

THE RANGE OF SERVICES OFFERED:

- Befriending / visiting
- Peer group support
- Social events
- Individual and Group Counselling
- Listening Ear Service
- Personal Support
- Skills Training
- Advice, Advocacy & Welfare Assistance
- Conferences / Seminars
- Education & Research

MEMBERSHIP

Membership of West Tyrone Voice is open to the residents and former residents of West Tyrone who are the near and immediate relatives of those who have been murdered by terrorists, or who have been injured and survived murder bids by terrorists, or who have suffered harassment and intimidation by terrorists. Those who have suffered bereavement, loss or injury (physical, emotional or mental) as a result of terrorist activity in West Tyrone and the surrounding area are welcome to join us. If you or someone you know would benefit from joining our group, and can assure the executive committee that you denounce ALL acts of terrorist violence, accept the aims of the group, and are prepared to assist where possible to bring justice and healing to the victims of terrorism in West Tyrone, please contact our office on 8166 2848.

Membership is at the absolute discretion of the executive committee and the fee is *fixed annually* by the committee.

For further information, please contact:

The Project Director
West Tyrone Voice
Grange Court, 21/27 Moyle Road
NEWTOWNSTEWART
Co Tyrone, N. Ireland, BT78 4AP

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Website: www.westtyronevoice.bravehost.com

On the Road to Recovery

By Dr J. E. Hazlett Lynch
Practical help for the victims of the NI
conflict as they seek to recover from their
trauma.

Price: £3.00 + 50p per book p&p.
Available from the office

WTV is part-funded by the Community Relations
Council, and by the EU Programme for Peace and
Reconciliation through The Rural Development
Council.

RESPONSE FORM

Please send me information on:

- * How I can become involved in WTV []
- * How WTV can help me []
- * Social benefit and welfare matters []
- * Events being arranged []

NAME

ADDRESS
.....

(028) 8166 2848
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WEST TYRONE VOICE

Speaking and Acting

for the Victims of

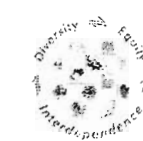
Paramilitary Terrorism

in West Tyrone

Part-funded by:



EU Programme
for Peace and Reconciliation
in Northern Ireland and The Border Region



WEST TYRONE VOICE

West Tyrone is a largely agricultural area, and shares a land frontier with the Irish Republic, covering the district council areas of Strabane and Omagh. It has a population of approximately 88,000 people.

West Tyrone Voice is a group of victims from our community that was formed in early 1999 as a result of needs that were identified amongst those who had been the innocent victims of paramilitary terrorism in this part of the North West of the Province, together with their families. The group is decidedly non-party political, and is not aligned to any religious body.

ORIGINS

The group came into being initially to highlight the plight of the countless “forgotten victims” who have been overlooked, whether intentionally or unintentionally, by a large section of society. They are the “disappeared” of West Tyrone. They have been ignored by our political and church leaders, and dismissed as irrelevant by national and international governments alike. Our members felt the need to talk about what they had suffered at the hands of terrorists to others who had had similar experiences, to be listened to sympathetically, and to do so in a safe, non-threatening environment.

Opportunity for people to work through some important issues in their own minds with the help and support of specially trained counsellors is an urgent need for these people.

A SUFFERING COMMUNITY

The community in West Tyrone has suffered greatly at the hands of terrorist death squads since the terror campaign started in 1968. Many murders and attacks still remain unsolved, which only serves to prolong the agony for their families. Over these years, there have been thousands of terrorist incidents, resulting in approximately 233 murders, and thousands of injuries, cases of intimidation and bombings.

Currently, 48 group members are under death threat from terrorists since the signing of the 1998 Belfast Agreement.

WHAT ARE OUR AIMS?

- * Be a voice for the victims of paramilitary terrorism and their families
- * Seek justice for these victims
- * Seek formal recognition of their suffering
- * Provide support and advice for our members
- * Ensure the story of our pain and loss is never forgotten
- * Seek the re-integration of our members back into the wider community, especially the youth and young adults.

WEST TYRONE VOICE

*Speaking and Acting for the Innocent Victims of
Paramilitary Terrorism in West Tyrone*

West Tyrone Voice will seek to help, in whatever way it can, any who have suffered as a direct result of terrorist activity. Our principle is:

To offer care and support in a sensitive way to anyone who has suffered trauma as a result of terrorist activity during “the Troubles”, and to their families

Religious background, political opinion or cultural practice will be no bar to those who need our help. West Tyrone Voice believes in the uniqueness and dignity of people who have the right to be treated with respect. Respect for life and the acceptance of differences are basic to our outlook.

ACHIEVING OUR AIMS?

WTV has established informed relationships with governments and statutory bodies, and meets with the decision-makers in the Northern Ireland, UK, Dublin and European Parliaments. We encourage our people to tell their story to the media at every opportunity. WTV was set up to enable victims come to terms with the indescribable violence they have faced, and the loss they have sustained. Some members have been trained in the use of counselling skills. We now have a drop-in centre for victims who need support or help, the provision of full time members of staff, and administrative support. Under the European ‘Peace II’ Funding, WTV organises training courses for members in areas such as Computer Skills (Basic to ECDL), Historical Awareness, Crafts, and Personal Development.

WTV has tried to bring about a level of closure for the victims, by pursuing human rights and justice issues. It has also organised events that took the members into the Irish Republic (the first time in 30 years for many of them), where they have met with people from across the border and in a cross-community context. Members have also been actively engaged in dialogue meetings with people from across the religious and political divides in N. Ireland, in an attempt to understand where others are coming from, and to give them the opportunity to learn where we are coming from in our experience. The group gave people the opportunity to travel abroad for the first time in their lives, by organising group holidays to Portugal and Greece, and to experience a different culture, language, climate and lifestyle.

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WEST TYRONE VOICE

Speaking and Acting for the Victims of Terrorism

WHO ARE WE?

West Tyrone Voice (WTV) was established in 1999 to meet the profound needs of the victims of terrorist violence in the West Tyrone region of N. Ireland. These largely 'forgotten' people had no one to help them, voice their concerns, or support them in their darkest hours. Now they have such an organisation, with outreach workers who visit the elderly, widows, infirm, disabled and orphans in their homes.

West Tyrone borders the Irish Republic, from where many of the terrorist attacks were launched, and to where the terrorists returned after their task was completed. The region is mainly rural and agricultural, and covers an area of approximately 1800 square miles with a population of approximately 88,000 people. In this area, people still live in fear.

In 1998, two documents led to our establishment. Sir Kenneth Bloomfield's Report, and the Belfast (or Good Friday) Agreement. Bloomfield identified the '*need for a powerful voice for victims' interests*', while the Agreement stated, '*It is recognised that victims have a right to remember as well as contribute to a changed society... and the participants will support the development of special community-based initiatives based on international best practice.*'

WTV is non-party political, nor is it linked to any religious grouping. Members are drawn from both sides of the community, and have denounced ALL acts of terrorist violence.



MEMBERSHIP

The main purpose of this grassroots group is to deal with the genuine concerns that many victims have, and to *voice* these concerns at the highest levels in society. WTV now has 582 members, as well as 180 non-members availing of our services. Including their immediate families, this means we are working with at least 2300 people in total. Numerically, **Co Tyrone is the third worst affected area of N. Ireland** – per head of population, Belfast lost 48 people of every 10,000, South Armagh lost 37, and West Tyrone lost 26 people of every 10,000.

MEMBERSHIP PROFILE

The group comprises mainly families of security force personnel, where the breadwinners are no longer with them because they were murdered by terrorists, or are no longer capable of supporting the family because of injury sustained either on or off duty. This grouping accounts for approximately 70% of our membership.

We also have many families who, as civilians, were caught up in terrorist attacks as a means of ethnic cleansing. Other incidents have included the Ballygawley bus bomb in August 1988, in which 8 soldiers were murdered; and the bombing in Omagh town centre in August 1998, where 29 people lost their lives, and 270 sustained varying degrees of injury. Many of the more severely injured will not be able to work again.

The organisation works with the depressed, the anxious, the downcast, and the fearful, as well as the bereaved and the physically and emotionally injured. Many of our members are weary of life, and do not have much hope for the future— some even ask ‘What future?’ The elderly, whose sons and daughters and husbands were murdered, benefit immensely from our outreach service with specially trained counsellors. **Our aim is to facilitate the re-integration of victims back into the community.**

A SUFFERING COMMUNITY

The community in West Tyrone has suffered greatly at the hands of terrorist death squads since the terror campaign started in 1968. In our area alone, terrorists murdered 128 people. Further, 100 people from the area were murdered elsewhere. Whilst major atrocities are remembered, the fact is that most of our deaths were either of individuals or small groups. The number of people injured physically amounts to 384, while those injured psychologically, emotionally and mentally would come to some 13,000, based on the estimates used by Sir Kenneth Bloomfield (*We Will Remember Them*, 1998).

These atrocities have created more than 100 widows, 300 orphans, 236 parents who have had a child murdered, and many extended families who have been affected by the campaign of terror in our area. Many murders and attacks still remain unsolved, which only serves to prolong the agony for their families. As our work continues, we are becoming aware of more and more people who have been diagnosed as suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), as a direct result of terrorist violence against them and/or their colleagues, friends and families.

SERVICES OFFERED

The organisation offers a wide range of ‘therapies’ of various kinds, including home visits for the ‘shut-ins’, counselling, befriending, social events (to break feelings of isolation and to establish a sense of belonging to the community), craft classes (to stimulate creativity and provide an oasis for the confined), historical and political awareness classes (to provide members with an understanding of who they are and where they came from); we are currently managing an Essential Skills Project and are in the process of setting up various computer classes. While training is an important aspect of our work, it has a narrow beneficiary base of less than 100 people. The other 2000 people involved in the group are left with nothing.