




Victim Support NI
Annual Report 2017/18

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WITNESS SERVICE OFFICES

The Witness Service is available in all criminal courts in Northern Ireland.
Call 028 9024 4039 for more information

Behind The Scenes

Chief Executive

Geraldine Hanna

Board of Trustees:

Brendan Loughran (Chair until Nov '17)
Kate Laverty (Vice-Chair until Nov '17)
Joan Broder (Chair from Nov '17)
Dale Ashford (Vice-Chair from Nov '17)
Barry Connolly (Treasurer)
Olive Hill
Allyson McKimm
Judith Cross (until Nov '17)
Rhyannon Blythe
Neil Laverty (until Jan '18)
Alice Chapman OBE
Louise Craig
Peter Mann (appointed Nov '17)
Dr David Lennox (appointed Nov '17)

Funded by the Department of Justice

Chair's Foreword

My first duty as the new Chair of the Board of Trustees for Victim Support NI must be to acknowledge the huge contribution of our outgoing chair, Brendan Loughran, to the cause of victims and witnesses of crime. In his six years on the Board, Brendan made a very significant contribution to Victim Support NI and passionately believed in the rights and needs of victims. His work with the board of Victim Support Europe meant that he was always up to date with best practice and the innovations of our partner Victim Support agencies throughout Europe. He is indeed a loss to the Board, but will remain an active supporter and advisor to the organisation.

I am proud and excited to have taken on the role of chairperson of the Board of Trustees. I have had a longstanding involvement with Victim Support NI. I was a member of the original Victim Support committee when the organisation first started supporting victims of robbery on a housing estate in Newtownabbey and was proud to take on the role of Chairperson of that committee for a number of years.

I have remained a supporter of the charity as it has grown and changed into the powerful and impactful organisation it has become today. It has been very reassuring for me to see that the organisation remains true to the values of that first small committee – to provide appropriate local support to victims of crime in their own community. Essentially, that is still what Victim Support NI does, thanks to our network of dedicated volunteers and staff throughout Northern Ireland.

Of course, the organisation has changed a lot in the past 37 years, and it now does so much more than simply support victims of crime. The Witness Service has become an essential service in the Northern Ireland courts system, providing support to prosecution witnesses and their families as they face the stressful situation of attending court. For many victims who have been injured as a result of crime, the free support they receive from our volunteers and specialised Advice staff has been critical to them obtaining some measure of compensation. More specialised areas of work include that undertaken by our Independent Sexual Violence advocates and our Hate Crime advocates who support victims at critical times.

The work that the organisation does in terms of lobbying for positive change, holding our criminal justice colleagues to account, and making sure that the public, our stakeholders, and elected representatives are all aware of the issues facing victims and witnesses, and their rights, has become an important part of what the charity does, and is the driving force behind our

current 'Something to Shout About' strategy. I was pleased this year that we were able to run our first television advertising campaign, building the Victim Support NI brand, and effectively communicating who we are and what we do to a wide audience throughout Northern Ireland.

Like many organisations, Victim Support NI has not been immune to the winds of change. During 2017-18, we embarked upon an ambitious restructuring which led to the creation of new Senior Management Team. We introduced a completely new client management system, which required a lot of testing, revisions, and learning of new processes for staff. Throughout this period of change, Victim Support NI staff have remained focused, resilient and adaptable in order to keep producing the excellent standard of service for our clients that we are known for.

The organisational restructure has allowed us to improve our consistency across our key services, and has also enabled us to free up some capacity to explore extra revenue stream funding.

We also welcomed some new members to the Victim Support NI Board of Trustees this year each with the specific skills and experience that will enable Victim Support NI to continue to deliver on its ongoing Strategy.

We look forward to an exciting year ahead, during which we will continue to develop and enhance our services, improve our systems and knowledge sharing through innovative use of technology, develop our existing partnerships and embrace new ones, and continue to shout loudly about the rights and needs of victims and witnesses of crime in Northern Ireland.

Dr Joan Broder

Chair of Trustees
Victim Support NI





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CHALLENGE, CHANGE, INNOVATION & GROWTH



GOING FORWARD



FINANCIALS



Our Impact

How much we did:

59,610

VICTIMS WERE REFERRED TO VICTIM SUPPORT NI

48,947

VICTIMS WERE CONTACTED BY OUR COMMUNITY SERVICE, WHO OFFER SUPPORT TO PEOPLE SHORTLY AFTER THEY EXPERIENCE CRIME

10,663

VICTIMS AND WITNESSES OF CRIME WERE REFERRED TO OUR WITNESS SERVICE, WHO SUPPORT VICTIMS AND PROSECUTION WITNESSES AT COURT

1,126

VICTIMS WERE HELPED TO MAKE APPLICATIONS FOR CRIMINAL INJURIES COMPENSATION, SECURING ALMOST

£1.9 MILLION

IN COMPENSATION FOR THOSE INJURED THROUGH VIOLENT CRIME

WE ARRANGED FACE-TO-FACE PERSONAL SUPPORT SESSIONS FOR 2,875 PEOPLE

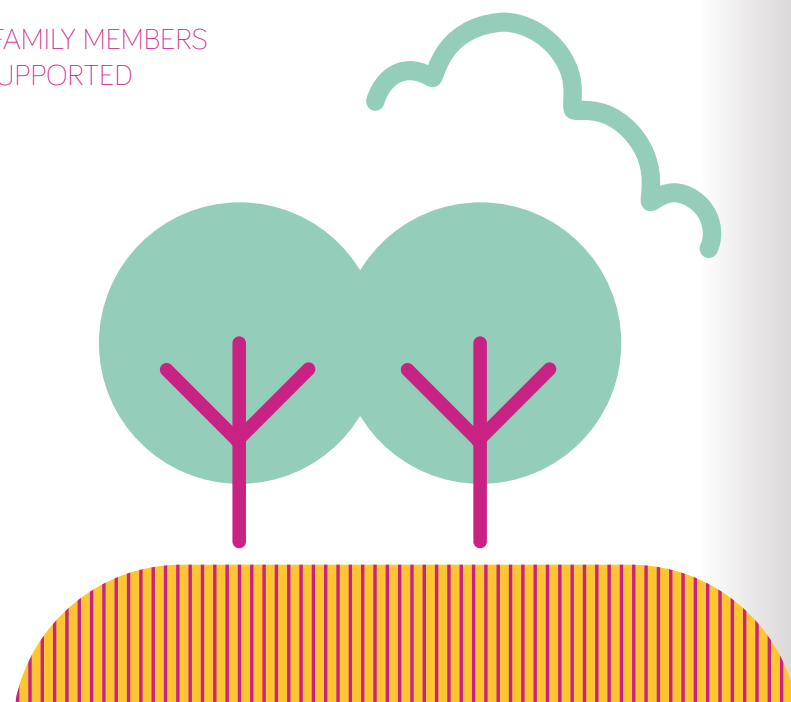
6,897

VICTIMS, WITNESSES, FAMILY MEMBERS AND FRIENDS WERE SUPPORTED AT COURT

OUR VOLUNTEERS DELIVERED

12,510

HOURS OF SERVICE



How well we did it:

85%

OF PEOPLE WHO ENGAGED WITH OUR COMMUNITY SERVICE STRONGLY AGREED THAT THEY FELT MORE INFORMED ABOUT SERVICES AVAILABLE TO THEM, AND WERE GIVEN INFORMATION IN A TIMELY MANNER APPROPRIATE TO NEED

80%

MORE THAN OF VICTIMS AND WITNESSES WHO ENGAGED WITH OUR WITNESS SERVICE EXPERIENCED REDUCED ANXIETY AND WERE BETTER ABLE TO GIVE EVIDENCE

96%

OF VIABLE REFERRALS WERE OFFERED SUPPORT BY LETTER WITHIN 5 WORKING DAYS

100%

OF CASES ELIGIBLE FOR AND WANTING SUPPORT AT COURT WERE SUPPORTED BY OUR WITNESS SERVICE, WHO GAVE PRE-TRIAL VISITS TO

45%

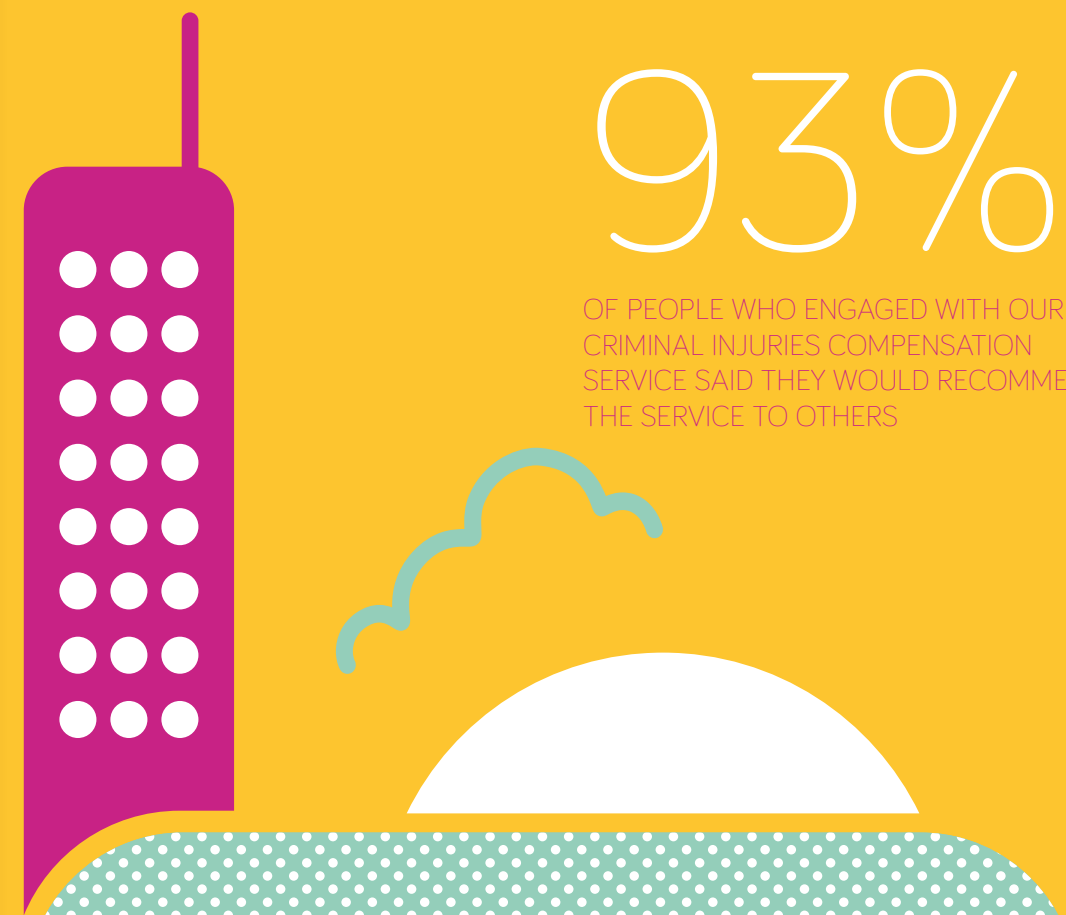
OF THE TOTAL AMOUNT OF PEOPLE APPLYING FOR CRIMINAL INJURIES COMPENSATION WERE HELPED BY VICTIM SUPPORT NI

93%

OF THESE WITNESSES AND THEIR FAMILIES.

93%

OF PEOPLE WHO ENGAGED WITH OUR CRIMINAL INJURIES COMPENSATION SERVICE SAID THEY WOULD RECOMMEND THE SERVICE TO OTHERS



Our Impact

The difference we made in the words of our clients...

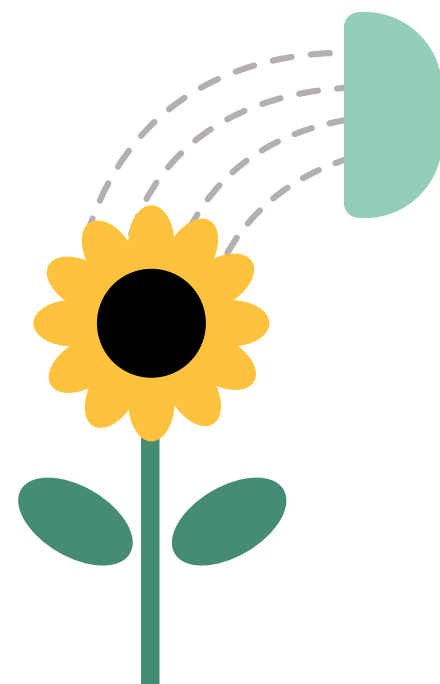
“Thank you for being there for me during one of the most horrific and traumatic events of my life”

“On behalf of my family I would like to thank you all for making our time at court as relaxing as possible. You were so friendly, you put us at ease.”

“Just a short note to let you know how much we appreciated the help, support and comfort you gave us at this very difficult time. Thanks for all the tea, chats and your kind words. It has made the process a little easier.”

“I really appreciate your help over that entire period. You were absolutely amazing and I could not have got through it without you.”

“I would like to tell you and the team how overwhelmed I am at the result. So a really big thank you for all the hard work you do without charging for it.”



“I wanted to say thank you for supporting _____ and explaining the process to him in a way he could understand as he was only 17 when he was assaulted. It was so good to win the case.”



General Information

How are we funded?

We receive funding from the Department of Justice NI as well as charitable donations from the public. Our ISVA service is primarily funded by a grant from Comic Relief. This, combined with the time, effort and expertise donated by our volunteers, enables us to deliver our services throughout Northern Ireland at a local level. We have also built successful partnerships with other support agencies

in order to ensure we can deliver the best specialist advice, support, and advocacy to our clients. Our commitment to the ongoing learning and development of our staff and volunteers is paramount, and we make continual efforts to ensure that appropriate training is available to them before and during their time working with Victim Support NI.

What do we do?

Victim Support NI aims to reduce harm and influence positive change for victims and witnesses in Northern Ireland by staying true to our vision of a society in which appropriate support and information is available to all those affected by crime. We do this via a number of key activities:

COMMUNITY SERVICE

When a crime has occurred, we receive referrals from the PSNI about crime victims, which enable us to contact the victims and offer them our services. Victims and witnesses of crime can also self-refer, or use our services even when the crime has not been reported.

Our community service offers practical and emotional support for the victim shortly after the crime has occurred. If the victim chooses to come in for an appointment, they receive a completely individualised service during which the most appropriate level of support will be determined and offered. They may be advised on their eligibility to apply for criminal injuries compensation, pointed to one of our internal advocacy services, or referred to another specialist agency for help.

WITNESS SERVICE

Victim Support's Witness Service provides another vital service by helping to prepare people for the experience of going to court, and supports prosecution witnesses and their families at court. The Witness Service has a presence at every criminal court in Northern Ireland. Our staff and volunteers can explain criminal processes and jargon, liaise with prosecution barristers and solicitors, and physically accompany witnesses and their friends and family into the courtrooms or live link rooms. The Witness Service also provides a safe place for victims and witnesses to wait away from the defendant and their supporters.

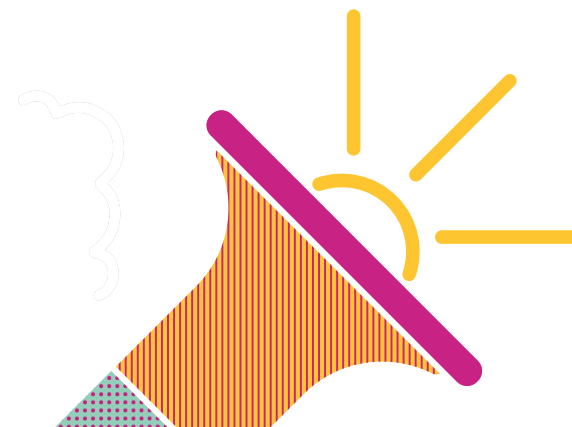
ADVOCACY SERVICES

We currently offer specialist advice and advocacy to people applying for Criminal Injuries Compensation, those affected by sexual violence who wish to engage with the criminal justice system, and victims affected by Hate Crime.

INFORMATION, RESEARCH, POLICY & LOBBYING

Victim Support NI helps victims of crime in Northern Ireland to feel better informed about their rights, and become more aware of the choices available to them. Confidence in the criminal justice system improves, as they feel that someone is hearing their voice and believing them. Victim Support NI also tries to ensure that our criminal justice system colleagues are aware of the issues facing victims and witnesses of crime, and works to improve the system for all.

These many facets of our work come together to help us achieve our purpose of reducing harm and influencing positive change for victims and witnesses in Northern Ireland.



Our Objectives and Achievements

2017-18 proved to be another challenging year for the organisation. We addressed the previous year's unsuccessful introduction of a new client management system with a complete revision of the system in the early part of the year, working out all the issues before a successful launch in November. As with any introduction of a new system and technology, there is always a settling in period in which problems are analysed, identified and addressed. For us this was an issue with the veracity of the data, which impacted on our reported figures for the year. The slight dip in performance in some areas can be largely attributed to this recording issue, and we expect our figures to increase in next year's report.

The organisation also underwent a restructure at senior management level in order to make our operational structure more streamlined and effective. While this meant we said goodbye to some longstanding and valued members of staff, we were able to welcome a number of new members of staff at management level, who collectively brought years of experience and a fresh approach to the team.

In spite of these challenges, we were delighted to achieve the majority of the objectives agreed with our funder:

WE PROCESSED **47,460** POLICE REFERRALS ABOUT VICTIMS OF CRIME

51% OF WITNESSES REFERRED TO US BEFORE TRIAL WERE SUCCESSFULLY CONTACTED BY TELEPHONE AND OFFERED SUPPORT AT COURT

5,801 PEOPLE WERE SHOWN AROUND COURT BEFORE THEIR TRIAL, EXCEEDING OUR TARGETS WITH RESPECT TO PRE-TRIAL VISITS AT CROWN AND MAGISTRATES COURTS

1,126 APPLICATIONS FOR CRIMINAL INJURIES COMPENSATION WERE MADE WITH SUPPORT FROM VICTIM SUPPORT NI, MEETING OUR TARGET OF HELPING

45% OF ALL VICTIMS WISHING TO APPLY FOR CRIMINAL INJURIES COMPENSATION

£1.9 MILLION IN COMPENSATION WAS GRANTED TO VICTIMS OF VIOLENT CRIME

12,510 HOURS OF SERVICE WERE DELIVERED BY VOLUNTEERS.



VSE 2017

For the first time, the annual Victim Support Europe conference was held in Ireland, and we were proud to partner with Advocates for Victims of Homicide (AdVIC) and the Victims' Rights Alliance in order to help organise the event in Dublin's Royal Hospital, Kilmainham venue.

The theme of the conference was 'Victims of Crime: Rights, Needs & Responses'. Experts from all over the world travelled to Dublin to share best practice and learning in order to ensure that victims of crime are getting access to their rights in line with national, European, and international legislation.

Victim Support NI contributed to the event programme by delivering workshops in 'Psychological First Aid', 'Practical Support for Victims of Hate Crime', and 'Referral of Victims between Organisations'.

The event was a great success, with 200 delegates enjoying the conference content, beautiful venue, and attractions of Dublin.



Community Service

The Community Service is often the first point of contact with Victim Support NI, helping people to cope with the personal and practical impact of crime. It provides information and advice to clients about dealing with the police, courts, legal professionals, media, and making a compensation claim after violent crime.

Specially trained advocates work with victims of sexual violence and hate crime, and support clients through their criminal injuries compensation claims.



48,947

VICTIMS OF CRIME THROUGHOUT
NORTHERN IRELAND WERE
OFFERED SUPPORT

3,790

HOURS OF SUPPORT WERE
GIVEN BY VOLUNTEERS TO
HELP PEOPLE AFFECTED
BY CRIME

2,875

PEOPLE ATTENDED FACE TO
FACE SUPPORT MEETINGS TO
HELP THEM RECOVER FROM
THE IMPACT OF CRIME

£1.9 MILLION

IN COMPENSATION WAS AWARDED TO VICTIMS FOR THEIR
INJURIES AS A RESULT OF CRIME, ALL OF WHICH WENT TO
VICTIMS AS WE DO NOT CHARGE FEES



Witness Service

The Witness Service helps adult prosecution witnesses before, during and after a trial in Crown, Magistrates' and Youth Courts. It offers pre-trial familiarisation visits to court, support on the day, a separate waiting area, and information and support throughout the legal process.



6,897

PEOPLE WERE SUPPORTED WITH THEIR ATTENDANCE AT COURT

100%

OF ELIGIBLE WITNESSES REFERRED TO US BEFORE TRIAL WERE SUPPORTED BY OUR WITNESS SERVICE

76% OF THE 11,509

HOURS OF SERVICE DELIVERED IN ALL COURTS WERE DELIVERED BY WITNESS SERVICE VOLUNTEERS

283

CLIENTS WERE SUPPORTED THROUGH SPECIAL MEASURES

4,517

NEEDS ASSESSMENTS WERE CONDUCTED FOR WITNESSES

176

ADDITIONAL NEEDS CASES WERE SUPPORTED TO RECEIVE HELP OUTSIDE OF SPECIAL MEASURES



Our Volunteers

Victim Support NI was founded by volunteers and continues to be a volunteer-delivered organisation. Our volunteers receive comprehensive accredited training and are integral to the delivery of our support services.

Throughout 2017-18, across the Community and Witness Services, our volunteers delivered

12,510

hours of service to victims and witnesses of crime in Northern Ireland.

We recruit for new volunteers throughout the year, and over 2017-18, we welcomed 23 new volunteers to the organisation. Each new volunteer completed our Core Learning training followed by a period of shadowing an experienced volunteer before working solo with victims and witnesses of crime.

This year, we pioneered a new approach to our Core Learning programme piloting a new 3 day fast track model, with one additional practical service day. This new fast track approach has been welcomed by the trainees, who said *"the interactive nature of the 3 day training was very beneficial"*, and *"I thought the course content and delivery of the training was perfect over the 3 day period. My interest was held throughout."*

We were delighted to receive the 'Investing in Volunteers' award during the year. This is an industry-wide quality award which recognises the importance we place on our volunteers, their training and the support available to them from the organisation. The award was presented to us at our Volunteer Week event in June, at which our family of volunteers were invited to the Glenavon Hotel in Cookstown to take part in a day of recognition which included a recording of Radio Ulster's popular 'Gardener's Corner' radio show.



Victim Support NI Volunteer Day 2017 in Cookstown



(A) Victim Support NI Volunteer Day 2017, IIV presentation (B, C) Gardener's Corner at Volunteer Day 2017





Campaigning and Raising Awareness

Victim Support NI continues to use our voice to shout about the needs of victims and witnesses of crime in Northern Ireland. We campaign, lobby, and discuss the key issues affecting victims and witnesses of crime through all the channels we have available to us, in order to raise awareness of these issues to the public, our stakeholders, fellow criminal justice agencies, and our elected representatives. During 2017-18, the charity was involved in the following campaigns:

- With the introduction of Universal Credit, a Two Child Tax Credit cap was introduced, reducing the amount of children for which claimants could receive benefits to two. This new policy allowed claimants to apply for more children if they met certain requirements, one of which was if they disclosed that the child was conceived as the result of rape. We were extremely concerned about this policy for a number of reasons: the trauma for victims to have to disclose this information, the potentially triggering nature of the disclosure for such victims, the training of Social Security Agency staff to hear this information, and the legal requirement in NI to report a crime of this nature to police. We voiced our concerns in a letter to the Prime Minister Theresa May and all sitting NI Westminster MPs. We also lent our support to the other agencies campaigning to overturn this piece of legislation, and attended rallies in Belfast and Londonderry.
- During November and December 2017, we lent our voice to the annual UN Women – End Violence Against Women and Girls social media campaign. This was a 16 day campaign which highlighted the statistics about the

different types of violence women and girls experience internationally. This campaign covered subjects such as sexual violence, child marriage, trafficking, domestic abuse, elder neglect and female genital mutilation.

- In February 2018, one of the most high profile trials Northern Ireland has ever experienced began, with Ulster Rugby players Paddy Jackson and Stuart Olding et al accused of rape and sexual assault. The media coverage put rape trials in the spotlight, and there was much discussion on social media and in traditional news comment pieces about how the trial was conducted, the treatment the victim received in court, and the many issues surrounding the allowed evidence and testimony. The trial highlighted many of our concerns about how cases of sexual violence are dealt with by the courts, and we were able to use the wave of public interest to call for positive change in an open letter to the Justice Permanent Secretary which was co-signed by Nexus NI, MAP, and Women's Aid NI. A judicial review led Sir John Gillen was announced and the results of this will be published during 2018-19.



(A) Sir John Gillen meeting with (l-r) Jan Melia from Women's Aid NI, Rhonda Lusty from Men's Advisory Project, Geraldine Hanna from Victim Support NI, and Cara Cash-Marley from Nexus NI (B) Our appeal to the public for their thoughts on a review of sexual violence cases following the Jackson et al trial (C) UN Women campaign

- Our social media channels have been used effectively this year to spread the word re many of our services, and to add our voice to international discussions on issues affecting victims and witnesses of crime. An example of this is our involvement with the Scamwise NI partnership, which has enabled us to spread up to date information about scams circulating in Northern Ireland.

We were also approached for comment by many of Northern Ireland's newspapers when covering crime stories and the issues affecting victims and witnesses of crime and released press statements on issues like Hate Crime Awareness Week and achievements like our Investing in Volunteers Award.

- Various members of our staff took part in radio and television programmes over the course of the year to raise awareness of some of the issues affecting victims and witnesses of crime, and promote the organisation and our services to the public. These included pieces on the trauma experienced by the surviving family of murder or manslaughter victims, a HMRC scam targeting vulnerable people in the Derry area, online hate crime, perceptions of crime, crimes against the elderly, and the delays in cases coming to court and how this affects victims.

- We marked European Victims of Crime Day in February with an innovative 'Open Space' event held at the Europa Hotel in Belfast, at which we discussed 'The Ideal Criminal Justice System for Victims. What does the model look like?' Many of our friends and colleagues from other criminal justice agencies were in attendance, and all contributed to and enjoyed the lively but very useful debate. A report was then compiled on the findings of our event, and was circulated to all attendees.



(A) Victim Support NI CEO Geraldine Hanna speaking on Radio Ulster (B, C, D) Marking European Victims of Crime Day with an 'Open Space' event at the Europa Hotel in Belfast



Hate Crime

The Hate Crime Advocacy Service has established itself as one of our main channels of specialist advocacy, offering a high quality service to

714

victims of hate crime in Northern Ireland in partnership with our external advocate agencies. This partnership approach has ensured that we are able to meet the needs of particularly vulnerable victims. We work closely with our colleagues in the Migrant Centre NI, Leonard Cheshire Disability NI, and The Rainbow Project NI to

ensure that we can offer the best support available to victims of race hate crime, disability hate crime, and homophobic or transphobic hate crime.

Within minority communities we are also working to help increase confidence in policing, and have been working with community organisations and local policing groups in order to raise awareness of what constitutes a hate crime.

Hate Crime continues to make headlines in Northern Ireland on a weekly basis, and we must endeavour to do all we can to help the most vulnerable in our society to access the support they need.



Victim Support NI marching in Belfast Pride 2017

Independent Sexual Violence Advocacy (ISVA) Service

Our ISVA service was established in April 2016 and went live to clients in September 2016 thanks to funding from Comic Relief and the Department of Justice NI. We currently have two professionally trained ISVAs, Claire and Roisin, covering Northern Ireland. During 2017-18, they dealt with

443

referrals from victims of sexual violence.

They provide an informative, non-judgemental support service to victims who have already engaged with the police or criminal justice system, or who are thinking of reporting their crime. The service is also available to those at risk of further sexual violence, and victims with complex advocacy needs.

Claire and Roisin have built strong and effective relationships with the PSNI, PPS, The Rowan Sexual Assault Referral Centre, NEXUS NI, and other support agencies in order to ensure that the best advice and support is available to their clients.

Despite being operational for only a short time, The Victim Support NI ISVA team was nominated for the 'Best Team' award at the Limelight Awards in Manchester in September 2017, and was shortlisted with two other ISVA teams from elsewhere in the UK. Unfortunately they lost out to the longer established Herts SARC team on the night, but were delighted with the recognition for the team in these UK wide awards.

Perhaps the best way to demonstrate the effect an ISVA can have, is to show some of the positive

feedback they have had from their clients. One of Roisin's clients told her "I wouldn't have got this far if it wasn't for the support from you", just days before her trial was due to start. A client of Claire's said:

"Speaking to you at our first interview was so much more than I could have expected for support through this terrible ordeal. You helped me fight for results because of my value as a person, and not just to protect other people or to get justice. You have helped change the way I see what has happened to me. And because of this, I now want to help others feel similarly. I look forward to my future."



(A) Victim Support NI ISVA Roisin McCallion (left) with the NEXUS NI pledge



Victim Support NI's ISVA team, (B) Roisin McCallion and (C) Claire Gallaugher



Our Staff

Victim Support NI has a team of 57 professional staff who provide support to clients who have been through stressful and traumatic experiences. We could not deliver the services we do without this team of dedicated individuals and to support them in the effective delivery of our service, we have a bespoke Wellbeing Strategy in place.

Under this Wellbeing strategy, we were able to secure another year of the Health Cash plan for staff, and also introduced a Perks card for staff and volunteers, which offers a range of discounts from businesses in many different sectors including retail, leisure, travel and food.

Our staff set up a Health and Wellbeing group called FLOW (Flourish at Work). They have consulted on ways to promote wellbeing in the workplace, and have encouraged staff to participate in wellbeing strategies such as Salt Awareness Week, National No Smoking Week, and Dry January.

“OUR STAFF ARE DIVIDED BY GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION BETWEEN OUR TWO MAIN HUBS IN BELFAST AND FOYLE, AND THE WITNESS SERVICE OFFICES AROUND NORTHERN IRELAND, BUT DESPITE THESE DIVISIONS, THEY ARE A UNITED TEAM, WHO ARE A PLEASURE TO WORK WITH AND BE AROUND.”

This year we became an 'Inspiration Point' for Inspire Wellbeing. This means that we are a space open to the public which offers advice and information about promoting mental wellbeing.

All of our staff dealt with considerable change this year due to a management restructure, and have coped with the introduction of a new client management system, requiring the learning of new processes, with resilience and good humour. Our staff are divided by geographical location between our two main Hubs in Belfast and Foyle, and the Witness Service offices around Northern Ireland, but despite these divisions, they are a united team, who are a pleasure to work with and be around.

As an organisation, we thank them for their continued service and recognise their important contributions to our ability to deliver a consistent, informed, respectful, responsive and reliable service to clients.



Learning and Development

Throughout the year, our existing staff and volunteers receive first class training and development in areas including:

- Supporting victims of rape and sexual violence
- Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training
- Self-care and resilience
- Understanding and communication with people who have communication and learning difficulties
- Supporting victims of domestic violence and abuse
- Supporting families bereaved through murder/manslaughter

This training has equipped our staff and volunteers to offer quality support services to people suffering as a result of crime.

All of our volunteers undertake OCN accredited training and are offered the opportunity to convert this into formal OCN accredited certificates. 31% of these volunteers achieved Level 3 OCN accreditation to work with victims, survivors and witnesses, while 43% of our volunteers achieved OCN Level 3 accreditation to work as Accompanying Officers in the courts.

11 of our staff and volunteers completed Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training this year. 95% of delegates rated the training as 10/10 and said they would definitely recommend this training to others. This training has practical implications for our staff when they receive calls from people who say they are thinking of taking their own lives. We have seen our staff deal with such calls in a calm, professional manner as a result of this training, and will continue to include it in our learning and development provision.

12 of our staff and volunteers took part in Supporting Victims of Sexual Violence training. They all reported that the training has improved their understanding of the needs of victims of sexual violence, saying "The training has been so good at looking at things from the point of the victim and how they feel about accessing support, therefore has really opened my eyes to more sensitively supporting them."

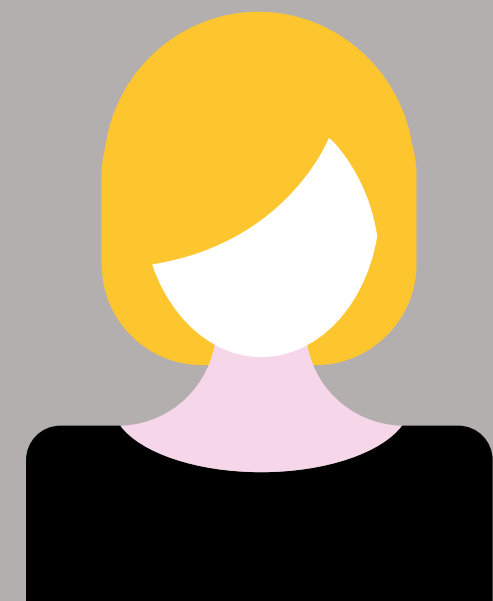
13 delegates took part in 'Understanding Mental Illness' training provided by Evolve. This training was felt to be very relevant to our staff and volunteer

roles, although feedback showed they would like the training to be more in depth in certain areas.

34 delegates attended DV and MARAC awareness training delivered by Onus. The feedback for this was very positive. "The trainer was fantastic and educated us on the MARAC process. I would definitely recommend this training in the future. It was hard hitting and was very helpful to me in my role."

"I thought this training was very helpful and informative. The trainer was excellent and outlined the rationale behind MARAC clearly and concisely. I would recommend this training."

Finally, 51 staff completed training in Sharepoint delivered by Mullan. 82% of delegates rated this training 'good' or 'excellent' in terms of relevancy to their role.



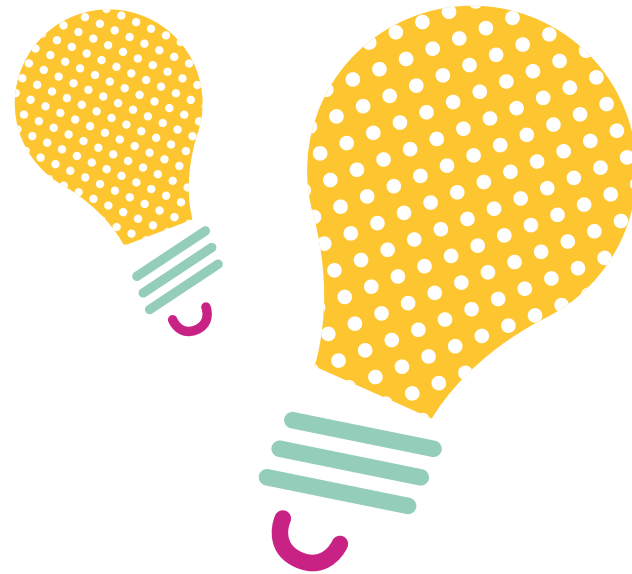
Challenge, Change, Innovation & Growth

The organisation underwent a major restructure at management level during 17-18 in order to streamline our organisational structure and make sure that we are working in our best capacity to deliver our services effectively and efficiently for all victims of crime.

In keeping with our commitment to improving our interactivity online, and improving the service we offer to victims and witnesses of crime, we have continued to build upon and add to our newly designed website. Pages were added this year to our 'Help for Victims' pages on sexual violence, and the website was updated and reviewed throughout the year to keep the information as fresh as possible.

We launched our Victim's Journey microsite on the website this year, which details the journey a victim may take once a crime has been committed. This includes the decision to report to police, the police investigation, specialist support available at each step of the journey, how the decision is made to prosecute, and what happens if the case reaches court, right through to the verdict, sentencing, and support available to victims afterwards. This is an easy to navigate site, which gathers information from many different sources into one place, and is illustrated by two short animated videos which detail the journey from crime to court, and through the court system.

Funding was awarded to us through the Department of Justice's Victims of Crime fund for a number of innovative projects this year. The first of these projects was the delivery of a television and outdoor advertising campaign to raise brand awareness of Victim Support NI and the services we offer. This campaign was tendered out to local advertising firms specialising in TV campaigns, and was awarded to ASG & Partners. They worked with us to deliver a TV and poster campaign which ran in February 2018 to tie in with European Victims of Crime Day. The TV campaign was attention grabbing, thought provoking and simple, using a visual text approach to highlight the positive change Victim Support NI can make to people's lives, empowering them to feel helped rather than helpless, heard rather than unheard, and that victims can have the power to change. The tagline was 'Together, we can make a difference'. The TV ad ran for a 2 week period in late February, early March, and our tracking research showed that it increased the awareness of Victim Support NI and the services it provides, and therefore met our objectives for the project.



The second project we were able to develop thanks to the Victims of Crime funding from the Department of Justice NI was an Interactive Courtroom for our website. We used an idea already in existence in the UK, but developed and enhanced it with an ambitious and pioneering plan to create full 360 degree interactive tours of all the courthouses in Northern Ireland. This project has been a mammoth undertaking, especially for photography firm 360 Spaces and photographer Karl McClelland, who travelled the length and breadth of Northern Ireland to make sure that all courts were captured to a high standard. When completed, this project will allow viewers to see courtrooms from the comfort of their own home via their computer, laptop, tablet or phone. They can move around within the courtrooms and access information about different areas via hotspot information points on screen. The project is also Virtual Reality compatible. It is intended that this facility will help to reduce the anxiety or worry that victims and witnesses have around attending court, and will be a companion to the pre-trial familiarisation visits our Witness Service currently delivers. We intend this project will be ready for launch in autumn 2018.

The Victims of Crime fund also granted financial support for us to develop a live chat facility for our website. This has been purchased and will undergo pilot testing over the next year once necessary staff training has been delivered. Funding was also granted for the purchase of tablets in order to improve service delivery and increase client feedback.



“THE TV CAMPAIGN WAS ATTENTION GRABBING, THOUGHT PROVOKING AND SIMPLE, USING A VISUAL TEXT APPROACH TO HIGHLIGHT THE POSITIVE CHANGE VICTIM SUPPORT NI CAN MAKE TO PEOPLE'S LIVES, EMPOWERING THEM TO FEEL HELPED RATHER THAN HELPLESS, HEARD RATHER THAN UNHEARD, AND THAT VICTIMS CAN HAVE THE POWER TO CHANGE.”



Going Forward

In the year ahead we are hopeful that our new organisational structure will allow us to embed, improve and streamline our services, allowing us to offer the most appropriate support to our clients. Our new staff come with years of experience and new vision for the organisation, and Victim Support NI remains a charity driven by the commitment, passion and knowledge of its staff and volunteers.

2018-19 sees us at the midpoint of our current 'Something to Shout About' strategy and its three key themes relating to the Voice of the Victim, Service Improvement and Innovation and Growth. Recent newsworthy events have meant that we will have plenty to raise our voice about this coming year. Sexual violence and the way that rape cases are dealt with by our criminal justice system and the support available will be at the forefront of our thinking this year. The judicial review by Sir John Gillen provides an opportunity to make real and lasting positive change for victims and witnesses going through our courts. This will be one of our main focuses in terms of lobbying, and will provide the driving force behind an innovative Court Observers research project which we hope to launch in the autumn of 2018. We will also be exploring funding opportunities with the intention of extending the range of our current ISVA service to include provision for child victims of sexual abuse.

Of course, this concentration on sexual violence does not mean that we will forget about the many other issues facing victims and witnesses of other crimes. Our 'Voice of the Victim' theme means we will continue to shout about the important topics of Hate Crime, Cybercrime, Domestic Violence, Elder Abuse, Fraud, Scams. We will continue to shout about the myriad of issues affecting witnesses attending court, and highlight ongoing difficulties faced by victims and witnesses impacted by crime.

The second theme of our strategy is that of 'Service Improvement', and this is one of the most important things we are concentrating on in order to fulfil our vision of delivering appropriate support and information to all those affected by crime. Decisions around our client management system, staffing changes, and our organisational restructure have all been successfully undertaken with this part of the strategy in mind. We will make further changes to the organisational structure of the Witness Service this year, and will introduce a new digital client survey system in order to develop the way we monitor feedback and gather information. This will allow us to become a more responsive organisation, and will keep the needs of victims and witnesses at the core of what we do.

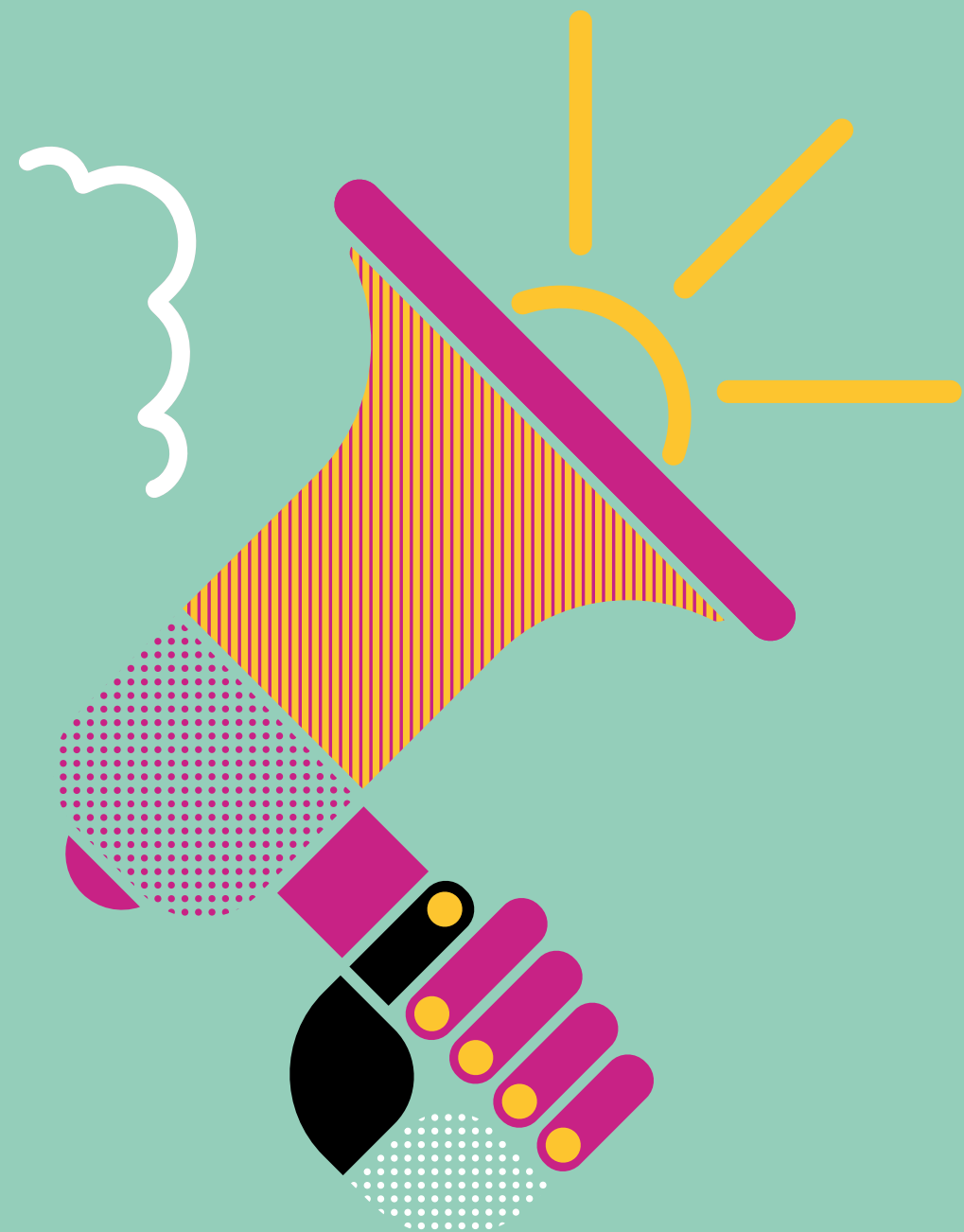
Our third theme is that of 'Innovation and Growth'. Our capacity to explore new funding opportunities will allow us to expand and extend the ways in which we offer support to victims, and the range of victims we can help. Our successful advertising campaign has increased our brand awareness this year, and we will build on this with a secondary run of the campaign later this year. Our website has now established itself as a superlative information point for victims and witnesses of crime and is supported by strong social media channels on facebook and twitter, allowing us to directly connect with our audience, and comment on news stories relevant to our work. Recent innovations to the site including the Victim's Journey have enhanced our site creating an information portal for victims and witnesses that is informative, exciting and easily accessible via smart and android phones. Looking into next year, there are further exciting and innovative projects in the works which will further improve our site's visitor experience.

I look forward in the year ahead to continuing our partnership work with our statutory and voluntary sector colleagues to ensure that appropriate support and information is available to people affected by crime.

Geraldine Hanna, CEO Victim Support NI



“WE WILL CONTINUE TO SHOUT ABOUT THE MYRIAD OF ISSUES AFFECTING WITNESSES ATTENDING COURT, AND HIGHLIGHT ONGOING DIFFICULTIES FACED BY VICTIMS AND WITNESSES IMPACTED BY CRIME.”



Financials 2017/18

Independent Auditor's Report to the Members of Victim Support Northern Ireland Board of Trustees

Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of Victim Support Northern Ireland (the 'charity') for the year ended 31 March 2018 which comprise the statement of financial activities (including income and expenditure account), statement of financial position, statement of cash flows and the related notes, including a summary of significant accounting policies. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards, including FRS 102 The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

This report is made solely to the charity's members, as a body, in accordance with Chapter 3 of Part 16 of the Companies Act 2006. Our audit work has been undertaken so that we might state to the charity's members those matters we are required to state to them in an auditor's report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the charity and the charity's members as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.

In our opinion the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the state of the charity's affairs as at 31 March 2018 and of its incoming resources and application of resources, including its income and expenditure, for the year then ended;
- have been properly prepared in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice;
- have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006.

Opinions on other matters prescribed by the Companies Act 2006

This report is made solely to the charity's members, as a body, in accordance with chapter 3 of part 16 of the Companies Act 2006. Our audit work has been undertaken so that we might state to the charity's members those matters we are required to state to them in an auditor's report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the charity and the charity's members as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.

Scope of the audit of the financial statements

An audit involves obtaining evidence about the amounts and disclosures in the financial statements sufficient to give reasonable assurance that the financial statements are free from material misstatement, whether caused by fraud or error. This includes an assessment of: whether the accounting policies are appropriate to the charity's circumstances and have been consistently applied and adequately disclosed; the reasonableness of significant accounting estimates made by the trustees; and the overall presentation of the financial statements. In addition, we read all the financial and non-financial information in the trustees' report to identify material inconsistencies with the audited financial statements and to identify any information that is apparently materially incorrect based on, or materially inconsistent with, the knowledge acquired by us in the course of performing the audit. If we become aware of any apparent material misstatements or inconsistencies, we consider the implications for our report.

Matters on which we are required to report by exception

In the light of the knowledge and understanding of the charity and its environment obtained in the course of the audit, we have not identified material misstatements in the trustees' report.

We have nothing to report in respect of the following matters in relation to which the Companies Act 2006 requires us to report to you if, in our opinion:

- adequate accounting records have not been kept, or returns adequate for our audit have not been received from branches not visited by us; or
- the financial statements are not in agreement with the accounting records and returns; or
- certain disclosures of trustees' remuneration specified by law are not made; or
- we have not received all the information and explanations we require for our audit; or
- the trustees were not entitled to prepare the financial statements in accordance with the small companies regime and take advantage of the small companies' exemptions in preparing the directors' report and from the requirement to prepare a strategic report.

Responsibilities of trustees

As explained more fully in the trustees' responsibilities statement, the trustees (who are also the directors for the purposes of company law) are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view.

Auditor's responsibilities

Our responsibility is to audit and express an opinion on the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and International Standards on Auditing (UK and Ireland). Those standards require us to comply with the Auditing Practices Board's (APB's) Ethical Standards for Auditors, including APB Ethical Standard - Provisions Available for Small Entities (Revised), in the circumstances set out below: In common with many other organisations of our size and nature we use our auditors to prepare and submit returns to the tax authorities and assist with the preparation of the financial statements.

As part of an audit in accordance with ISAs (UK), we exercise professional judgment and maintain professional scepticism throughout the audit. We also:

- Identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error, design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control.
- Obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the internal control.
- Evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures made by the trustees.

- Conclude on the appropriateness of the trustees' use of the going concern basis of accounting and, based on the audit evidence obtained, whether a material uncertainty exists related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the charity's ability to continue as a going concern. If we conclude that a material uncertainty exists, we are required to draw attention in our auditor's report to the related disclosures in the financial statements or, if such disclosures are inadequate, to modify our opinion. Our conclusions are based on the audit evidence obtained up to the date of our auditor's report. However, future events or conditions may cause the charity to cease to continue as a going concern.
- Evaluate the overall presentation, structure and content of the financial statements, including the disclosures, and whether the financial statements represent the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation.

We communicate with those charged with governance regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that we identify during our audit.

Paul Dolan ACA (Senior Statutory Auditor)
For and on behalf of
Finegan Gibson Ltd
Chartered accountant & statutory auditor
Causeway Tower
9 James Street South
Belfast
BT2 8DN



Balance Sheet at 31 March 2018

	2018	2017
FIXED ASSETS	£	£
	3,995	-
CURRENT ASSETS		
Stocks	1,000	-
Debtors	109,995	20,420
Cash at Bank and in hand	281,566	235,918
	392,561	256,338
CREDITORS		
Amounts falling due within one year	196,674	146,108
NET CURRENT ASSETS		
	195,887	110,230
TOTAL ASSETS LESS CURRENT LIABILITIES		
	199,882	110,230
NET ASSETS		
	199,882	110,230
FUNDS OF THE CHARITY		
Restricted funds	90,956	10,673
Unrestricted funds	108,926	99,557
TOTAL CHARITY FUNDS		
	199,882	110,230

These financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the provisions applicable to companies subject to the small companies' regime. These financial statements were approved by the board of trustees and authorised for issue on 8th November 2018 and are signed on behalf of the Board by J Broder (Chair)

Statement of Financial Activities year ended 31 March 2017

INCOME & EXPENDITURE	UNRESTRICTED FUNDS	RESTRICTED FUNDS	TOTAL FUNDS 2018	TOTAL 2017
INCOME FROM:	£	£	£	£
Donations & Legacies	1,077	-	1,077	4,988
Charitable Activities	8,611	1,922,287	1,930,898	1,896,607
Investments	71	-	71	957
Other Income	-	85,000	85,000	-
TOTAL INCOME				
	9,759	2,007,287	2,017,046	1,902,552
EXPENDITURE ON:				
Charitable Activities		1,927,394	1,927,394	1,885,934
NET INCOME FOR THE YEAR/ NET MOVEMENT OF FUNDS				
			89,652	16,618
FUND BALANCE AT APRIL 1 2017				
			110,230	110,230
FUND BALANCE AT MARCH 31 2018				
			199,882	-

The statement of financial activities includes all gains and losses recognised in the year. All income and expenditure derive from continuing activities. The statement of financial activities also complies with the requirements for an income and expenditure account under the Companies Act 2006. If you would like to see a full statement of accounts, please contact finance@victimsupportni.org.uk





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For details of our Witness Service offices, please visit www.victimsupportni.co.uk