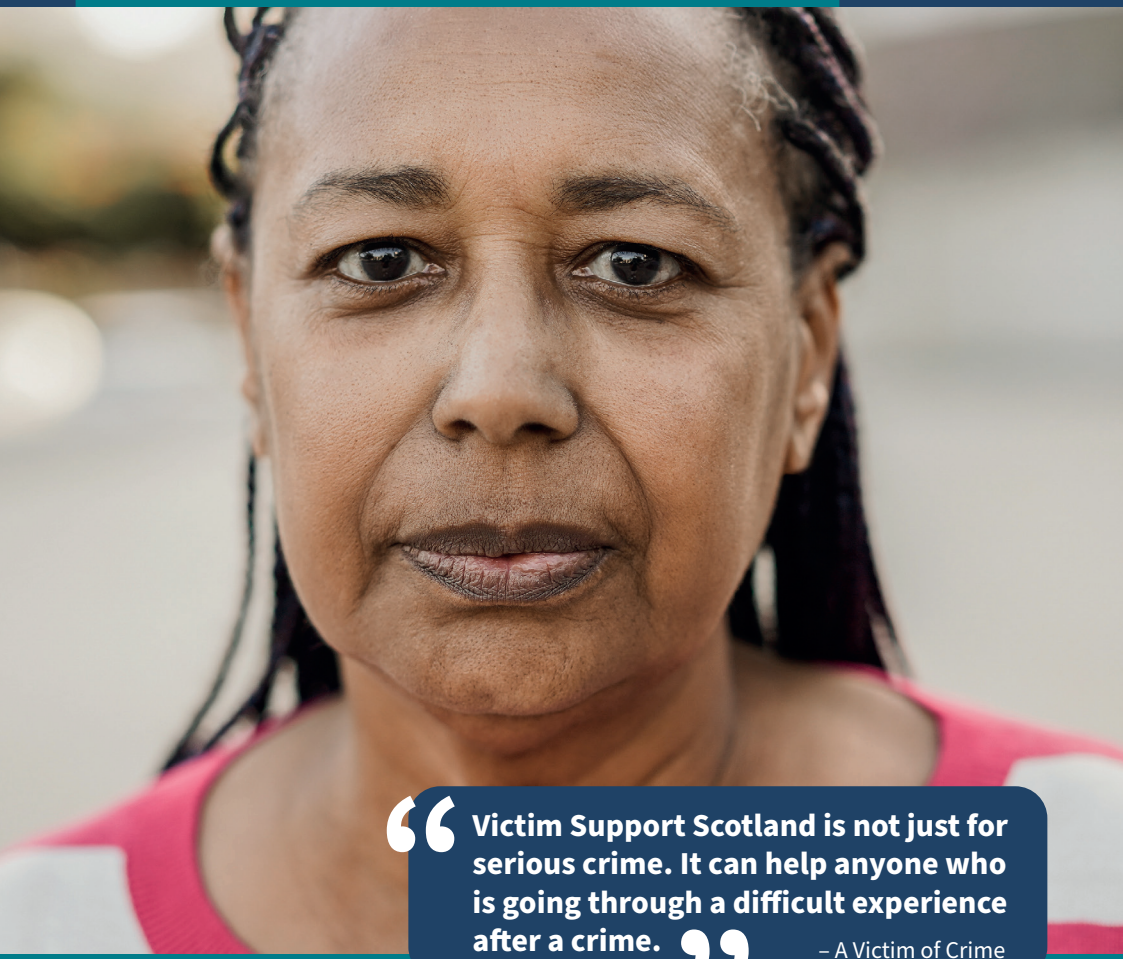
Victim Support Scotland

Support After a Crime

Your guide to our support services



> **Victim Support Scotland is not just for serious crime. It can help anyone who is going through a difficult experience after a crime.**
>
> – A Victim of Crime

A national organisation providing local support in communities throughout Scotland.
Free independent and confidential support for victims, witnesses and their families.

This guide provides information on:

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- Reporting a crime to the police 3
- The different ways we can support you after a crime 4-5
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Victim Support Scotland

Victim Support Scotland (VSS) is the foremost charity dedicated to supporting people affected by crime throughout Scotland. We:



- Offer free independent and confidential support for victims, witnesses and their families
- Embrace diversity, ensuring our support services are tailored to the unique needs of each individual.

Our Vision

People affected by crime – victims, witnesses and their families – are treated with dignity and respect and are at the heart of justice in Scotland.

Our Mission

Provide people affected by crime with the high-quality support and care they need to move forward with their lives.

Crime can happen to anyone

With approximately one in ten adults in Scotland being affected by crime annually, the ripple effects extend to families, friends, and witnesses.

The impacts of crime can be significant. That's why we offer a package of wraparound support that considers:

- Access to the information you need
- Reducing the economic impact of the crime
- Providing comprehensive assistance, including information, practical aid, emotional support, and guidance throughout the criminal justice system.

At the core of our service is a team of dedicated volunteers and professionals, working in communities and within all Sheriff and High Courts across Scotland, offering a helping hand during challenging times.

Reporting a crime

If you've been affected by a crime Victim Support Scotland can support you, even if you haven't reported the crime to the police.



If you do decide to report a crime, the police will tell you:

- The name, number and station of the officer dealing with your case
- If they arrest or charge someone
- About any charges connected to the crime
- If relevant, whether your stolen property has been found or returned
- Any other information you should know about the case

They should also keep you up to date with what is happening with the case.

You should let the police know if you change your address or phone number. Also tell them if you are worried about your (or your family's) safety.

Supporting you after a crime

Who we support

Victim Support Scotland stands with anyone affected by crime, providing unwavering support, regardless of the circumstances. This includes victims, witnesses and their loved ones.

Our comprehensive support

Understanding the profound effects of crime, our support has a holistic approach, encompassing information, practical aid, emotional support, and guidance throughout the criminal justice system.

Confidentiality

While we prioritise confidentiality, we may need to share information where there is a safeguarding or risks to others.

Flexible assistance

Recognising individual needs, we provide flexible support options tailored to you. Whether it's in-person meetings, phone calls, webchats, or emails, we accommodate your preferences, ensuring comfort and accessibility.



"I accessed emotional support from a Victim Support Scotland volunteer on the day of giving evidence for the trial. I believe the support was over and above – it was on another level. I realise you need to have a level of empathy to do the role, but I feel that everyone was completely invested in my case, in my wellbeing and in supporting me."

– A Victim of Crime

How we can help you

Emotional and practical support:

Our compassionate team of volunteers offer:

- A listening ear
- Guidance to manage emotional stress
- Support in court proceedings, even if police involvement is not required
- Assistance and empowerment throughout the witness testimony process (see page 6)

Information and guidance:

Navigate the complexities of the criminal justice system with us:

- Understand your rights
- Receive guidance on court proceedings
- Assistance in accessing benefits and therapeutic resources
- Help with practical matters like housing

Safety advice:



Practical tips to enhance safety:

- At home
- In public spaces
- Empowering you to protect yourself effectively

Support for Families Bereaved by Crime (SFBC):

Dedicated, specialist team offering:

- Practical assistance
- Emotional support
- Guidance through the legal system
- Ensuring families are not alone during the challenging aftermath of losing a family member to crime

Financial support:



Emergency Assistance Fund (EAF):

- Assistance in applying for the fund
- Support for essential goods and services in urgent situations due to crime
- Timely assistance to address immediate concerns, including access to benefits

Going to court

If you are going to court, we can support you. The service is free and available in every Sheriff and High Court in Scotland to prosecution witnesses.

Court familiarisation visit

We can take anyone who has been called as a witness to an empty court in advance of the trial date. Some witnesses find that familiarisation with the court reduces some of the stress and anxiety on the day of the trial.

During this visit we can:

- Discuss any additional needs or any concerns you have
- Explain the expectations of a witness and the possible sequence of events
- Offer reassurance about anything that may be troubling you

We know people may have to travel a long way to court so we can also support you to visit the court via our Virtual Reality and 360 web-based tours.

> **“Victim Support Scotland is the best service ever to help. Before any trial went ahead the Service had me in the court for a visit and talked me through the court process; they showed me how the screen worked and how the court was set up. It was still really daunting but they put me at ease.”**
>
> – A Victim of Crime



Special Measures

The court automatically treats some victims and witnesses as vulnerable. Others may be treated as such after consideration. If someone is vulnerable they can use special measures when they give evidence in a trial.

Examples of people who are/may be entitled to special measures are:

- those who may suffer from fear or distress due to giving evidence
- those with a mental disorder or learning difficulties
- those under 18 years of age
- victims in cases of domestic abuse, sexual crime, stalking & human trafficking
- those who could suffer harm because of giving evidence

Not sure if you have Special Measures?

Contact the Crown Office at **0300 020 3000** or email **enquirypoint@copfs.gov.uk** to find out. Unfortunately, VSS can’t assist with this.

How we can assist you

We are here to support people going through the court process who are both:

- a witness for the prosecution and have Special Measures in place

We also must have received your referral from Victim Information and Advice (VIA) at least 10 days ago.

For witnesses who meet all of these criteria, here are some of the ways we can help you while in court.

We can:

- Sit with you while you wait to go into the court room if you are nervous, worried or upset.
- Explain the court process, what will happen and what to expect.
- Give you more information about the agencies involved in your case and the best people to go to with questions. We may be able to speak to agencies for you.
- Help with practical matters, such as finding your way around the court building.
- Provide information on Special Measures, which can help you give your best evidence.

In some cases we may also be able to sit with you in court, while you give your evidence.

After your time in court

We’ll give you a call to check in and discuss any further needs you might have.

Accessing Support

Remember:

- We are here to support you after a crime, including support at court – whether the crime happened recently or a long time ago.
- You do not have to report the crime to the police to get our help.
- Our service is free, impartial and confidential, so we will not discuss personal details with anyone else without permission*.

If you would like to speak to us, please contact us using the details below.

Contact us

Call our free helpline on **0800 160 1985**
(8am – 8pm, Mon – Fri, 10am – 4pm, Sat - Sun)
to speak to our friendly support team.

Find help, support and your local service at:

www.victimsupport.scot

info@victimsupportsco.org.uk



HAPPY TO TRANSLATE

We support people from all communities. If you'd like this leaflet in a different language, please contact us.

*We will need to alert someone else if there is a safeguarding issue or a risk to others

Victim Support Scotland

victimsupport.scot

Victim Support Scotland is a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation, registered in Scotland SC002138.
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