



Registered Charity No 20079246

CHY 20042, Company No 409085

Joint Committee on Justice on the topic of Courts and Courthouses

Victim Support at Court

Opening statement¹

28th September 2021

Victim Support at Court (V-SAC) would like to thank the Committee for the opportunity to participate today. In this statement we summarise the key items recommended to the Committee regarding Courts and Courthouses as outlined in more detail in our written submission.

Victim Support at Court or V-SAC is the only voluntary service in Ireland that specialises in court accompaniment for victims of all types of crime. Our service currently operates in the Dublin, Eastern and South-Eastern Courts. V-SAC have an agreed strategy, which includes expanding its service nationwide over the next 2-3 years. It is V-SAC's mission to provide a safe and supportive environment for victims of all types of crime, their family and prosecution witnesses when they attend court.

V-SAC acknowledges the great work being undertaken by The Courts Service in managing and maintaining the court buildings and the facilities within them. Our recommendations are based on our staff and volunteers' experience working within the criminal courts where our service operates.

The facilities in the Criminal Courts of Justice, Parkgate Street, Dublin are of a very high standard and should be used as the benchmark for all courts within the State when considering any renovations or updating of facilities for victims of crime and/or those involved in criminal proceedings. This means no matter what court a criminal case is due to be heard, all involved in those proceedings are afforded the same level of service and standard of facilities when attending court.

¹ Delivered by Dympna Kenny, General Manager, Victim Support at Court

To address the backlog of court cases, V-SAC recommends the following actions:

1. Review the court legal terms and give consideration for staggering court closures, particularly during August and September.
2. Review the sittings for Circuit Courts in the regional courts as some only sit for a number of weeks during the court term.
3. Consider facilitating more Central Criminal Court trials in the regional courts, which would alleviate some of the pressure in the Criminal Courts of Justice.
4. Consider non-court venues to hold proceedings, e.g. Croke Park, or other suitable venues.

Some positive changes have been introduced because of the restrictions imposed to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

1. The introduction of staggering court lists throughout the day should continue when restrictions are lifted. This would reduce the numbers of people attending at any one time and reduce the waiting times for all involved in the proceedings, particularly the victims as waiting around in the courthouse can add to anxiety levels.
2. V-SAC welcomes the increase in the use of technology within the courts, particularly for remote participation, and where possible this process could be used more extensively, if the courthouses are equipped to facilitate its use.

V-SAC holds the view that every victim should be entitled to access our accompaniment service, regardless of what part of the country they live in. We would be happy to discuss any of our recommendations set out in our submission.



An Roinn Dlí agus Cirt
agus Comhionannais
Department of Justice
and Equality


ciste na
gcuntas dóbhain
the dormant
accounts fund