



**NORWEGIAN COURTS  
ADMINISTRATION**



# Witness Service

in Norwegian courts

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'A confident witness  
is a good witness'

Witness Service  
improves quality and service

# Witness Service



Trained volunteers present in court are offering victims and witnesses emotional support and practical information about the hearing.



# Witness Service volunteer

- The Red Cross volunteers are **neutral** and **independent**.
- They do not advice the witness about what to say or not to say
- They are bound by confidentiality obligations



Witness support volunteer  
Kelly Solem-Young

# The support

- Pre-booking
- Call/email Witness Service
- Pre-visit in court
- Support on the day of the trial:
  - Before testifying
  - May join in court room
  - Debriefing after testifying

# National agreement



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## **Ensure a uniform and holistic Witness Service**

- Guiding courts and Red Cross establishing Witness Service (even guiding daily operation when needed)
- Developing training and materiel
- Quality assurance and development

# Similar values

## Norwegian Courts' values:

- Independence,
- Due process protection
- Trust

[Quality, Transparency,  
Service, Efficiency,  
Respect, Integrity]



## The seven Fundamental Principles of the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement:

- Humanity
- Impartiality
- Neutrality
- Independence
- Voluntary service
- Unity
- Universality

# Local agreements

The court and the local Red Cross make a local agreement based on the national agreement

The court and the local Red Cross cooperate to establish Witness Service in terms of: recruiting, organizing and coordinating the daily work



# Volunteers' experiences:

- Type of court case say nothing about the need for witness support
  - Depends on the witness' history, personality, psychological strain testifying, sense of responsibility for the outcome of the case etc.
- Different victims and witnesses have different needs

# Cultural differences in Court and Social life

	<b>Court</b>	<b>Social life</b>
<b>Task</b>	Case proceeding	Treat the affected person
<b>Method</b>	Investigative	Caring
<b>Form</b>	Formal, dignified	Personal
<b>Main character</b>	The defendant	The affected
<b>Perspective</b>	Retrospective	Future
<b>Time</b>	Days/weeks	As long as it takes...

# Selection and training:

1. Interviewed by Red Cross (and the court)
2. Attend one or two criminal cases in court
3. Physical first aid - Red Cross (5 hours)
4. Mental first aid - Red Cross (3 hours)
5. Red Cross introduction (3 hours)
6. Witness support training (6 hours)
7. Training with an experienced witness support volunteer (x days)

# Measures for witnesses

- Courts of Norway webpage
- Brochures: eg. "Being a victim/witness in a criminal case"

- Smartphone app  
"Witness in court?"



- Film "Are you going to be a witness?"



- Special measures for vulnerable victims and witnesses: cooperation between the court and the prosecution
- **Witness Service**

# WITNESS SERVICE IS RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

Restorative justice emphasizes restoring *balance*, repairing harm



## VICTIMS RIGHTS DIRECTIVE 2012 (2015)

- Ensure access to general victim support for victims and their family members

# Imagine...



You witnessed a robbery.  
To relive the incident is terrible  
enough.

In addition you have many  
practical and emotinal questions:

- Where do I go? I don't know where the room is!
  - Do I have to wait?
  - What do I say when the judge comes?
  - Can the defendant be there? Do I have to speak when he or she is present?
  - Can other people listen to what I am saying?
  - Who are actually listening to me?
  - What if I just don't turn up?
- ... and many more might pop up in your head



# Or...

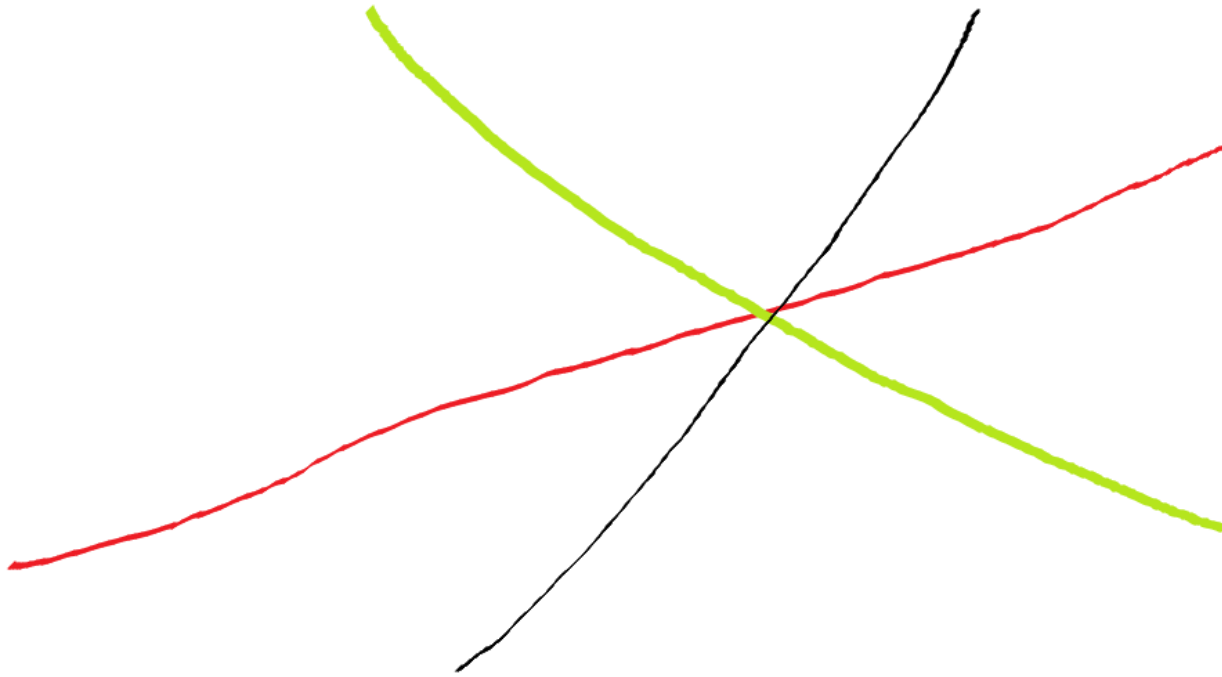


..maybe you don't even know why you have been summoned

You have already spoken to the police, and in addition you don't feel like you saw anything special.

You were just walking to work, and yes, you saw a red car on the corner as usual.

The same practical questions may also arise here.

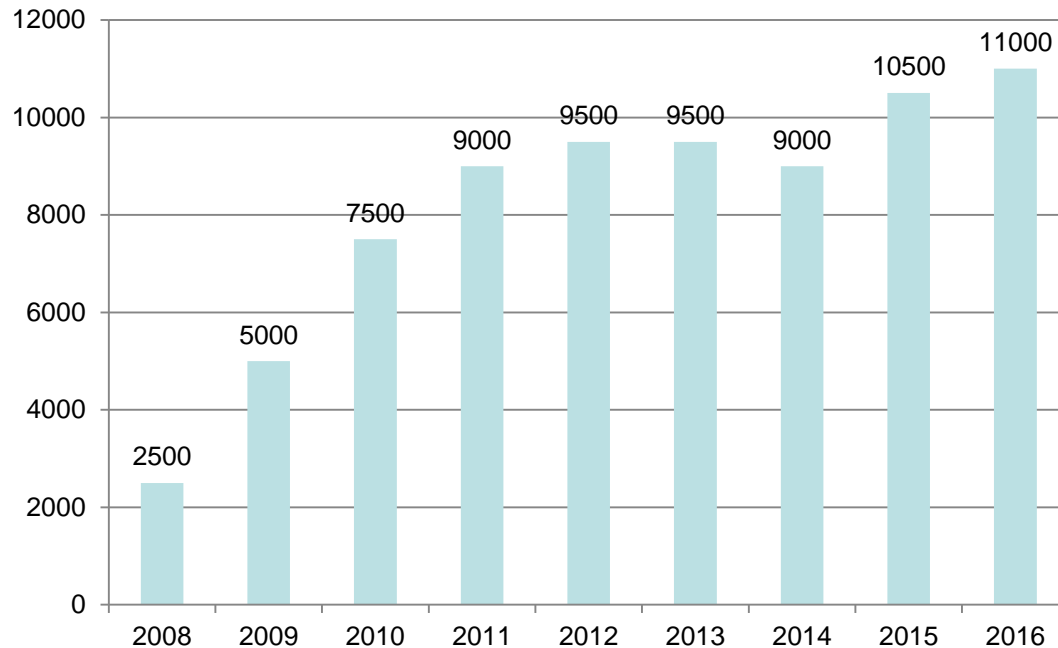


This may look like a piece of modern art, but it is a way of trying to illustrate the witness support volunteer's role

Witness Service is the crossing between psychology, law and social experience. The volunteers are not psychologists or lawyers, but do have lot of training and experience

# The effect

## Witness supported 2008-2016



85 % of all witnesses meet in courts offering  
Witness Service

# Victims and witness survey:

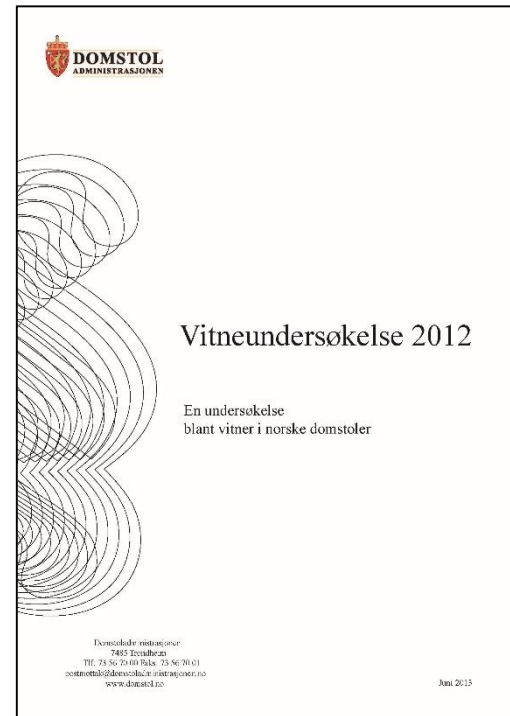
4 of 10 victims and witnesses  
are nervous to testify,

3 of 10 reluctant to come to court

Witness Service is important for

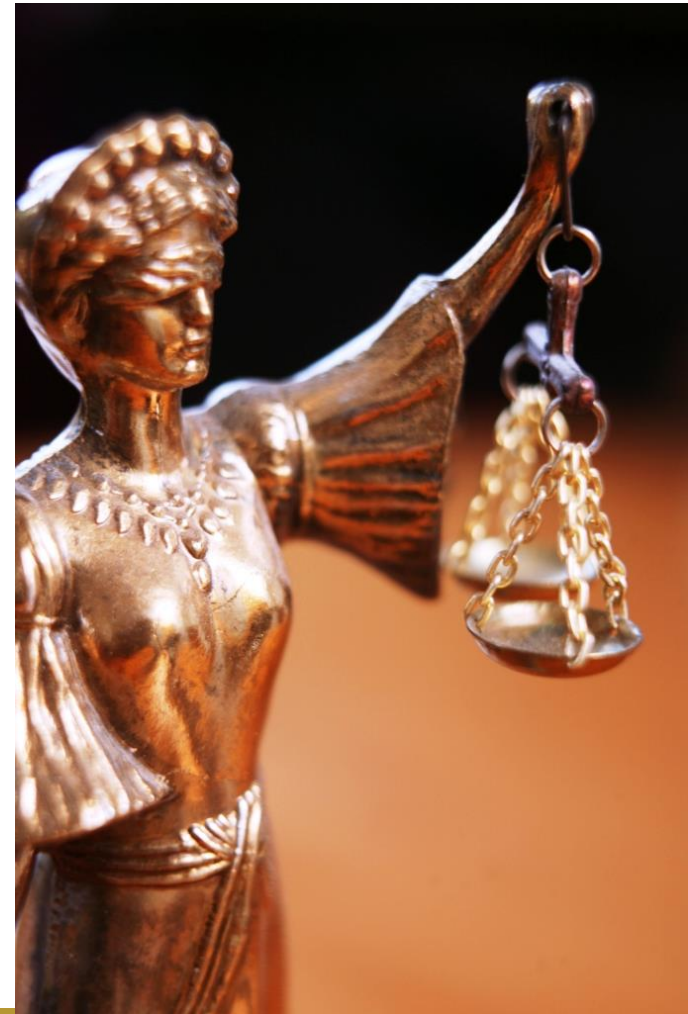
all victims and witnesses. Vulnerable groups:

- Nervous victims and witnesses
- Victims/witnesses giving testimony for the 1. and 2. time
- Young victims and witnesses (age 16-25)



# The big picture

- Modern courts with focus on court users
- Socially responsible courts
- Trust
- Due process of law



# Like to know more?

[www.domstol.no](http://www.domstol.no), [www.redcross.no](http://www.redcross.no)

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