



SUPPORTING VICTIMS *of Sexual Harm*

The majority of sexual harm crimes go unreported, so much so that it's widely believed that here in New Zealand, only 9%

are reported to Police, and of those that go through the court process, 13% result in conviction.

Sexual harm victims can receive support from Victim Support and other agencies. While perpetrators should face the justice system, victims' needs are foremost and they can receive support whether the assault is reported or not. Of course, reporting to police as soon as possible means the investigation can start and vital forensic evidence is more likely.

"Due to the high level of under-reporting, it's very difficult to say exactly what the level of sexual harm is, but I'd tend to agree reported offences would be a single figure percentage, said Victim Support's Central Area Manager, Sheryl Robinson.

"There's many reasons for that. It might be that the victim feels they won't be believed or blamed, particularly if the perpetrator is a family member, high profile person or trusted member of the community. They might fear tearing their family apart. They might fear the court process, the discussion of the details, of how their friends, family and workmates will react. Of being discussed in public and on social media. If media reporting is uninformed, it can perpetuate age-old myths. More often than not, it'll be a combination of these factors that make it difficult for a victim to come forward," said Sheryl.

"So when a person does come forward for help, we focus our support on what they need, and what they want to do. We support them and ensure they have all the information they need

so that when they do make decisions, they're making informed decisions," said Sheryl.

"Considering the stereotypes and attitudes around sexual harm, it's not surprising that we're often dealing with historic cases. A victim may have been in counselling and is now feeling they're able to make decisions and take action. Sometimes there's a ripple effect – when someone does come forward to say they're a victim of sexual harm, others feel they may now have the strength too, and importantly, that they will be believed," said Sheryl.

Historic timeframes can vary quite significantly, from months to many years.

There's several agencies around the country who can provide support to victims of sexual harm, with a lead agency appointed in each region. Victim Support is such in some regions, and can also provide support to victims to help them make informed choices and guide them through the Court process.

Victim Support
is always open
24/365

HELP WITH REPORTING

New Zealand Police has made a series of videos about reporting sexual violence.

They walk through the process of reporting sexual assault to Police. The first video, *Reporting Sexual Assault to Police*, follows a young woman as she and her mother go to their local Police Station to report an assault, and the people they interact with in that process, having taken that vital first step in reporting the crime.

Victims of sexual assault should not feel alone. Victim Support and specialist organisations like Rape Crisis are there to provide support, and can accompany them through this formal process.

The videos aim to debunk myths and alleviate fears about reporting sexual assault and encourage victims to go to Police.

The videos can be found on the Police YouTube channel and the Sexual Assault section of police.govt.nz.



There is nationwide support for male victims of sexual violence, with Victim Support being the lead agency in the majority of regions.





From Kevin's desk

Earlier this year I received two items which perfectly encapsulated why the work organisations like Victim Support do to support survivors of sexual harm is so important.

The first was a letter from the mother of a sexual harm survivor. Victim Support and another specialist agency had worked together to help their family through undoubtedly the toughest experience of their lives. We helped them understand their rights, participate fairly and fully in the justice process, and find the strength to cope through trauma – strength that was badly needed as they relived their nightmare experience in court. Her comment of “I don’t know how we could have got through it without the support” is a common theme amongst the letters and emails we receive from people we’ve helped.

The very same week, I received a tragic story from overseas, of a similar family in an almost identical situation. Struggling alone to deal with Police and the courts, lives brought to a halt without support, the family made the extremely difficult decision to drop the charges laid against the perpetrator.

It’s examples like this that demonstrate the impact good support has on a person and their family. We may never get over life changing incidents, but Victim Support helps people get through. We’ll help people get through the aftermath of extreme trauma. We’ll help them find services in their community, participate fully and fairly in the justice system and provide information and guidance so they can make informed decisions. We believe no-one should suffer alone, and our highly trained volunteers and staff are here to help for as long as it takes. For free.



“We believe no-one should suffer alone, and our highly trained volunteers and staff are here to help for as long as it takes. For free.”

In many parts of the country, Victim Support will refer a survivor of sexual harm to a specialist agency. However, some victims will prefer to come to us, particularly if we’ve supported them in the past. Victim Support is often the lead agency in regions where no specialist organisations operate, or – as we are open 24/7 – the first responder through the night until a specialist is available. Elsewhere, we may continue to provide support in court or help the victim receive financial assistance throughout a case.

Reporting family or sexual violence is immensely difficult for most victims and an often disparate and complicated process thereafter makes the journey more difficult. We are grateful for the work being done by Police and Justice sectors, but believe more must be done to really conquer the obstacles for sexual violence victims to be well supported and participate fairly and fully in the justice system.

Ngā mihi
Kevin Tso, Chief Executive



Be in to win!

Our Victim Support Lottery is on sale now!

The lottery is our annual national fundraiser, contributing to our work in communities all around New Zealand, every day.

“We’re thrilled to have Honda New Zealand partner with us once again,” said Victim Support CE Kevin Tso. “Their support enables us to have a fantastic first prize and a terrific draw card to the lottery. Who wouldn’t want to drive away in a brand new Honda HR-V S?”

“Purchasing a ticket not only puts you in the draw to win a new car, but also provides support to us and the work we do in communities nationwide,” said Kevin.

There’s a great line up of prizes, including the bonus prize of a trip for two to Fiji, so don’t miss out!

To buy tickets, get in touch with your local Victim Support office, download an order form from the Victim Support website, or call **0800 865 868** for more information.

COULD YOU BE THERE?

One volunteer Support Worker described their role as “the most rewarding thing you will ever do”, and plenty of others are inclined to agree.

Our volunteer Support Workers provide independent emotional and practical support to people during the toughest times of their life.

Could you do that? If the answer’s “yes”, call us for a chat, we’d love to hear from you. Alternatively, there might be occasional administration or fundraising work you can help with.

Call now on **0800 865 868** to get started on the most rewarding thing you will ever do.

In brief

- **THE HUGELY SUCCESSFUL INTEGRATED FAMILY RESPONSE (ISR) PROJECT IN CHRISTCHURCH HAS NOW BEEN OPERATIONAL FOR A YEAR.** Our Victim Support Christchurch team is a vital part of this project and have supported over 2,400 victims to stay safe since this project began.
- **OUR WAIKATO AND COUNTIES-MANUKAU TEAMS ARE ALSO WORKING HARD ON THEIR RESPECTIVE ISR AND WHANGAIA FAMILY VIOLENCE PROJECTS.**

OUR VOLUNTEERS: MIRIAM

After closing her practice, Manawatu based Miriam wanted to continue helping people.

A volunteer for three and a half years, Miriam works as a sexual violence and homicide specialist Support Worker.

Miriam noted that lately more of her cases were historic – having happened anywhere between a few years to perhaps 20 years ago.

“There’s a lot of reasons for this,” said Miriam. “Sometimes it’s because they were a minor at the time and now have the ability, the courage to come forward. Or it might be that the perpetrator was a family member, and another family member has come forward about being assaulted, and they now have the courage to do so too,” she said.

“There’s often so much complexity with sexual and family violence cases, which are often interlinked. The crime might be from an outwardly innocuous relationship where there was a reason to trust the perpetrator. Some of the family may say it never happened, with all sorts of family dynamics kicking in. Families can get torn apart over it, there’s self-blaming and often a hopelessness that they won’t be believed,” she added.

Whether supporting a victim throughout the process or for just their time in Court, Miriam’s focus is to support, protect, and even calm the victim so they can continue, particularly when in Court.

She described her contribution at this high time of need as “just a drop in the bucket”, but that hopefully she’s able to provide help, hope and some relief to those she supports.

Victim Support puts the victims’ needs first, and tailors support to them and their circumstances. In the Manawatu, Victim Support provides support for self-referrals, Court support and back-up for police referrals when the lead agency is unable. Given our 24/7, 365 service we’re also available when others are not, and with the low number of assaults reported, there is continuing demand from self-referring sexual violence victims.



“Providing Support Workers with resources and training really is vital.”

– Nige Cox, Learning and Development Manager

The ITP programme includes a full module on suicide trauma, and after practical experience candidates are invited to complete more advanced training on homicide, family and sexual violence.

The sexual violence programme is a mix of presentations, activities and interactive learnings. There’s powerful presentations by guest speakers from organisations impacting on these crimes - other sexual violence support agencies, the Police Adult Sexual Assault Officers, Court Victim Advisers, Police Prosecutors, and Doctors for Sexual Abuse Care.

“Providing Support Workers with resources and training really is vital to supporting people as best we can,” said Nige. “We know there’s often a correlation between family or sexual violence and other crimes, so we deliver this advanced training too. Combined with ongoing coaching from their Service Co-ordinator, Support Workers are equipped with the very nuanced skills needed to support survivors of sexual harm.”

If you would like to support Victim Support by donating to our training programmes, please do get in touch.

TRAINING IS VITAL

Our volunteer and staff Support Workers complete intensive training before starting any support work.

“Every day our Support Workers are working with people who are suddenly faced with very traumatic situations, so it’s critical our people are highly trained to provide the best support,” said Victim Support Chief Executive, Kevin Tso.

Led by Learning & Development Manager Nige Cox, Advisors Christine (CJ) Jones and Shelley Brunskill-Matson develop and facilitate training with volunteers and staff, nationwide.

All Support Workers and Contact Service staff undergo a four-day Initial Training Programme (ITP) to gain the knowledge and skills needed to meet the various situations they’ll face. In addition, Support Workers complete modules and case studies during the following year, as well as working a buddy system on call outs, to achieve the required competencies.

FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Financial grants are available to sexual violence victims to assist with emergency costs incurred immediately after the crime.

They can be used to replace clothing, repair damaged property or for emergency accommodation. There’s also funding for sexual violence victims to attend the trial, parole or other hearings.

Victim Support administers these grants on behalf of the Ministry of Justice and more information can be found on our website, or by calling our Contact Service on **0800 VICTIM**.



THANK YOU Rātā Foundation!

We simply can't support victims every day, without community organisations supporting us.

Rātā Foundation has supported our work in the Christchurch, Marlborough and Nelson areas over several years. Their most recent grant of \$35,000 has contributed toward our operational costs in these areas and to a fulltime Family Harm Support Worker in Christchurch.

"Rātā Foundation's grant really helps our organisation, especially at a time when our services in these regions are under drastic pressure, and it truly makes a significant difference to our ability to support thousands of people across Canterbury and the upper South Island at their most vulnerable times," said Victim Support Chief Executive, Kevin Tso.

Having local volunteers trained and ready to respond is vital, and the whole community benefits given anyone may suddenly need our assistance following unexpected crime or trauma.

Rātā Foundation provides grants for those organisations who align with its priorities and criteria under the four focus areas of Learn, Support, Connect and Participate.



StandBy

We're proud to announce we've recently partnered with Australia's StandBy – Support after Suicide.

Like Victim Support, StandBy are there to help people affected by suicide – friends, family, whānau – to cope through tragedy and rebuild their lives.

Our partnership will make it easier to get support after a suicide when friends and whānau live in both countries.



WELLINGTON WOWS!

Victim Support Wellington recently won the Health and Wellbeing category in the Wellington City round of the Wellington Airport Community Awards.



Long standing volunteer Barbara Halliwell accepted the award with Wellington Service Co-ordinator Liz McLean. "I'm so proud of the team, they work very hard and always provide the best support they can. To be recognised so publicly, is tremendous," said Victim Support Area Manager, Paula Connolly.

The regional award winners will be announced in October – good luck Liz and the team!

In brief

- **CONGRATULATIONS TO WAIRARAPA VOLUNTEER JENNY TOSSWILL AND CENTRAL OTAGO VOLUNTEER JUDY ELLIOTT-HALL.** Both have received community recognition for their wonderful work. Well done Jenny and Judy!
- **WE PRESENTED A SELECT COMMITTEE SUBMISSION ON THE FAMILY AND WHĀNAU VIOLENCE LEGISLATION BILL.** There's still a way to go but the intent of the Bill is a move in the right direction.
- **AS A LEADING PROVIDER OF SUICIDE POST-VENTION SERVICES, WE ALSO PROVIDED SUBMISSION ON THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH'S SUICIDE PREVENTION STRATEGY.**
- **THANKS Z ENERGY FOR CHOOSING VICTIM SUPPORT AT 25 GOOD IN THE HOOD Z STATIONS.** The programme donates a share of funds to local charities doing good in their communities.
- **JOIN OUR CHARITY TEAM AND RUN THE 2017 ASB AUCKLAND MARATHON ON 29 OCTOBER!** There's half marathon and walk options too – contact robyn.scurrah@victimsupport.org.nz to discuss the details.

(Tear here)

Yes! Here is my donation to help victims of crime and trauma

Mr Mrs Miss Ms Other _____

Name

Postal address

Postcode

Phone

Email

The Privacy Act of 1993 requires us to advise you that we keep contact information of supporters on file to help us with fundraising. If you do not wish us to keep your information, please let us know.

Donate via internet banking to: **BNZ 020500 0493163 00**

Please ensure that you use your details as reference along with the code NL0817, so that we may acknowledge your gift.

Value of donation \$25 \$50 \$100 Other \$ _____

Gifts over \$5 are tax deductible.

Cheque. Made payable to Victim Support.

Credit card. Please debit this amount to my credit card.

Mastercard Visa Amex

Name of cardholder

Card Number

Expiry date Signature

I wish to donate by **automatic payment.** Please send me details.

I wish to make a **bequest** to Victim Support. Please send me details.

I have left a **bequest** to Victim Support in my Will.

Please return this form to:

Victim Support, Freepost 100819, PO Box 3017, Wellington 6140