Victim Support was active in a number of key policy areas. We contributed to:

- the development of a Northern Ireland Code of Practice for Victims and Witnesses
- victim and witness policy, including participation in the Victims and Witnesses Steering Group.

We are a people organisation which works closely with many organisations on a daily basis and on particular projects. In addition to the expansion of the Witness Service, which involved many other groups, we worked closely with NEXUS and the PSNI to develop protocols which will impact upon domestic and sexual crime and other issues.



Community Service

This service, which represents the 'face' of Victim Support to many people, was successful in key customer services areas:

- Victims of crime were contacted within 2 working days
- The service achieved a customer service rate of 91%, against a target of 80%, a major improvement compared to the previous year.

Our target for the number of referrals to Victim Support from other organisations was exceeded, while the level of self-referral fell below target. The number of people who asked us to provide 'face-to-face' emotional support increased to 8% of all clients. Although this was a significant increase, it did not reach our target of 10% of all clients.

We also worked closely with the police, with the dual aim of maintaining referrals from the police at a high level and making this process easier through the development of an electronic referral system.

Witness Service

Despite the demands of achieving the targets associated with the expansion of the service, our Witness Service achieved or exceeded its key customer service aims:

- Targets for the number of pre-trial visits by victims and prosecution witnesses to Crown, Magistrates' and Youth Courts were exceeded
- Support was offered to victims and prosecution witnesses involved in all eligible trials
- We achieved a customer satisfaction rate of 94% against a target of 90%

The Witness Service also worked upon new or revised protocols with the Public Prosecution Service, the Northern Ireland Court Service and the Police. Work in these areas is continuing.

Criminal Injuries Compensation Service

Research among people who used our Compensation Service and progress against operational targets confirmed that this service, like

other Victim Support services, consistently met the needs of customers:

- We achieved a customer satisfaction rate of 87% against a target of 80%
- Our target of assisting 35% of compensation applicants to complete the initial application form was exceeded.

The service also met regularly with the Compensation Agency and the Criminal Injuries Compensation Appeals Panel. Looking to future performance, the Service established a baseline measure for the number of new clients assisted at the review and appeal stages of the compensation claims process.

Against a background of significant expansion and change within the organisation, the level of achievement by our services against core objectives was satisfactory. 64% of these core aims were achieved, 25% were achieved in part and 11% were not achieved.

More detailed information about Victim Support's progress against key objectives is available on request.

Looking Ahead

In 2008-09 we will build upon the framework developed in 2007-08. Strong emphasis will be placed upon service development, customer satisfaction and influencing the development of the Criminal Justice System and other agencies for the benefit of people affected by crime.

Our work will include:

- **Service Database** – the development of an accessible list of local services and information sources for victims and witnesses.
- **Better Facilities** - we will launch new service bases in Derry and in Lisburn.
- **Policy and Research** – for the first time we will have the capacity to develop and deliver a Policy and Research programme. This will be used to influence ongoing change in the Criminal Justice System and other organisations which touch the lives of people affected by crime.
- **Earlier Contact** - we will have earlier contact with witnesses and be able to offer them an even better service, as a result of a new referral agreement with the Public Prosecution Service.

VICTIM SUPPORT NORTHERN IRELAND
STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES
 YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2008
INCOME AND EXPENDITURE

	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total Funds 2008 £	Total Funds 2007 £
Incoming resources				
Voluntary income	8,718	204	8,922	31,129
Activities in furtherance of the charity's objectives	450	2,002,000	2,002,450	1,922,225
Investment income	16,686	-	16,686	17,316
Other incoming resources	426	-	426	1,800
Total incoming resources	26,280	2,002,204	2,028,484	1,972,470
Costs of charitable activities	-	2,022,899	2,022,899	2,062,844
Governance costs	-	10,378	10,378	34,520
Total resources expended	-	2,033,277	2,033,277	2,097,364
Net incoming/(outgoing) resources before exceptional items	26,280	(31,073)	(4,793)	(124,894)
Restructuring costs	-	-	-	(48,438)
Transfers between funds	60,009	(60,009)	-	-
Net movement in funds	86,289	(91,082)	(4,793)	(173,332)
Fund balances at 1 April 2007	91,739	173,638	265,377	438,709
Fund balances at 31 March 2008	178,028	82,556	260,584	265,377

Opinion

In our opinion the accounts give a true and fair view, in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice, of the charitable company's state of affairs as at 31 March 2008 and of its income and expenditure for the year then ended. They have been properly prepared in accordance with the provisions of the Companies (Northern Ireland) Order 1986 and the information given in the directors report is consistent with the financial statements.

Crawford Sedgwick & Co, Chartered Accountants & Registered
 Auditors - 38 Hill Street, Belfast, BT1 2LB

Accounts

Victim Support Northern Ireland

VICTIM SUPPORT NORTHERN IRELAND
BALANCE SHEET
 AT 31 MARCH 2008

	2008 £	2007 £
FIXED ASSETS		
Tangible fixed assets	82,556	173,638
CURRENT ASSETS		
Debtors	17,484	18,467
Cash at bank and in hand	316,096	99,524
	333,580	117,991
CREDITORS:		
Amounts falling due within one year	(155,552)	(26,252)
NET CURRENT ASSETS	178,028	91,739
TOTAL ASSETS LESS CURRENT LIABILITIES	260,584	265,377
INCOME FUNDS		
Restricted funds	82,556	173,638
Unrestricted funds:		
General funds	178,028	91,739
	260,584	265,377

Risk Review Statement

The Board of Trustees continues to assess any risks to which the charity may be exposed, in particular those related to the operations and finances of the charity.





Chief Executive
Susan Reid

Board of Trustees

Mr Joseph Dunne, Chairperson

Mr Paul Simpson, Vice Chairperson

Mrs Margaret Collinson, OBE (resigned 14/01/08)

Mr Bob Coulter (resigned 14/01/08)

Mr Murray Cowan

Mrs Catherine Gilchrist (resigned 14/01/08)

Mrs Margaret Mahood, MBE

Mr Bob McCann, Honorary Secretary

Mrs Judy McCormick, MBE

Mr Andy McQuiggan

Mr Noel Mulholland (resigned 14/01/08)

Mr Sean O'Grady (resigned 14/01/08)

Mr Jack Savage

Mr David Smyth, QC

Victim Support Offices

Central Office 028 9024 4039

Local Offices

Ballymena 028 2563 0784

Belfast North & West 028 9024 3133

Belfast South & East 028 9032 8152

Derry / Londonderry 028 7137 0086

Lisburn 028 9267 5642

Newry 028 3025 1321

Omagh 028 8224 0012

Witness Service

The Witness Service is available at all Crown, Magistrates', Appeal and Youth Service courts in Northern Ireland.

Call 028 9024 4039 for more information.





Victim Support Northern Ireland

Registered Office:

Annsgate House
70-74 Ann Street
Belfast
BT1 4EH

Registered Company: NI 20562

Charity No. XN 88452

T: 028 9024 4039

E: info@victimsupportni.org.uk

www.victimsupport.org



Supporting people affected by crime