

REMOTE HEARINGS

As the UK continues to overcome the COVID-19 pandemic, the courts and tribunals of England and Wales are starting to reopen where court sites allow for socially distanced hearings. Support Through Court is subsequently taking cautious steps to work towards bringing back court-based support. However, remote hearings have been at the centre of discussions about access to justice during the crisis.



Support Through Court is now well placed to be able to offer remote support before and after, but more importantly, during remote hearings. Our volunteers can now sit in on remote hearings conducted by telephone or video link, relieving some of the clients’ anxiety as they know someone else is sharing the experience and can talk things through with them afterwards.

Reports on experiences from remote [family](#) and [civil](#) law hearings have identified a particular need for support for Litigants in Person, who may find effective participation particularly difficult. This has been of concern given that most hearings are currently being done remotely. Be that as it may, remote hearings are here to stay, and they do undoubtedly have many benefits. Our capacity to offer remote support will therefore continue to be a valuable aspect of our already vital service. Furthermore – together with our National Helpline – this allows us to increase accessibility, giving us a presence (albeit a remote one) in courts where we do not currently offer court-based support.

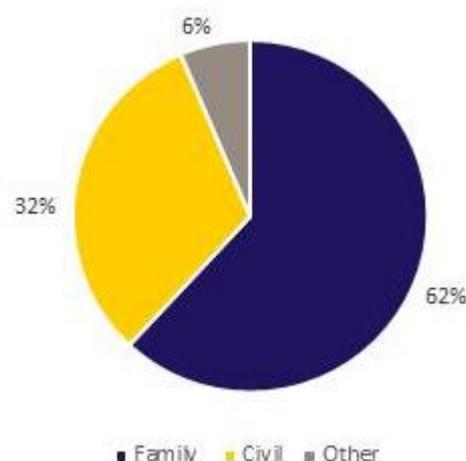
NATIONAL HELPLINE

In May and June, our dedicated volunteers received a total of 2,435 calls and completed an average of 53 calls per day in May which increased to 65 calls per day in June. This shows a steady increase of 53% from 40 daily calls completed in April.

We’re very proud to be able to meet the needs of more clients each day thanks to the 100-plus volunteers helping every week on the phonenumber. This includes many of our core volunteers who normally offer face to face support in the courts.

Family related calls continue to be the most common type with at least 2/3 of these calls involving children. Where calls relate to civil matters, they were mostly with respect to money or housing issues.

Types of cases between April and June 2020



DEBBIE'S STORY

Debbie* had been suffering abuse for several years and continued receiving regular threats from her ex-husband - despite his arrest and subsequent conviction following his behaviour.

The police visited her at home, where she lives with her two children and new partner and recommended, she apply for a Non-Molestation Order.

Over the past two years, Debbie had 54 referrals to her local Independent Domestic Abuse Support Service, **who advised her to call Support Through Court to help with her application.**

"I felt that the time spent with Debbie was very rewarding. Some of her questions were quite challenging, and by helping her answer all of them, I was able to help put Debbie on track to getting the outcome she needs."

Volunteer

When she called us, we talked through the questions she had about the type of protection the Non-Molestation Order would provide as well as how to complete the form, which she found complicated and off-putting. Whilst we were talking, she also registered online with the CAB CourtNav digital service for those experiencing domestic abuse. This service involves applications being checked by a Legal Adviser.

By the end of the call, Debbie had a checklist of what she needed to do next, how to apply for a Non-Molestation Order and complete the form, and how to set out a statement to be attached to the application. **For Debbie, the biggest benefit of calling our helpline was that she had a clearer understanding of what she needed to do next:** we helped her better understand the process, find the necessary information and explained what she needed to do to follow through with the application. She felt that our service was very accessible.

EVENTS IN TIMES OF COVID-19

With social distancing continuing well into the Summer, most of our events have been postponed or cancelled. We've had some great successes including the **2.6 Challenge** which saw trustees, staff, volunteers, and supporters get involved, setting their own unique challenges and **raising over £5,500.**

The **Great Virtual Legal Quiz** was also very successful, recently completing its second event. Staff and volunteers enjoyed this time and found it to be a great way to stay connected, have fun and raise much needed funds at the same time – **a total of £1,710 was raised.**

Postponed Legal Walks 2020 and Virgin London Marathon 2021

The **Regional Legal Walks** have all now been postponed to various dates in September/October. A full list of events and dates can be found on our [website](#).

Support Through Court have secured one place in the **2021 London Marathon** taking place on **Sunday, 25th April 2021.** We will be opening our own ballot for those interested in fundraising and running on behalf of Support Through Court. If you would like to receive an information pack and application form please email: events@supportthroughcourt.org

