



Introduction

Victim Support Scotland (VSS) is the largest charity supporting people affected by crime across Scotland through the provision of practical help, emotional support and essential information. Therefore, we welcome the opportunity to provide comment on Parole Board Scotland's (PBS) Draft Corporate Plan and look forward to maintaining our good working relationship with the group in the coming years.

1. VSS recognises the genuine desire from PBS to develop its Corporate Governance Strategy and acknowledge refinement of dossiers and commitment to up skill and train its members.
2. We are pleased that the Victims and Witnesses (Scotland) Act is being implemented, as evidenced by the organisation's commitment to reporting on the steps the group is taking to adhere to victims' rights legislation and the publishing of this on the PBS website. However, at **Annex A** in the draft plan the Victim and Witnesses Act is referred to as the "2015" Act. This should be changed to the "2014" Act.
3. We have provided training to approximately 40-50 Parole Board Scotland members and look forward offering further training, particularly around the anxieties victims face on the release of offenders and the challenges this presents for PBS. There is an on-going need to create the best environments and consider the appropriate use of verbal and written language in communication with victims at this crucial stage in the process.
4. It is our hope to continue our effective working relationship with PBS, including use of our premises to host oral hearings and provision of supporters to victims in cases involving possible release of offenders on a life

sentence. We would like to use this opportunity to re-affirm our intention to be as collaborate as possible with PBS and reiterate our intention to accommodate and assist the group with more extensive use of our facilities, providing access to our various victim led training – including assistance around the administration to help when contacting victims of crime.

5. It is encouraging that the draft plan acknowledges PBS's engagement with the Victim Notification Scheme. However, we believe further work in this area is required so as not to re-traumatise the victims by them having to supply the perpetrators name – rather than a case number (system used by The Scottish Prison Service).
6. VSS notes there will be engagement on The Management of Offenders Bill. We will be coordinating a response on this in the coming months. If there are any aspects of the Bill you feel would benefit from collaboration with VSS please do not hesitate to get in touch.
7. We look forward to engaging on this and other matters where we have a mutual interest and cooperating to ensure victim considerations are to the fore in any PBS deliberations on release of an offender.

ENDS