

NSPCC

Young Witness Service

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EVERY CHILDHOOD IS WORTH FIGHTING FOR

NSPCC

Young Witness Service

- Service Operational Since 1998**
- Provides free, independent & confidential support and assistance to children and young people under the age of 18 years who have to attend Court as young witnesses in Northern Ireland**

Nature/Aim of Service

- Support to children & young people (young witnesses) engaged within the criminal Court proceedings
- To provide support to young witnesses in criminal trials in order to help achieve best evidence
- To reduce the risk of secondary abuse and trauma by the Court process/legal system

Nature/Aim of Service Continued

- ❑ To help reduce/minimise the anxiety and stress experienced by young witnesses engaged within the criminal Court proceedings**
- ❑ To help ensure full and appropriate attention is given by professionals and the Court system to the needs of all young witnesses**

Nature/Aim of Service Continued

- To ensure, where possible, that the needs of young witnesses are fully understood and respected by the criminal justice system
- Work undertaken with young witnesses and their parents, carers and families prior to, during and post trial

Makeup of the Young Witness Service

- A Children's Services Manager
- 6 Children's Services Practitioner
- 43 Trained Volunteers



Main Age Groups of Young Witnesses

- ☐ 5-11 Years
- ☐ 12-16 Years
- ☐ 17-18 Years



Access/Referral To Service

Self

Parents/Carers/Relatives

Social Worker

Police

Public Prosecution Service (PPS) and/or
Court/Legal Service

Aim/Objective of Today

- Recognition and acknowledgement that giving evidence is a hard thing to do
- Tools, knowledge and skills to best support young witnesses
- Process of Criminal proceedings

What We Do

- ❑ Preparatory work with all young witness
- ❑ Provide support to young witnesses, their parents/carers and families
- ❑ Promote best practice regarding advocacy and best interests of young witnesses
- ❑ Partnership working with the Public Prosecution Service, Police and Court/Legal System

What We Do Continued

- Provision of support services adapted to individual needs of young witnesses and the legal context of their case
- Assist in the completion of their Victim Personal Statements
- Where appropriate make referrals to other agencies regarding further support for young witnesses

Skills Needed

- Holistic assessment of young witnesses
- Safeguarding/Child Protection
- Knowledge of child development and trauma
- Assessment, Planning and Communication Skills

Main Category of Support Services

- Domestic Abuse
- Sexual Abuse
- Family Support



Family Support Services

- Advocacy
- Children and Young People's Rights
- Victim/Trauma Support



Why We Do What We Do

- ❑ **NSPCC measuring up (2009) found that most young witnesses describe themselves as anxious in the run up to their trial**
- ❑ **Davis & Saffy (2004) pre-court preparation was seen as the key to enhancing the quality of child testimony**

Questions/ Feedback

