

Petal Support Limited (People Experiencing Trauma and Loss)

- **What are your views on the issues raised in the petition?**

Our views on the issues raised are:

Unfortunately there is a limited support to families and friends bereaved by Murder, but this is mainly on a geographic scale

The research carried by the Undergraduate and Postgraduate students from the Aberdeen Law Project failed to contact Petal as an organisation or any of our members.

We would therefore suggest that although we do agree that there are gaps in the service these are mainly due to the geographic restrictions since Petal operates from a support Centre base in Hamilton and since February 2010 we also operate within Glasgow City Centre and hope to commence utilising shared premises in the Edinburgh/Lothians area in the very near future.

- **Where are the gaps in legislative or service provision?**

There are major gaps in the legislative provision and we expect these to be addressed during this Parliament with the current range of initiatives to further the rights of victims.

There are major gaps in the service provision for families following murder or culpable homicide and these are mainly geographic.

The research highlighted in section 4 of the Petition suggests that there is insufficient post trial support for victims of crime, however this is inaccurate as the consultation is incomplete

We do agree that the funding provided by the government has previously led to a restriction in the ability of organisations to provide support for victims; however, over the past few years Petal has received funding from The Government to establish the Support Centre in Hamilton and the Outreach Pilot in Glasgow.

We do agree that it is imperative that the Scottish Government gives greater consideration to the need for emotional support available for victims. The success of the Petal Support Centre is proof that the provision of a free practical & emotional and counselling service for victims before and after a trial is essential to their health and wellbeing.

We accept that the rehabilitation of criminals is necessary; however it is essential that the victims should not come second to this.

2. I suggest that the government aid organisations that support victims by introducing guidance notes with regards to the minimum support organisations must provide post trial for victims.

Currently families bereaved by Murder or culpable homicide are provided with a detailed information pack:

“Information for bereaved families and friends following murder or culpable homicide”

This pack gives the information about what happens next and the procedures involved.

It has been prepared with the help of people who have been through a similar experience.

It includes information about:-

- how the police, Procurators Fiscal and courts work
- some of the arrangements families may have to make
- the help and support available to them.

This pack is produced and funded by the Scottish Government and highlights the agencies available for support.

3. I support the work of The Scottish Strategy for Victims and would encourage the continuing development of this initiative; and urge the government to highlight the importance of the support of victims post trial. We propose that there is a need for this to be provided by the public sector, not merely the voluntary sector.

Petal continues to contribute to and support the work of The Scottish Strategy for Victims

We have been directly involved with the government to highlight the importance of the support of victims at every stage of the long legal process involved in cases of murder and culpable homicide both pre and post trial.

There is, we agree, a need for this to be both recognised and provided by the public sector and not only by the voluntary sector.

4. I urge that the public sector body: Victim Information and Advice (VIA) increase the amount of assistance given to victims as at the moment there is limited support post trial.

Petal has regular contact with Victim Information and Advice (VIA) on behalf of our members and we do appreciate that there is a limit to the assistance they can provide particularly post-trial.

We do agree however, that there should be a greater awareness by the VIA that families do require greater assistance and quality of information than is currently being provided post trial.

5. Research has suggested that the support available must be sought out by the victims, and is not provided as an integrated service for the victims. This shows that there is not adequate support for the victims.

We would have to disagree with the research that suggests that the support available must be sought out by the victims.

At Petal we only accept referrals from the individual families and not from a secondary source.

The source of these referrals to Petal is provided as an integrated service for the victims since the families receive this information from a range of sources, such as:

The Information Pack,
The Police (the FLO or SIO),
The VIA,
The Court Witness/Service,
Health Boards,
Social Work,
Funeral Care

However, we do agree that there is not adequate support for victims, since as pointed out previously, we can only provide our comprehensive support service in a limited geographic scale.

Petal Support Limited

Aims and Objectives

The principal Aims and Objectives of PETAL are:

“To Provide Practical And Emotional Support, Advocacy, Group Support and Counselling for the Families and Friends of Murder and Culpable Homicide Victims”.

We treat our clients with dignity and respect and deliver an ethical and professional service.

Sensitive and responsive to individual and group needs

Empower service users to make decisions and take control of their situation

Develop services in response to the demand of the Members we serve

PETAL is a registered charity, has no affiliation to any religious or political party and is open to all sections of the community.

PETAL is free and confidential and the support provided to members is irrespective of time.

We comply with the Standard Conditions required by our Funders and we comply with the requirements of all the relevant Acts in terms of employment and service provision

Petal Support Centre focuses specifically on people who have experienced the loss of a family member or friend through murder or culpable homicide

Petal delivers holistic therapeutic rehabilitation services which include one to one, group and telephone counselling; stress relieving alternative therapies; suicide prevention; establish self support groups; advocacy; practical advice on legal aspects and related issues; mediation between clients, agencies and employers; contribute to debate and policy, volunteering and student placement opportunities; training and development.

A telephone counselling service is provided to members after one to one and or group counselling, and where people cannot travel to our centres in Hamilton and Glasgow

It is less inclusive to people who live in other parts of Scotland and have difficulty or cannot travel.