



# IMPACT REPORT 2015-16

How Victim Support Scotland has helped people  
in Scotland's communities in 2015-16



**VISION: Surviving crime by making people stronger**

**MISSION: Supporting people affected by crime and keeping them at the heart of justice in Scotland**

## What is this report about?

Victim Support Scotland's (VSS) impact report highlights the benefits of providing support and information services to victims of, and witnesses to, crime in Scotland to help them to survive crime and make them stronger.

## Why are we here?

We are a national charity that relies on fundraising to support people affected by crime across Scotland, regardless of the type of crime they have suffered.

Victim Support Scotland is independent of Police Scotland, the Scottish Courts and other statutory services and operates in all 32 local authority areas in Scotland.

We recognise that the psychological, physical, social and financial impact of crime can be immense on victims which in turn affects our society and economy. Therefore we aim to:

- + Provide emotional and practical support to victims and witnesses of crime by supporting them through their experience, throughout the criminal justice process and beyond
- + Provide information so that people affected by crime know where to turn, reducing feelings of isolation and confusion
- + Be available in every criminal court and local authority

- + Engage with other agencies to make arrangements that reduce the risk of becoming a victim of crime
- + Work with legislators to represent the needs of victims and witnesses so they are not harmed further by the justice process
- + Work in partnership to increase access to support following a crime.

We recognise that many more services exist for people who offend than for victims of and witnesses to crime. Whilst progress has been made over the last few years to address some of this inequity, much more needs to be done to ensure that people affected by crime are respected, acknowledged and listened to by agencies across the criminal justice system and fully supported in the aftermath of a crime.

# Achieving our aims

Over the following pages, we will show you the difference our charity made across Scottish communities and courts in 2015-16 to people who have been a victim of, or a witness to, a crime.

## The services we provide

Our community based Victim Service is provided in every local authority area in Scotland, and our court based Witness Service is in every criminal court in Scotland.

The impact of crime on people and communities is far reaching. It costs individuals their lives, and impacts our health services, our welfare services and our economy. The services we provide help to lessen the impact on society. We work towards measuring four key outcomes for people accessing our services:

- + Improved health and well being
- + Increased safety
- + Reduced isolation
- + Feeling informed

Our services are free, confidential, independent and non-judgmental, and are provided by staff and volunteers within their local community.

We provide a range of services in the aftermath of a crime for victims and witnesses of all crimes including emotional support, practical help and information. We help through assessing an individual's needs at various stages throughout their involvement with us. We provide individual support plans and help people see progress on their journey and we do this for as long as it takes. We provide access to services so people can feel safer in their homes and help them to access additional services and support they may need.

Here are some examples of how we have helped people to regain their confidence and trust in others, and to rebuild their lives in 2015-16.

Some names have been changed to protect the identity of those who have shared their stories with us.



# Supporting victims of anti-social behaviour

**Michelle was a victim of anti-social behaviour from the minute she moved into her new home. It impacted on the lives of her and her family for two years, until she turned to Victim Support Scotland for help.**

*“My experience with anti-social behaviour began on moving into my new home. Within the first few weeks, the tenant below me was causing me some concern with loud music, singing, shouting abuse and using foul language. Over time things got much worse, so much so that I had to call in the police. I was constantly phoning them, and they arrested my neighbour many times.*

*This had a significant impact on my life for the next two years. I was not sleeping, and my life was revolving around my neighbour’s outbursts; I often had to sleep on the couch in order to escape the singing, shouting, etc. I became very upset and moody with it all. This also had an impact on my family life, especially when I had my granddaughter to stay.*



*I had not been aware that I could get help from VSS for this kind of issue before I was put in touch with them by the police. I am grateful for the support as it made things so much better for me. My VSS worker was great – she kept in contact with me on a regular basis, updating me with relevant information on how to keep a diary for the housing association, keeping me informed of the core meetings, and advising me on how to deal with the police. She has a very calming and supportive manner, and it helped so much just talking to her, knowing she was there at the end of a phone.*

*Thankfully my life is so much better now. I was sad when my contact with VSS ended but I know that they are always there should I ever need assistance in the future.”*

**“Thankfully my life is much better now. I was sad when my contact with Victim Support Scotland ended.”**



# Supporting victims of abuse years after the crime

**Ben was a victim of abuse in his childhood and didn't realise the impact it had on him until he watched a TV programme. Receiving support from VSS has changed his life for the better.**

*"I could never have guessed that watching a TV programme with my wife one night would bring me to the realisation that I had not been alone in being the victim of abuse many years before. The abuse had found a hiding place in my head and never been discussed or dealt with. I had never truly realised the impact the crime had on my life, lifestyle, relationships and my mental health. I struggled with confidence issues, relationships and depression for many years. I never really socialised and only found solace and confidence in alcohol. I struggled to cope with everyday life but never really associated it with the events of my childhood.*

*Watching the TV programme brought memories flooding back, memories which had been shut away in the dark space in my head for so many years. The sudden realisation that I had not been alone compelled me to contact the police. The investigating officers could not have been more helpful and understanding. They ensured I was given time and information along with contacts for support agencies."*

**We supported Ben initially to deal with the crime itself and the effects it had on his life, and then throughout the police investigation.**

*"One of the agencies they put me in touch with was Victim Support Scotland and I reluctantly agreed to see what they could do for me. I have been attending for around two years now. Initially, I attended weekly for intensive support with dealing with the crime itself, the effects it had on my life and moving forward.*

*Initial sessions were difficult but I grew more and more comfortable and quickly felt more able to speak with them. As time went on my need to engage with them became less frequent but they were always available to answer questions and support when needed.*

*As time progressed and there were important changes in the investigations, VSS once again increased the level and frequency of the support. It was of great comfort to know that my feelings and reactions were normal and they referred me for specialist support when necessary.*



*VSS has helped me every step of the way, from speaking to the police to get updates on the investigation, to providing me with explanations of the process and assurances that they would be there to support me. They have helped me move on in life, assisted with the process of dealing with the crime and supported me with information regarding the criminal proceedings. It has made a difficult subject and process so much easier to deal with knowing that they are there to support me and that I have*

*someone to discuss anxieties with, ask questions or seek advice from."*

**Ben now feels more positive about his life with the support he's received, and he's been able to not only survive the crime, but he's become stronger with our help.**

*"I finally feel more positive about life and am beginning to deal with the events of the past and the effects it has had on me. I have even been encouraged to continue and move forward with my small business venture. I will continue to engage with the service for as long as I need and am extremely relieved to know that they are there for me throughout. I cannot express my gratitude to all the staff and volunteers for what is an invaluable service."*

# In 2015/16 this is how we made a difference

Findings from the Scottish Crime and Justice Survey 2014-15 indicate that around 13% of adults are at risk of being a victim of property crime, and 2.6% a victim of violent crime. 14% of adults in Scotland report experiencing partner abuse since they were 16.

Around 3% of adults experience partner abuse each year. Since the age of 16, 2.7% of the adult population have experienced at least one type of serious sexual assault; and 8.3% at least one type of less serious sexual assault.

## Supporting Witnesses of Crime

- + **97,633 contacts with witnesses of crime** via our WS (Witness Service)
- + **WS** undertook **36,938 court familiarisation activities** (supporting people give evidence remotely, visits to court pre-trial, providing diagrams or pictures of the court room in advance of trial)
- + **WS** provided **direct in court support on 3,341 occasions**
- + **14,779** vulnerable witnesses were supported

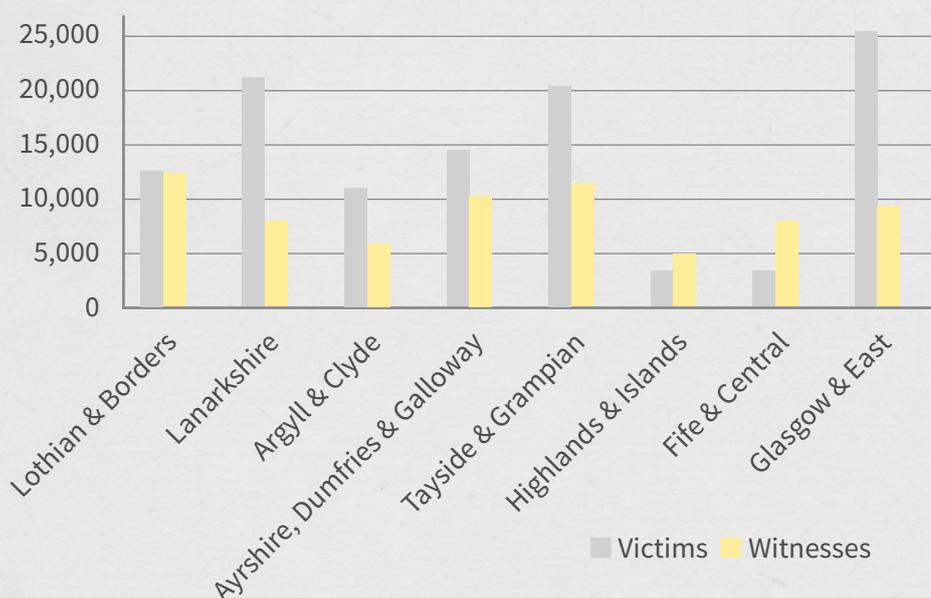


## Supporting Victims of Crime

- + We supported **101,820 victims of crime** through phone calls and face-to-face meetings (at home or in our offices)
- + Our National Support Centre sent **45,725 letters with information** to assist victims of crime



### Victims and Witnesses by regions



We provided support to:

- + **121** people from families bereaved through murder
- + **4,889** domestic abuse victims
- + **2,234** people where hate crime was a motivating factor
- + **1,317** rape and sexual assault victims
- + **2,793** ASB victims
- + **54,077** men
- + **47,743** women
- + **7,916** children and young people

# ference...

## Helping victims to receive financial compensation through CICA

- + VSS helped **592 people** make Criminal Injuries Compensation claims
- + **£3.84m** in awards have been received this year

## Our volunteers generously gave their time...

- + **93,000** hours were given by **volunteers** directly helping people affected by crime
- + Over **3,805** hours were provided by **non service delivery volunteers** across local services
- + Over **2,295** hours were given by our **trustees** in support of the governance of VSS

## Our Learning and Development Team trained...

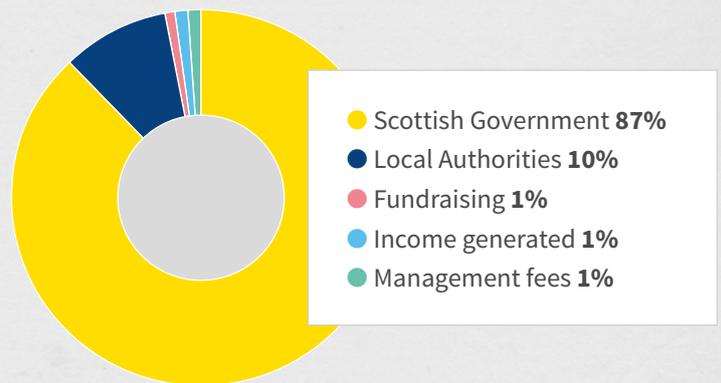
- + We trained **118** of our **existing volunteers** on specialist advanced courses
- + We recruited and trained **178 new volunteers**
- + **95** of our **staff** completed internal classroom based courses covering managing volunteers, managing staff, CSI (Core service improvement) and call handling.
- + **137** staff accessed e-learning courses

## Giving a voice to victims of crime

In 2015 we saw victims and witnesses gain legal rights for the first time in history. VSS actively advocates for these rights to be put into practice in a way that people affected by crime understand and need.

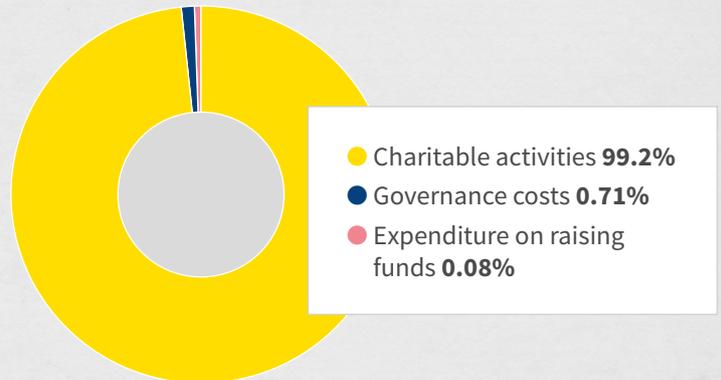
## VSS Income

In 2015/2016 VSS continued to receive the majority of its funding from the Scottish Government – a grant of £4,217,000 (87% of our total income). A further £536,815 was received from local authorities and other grant givers. The remaining income was generated from fundraising, donations, trading activities and investment income. All this helps us to provide services to victims and witnesses of crime. The total income received is analysed in the graph below.



## VSS Expenditure

Direct V Governance costs



## Raising Awareness of VSS

We ran an awareness raising campaign over the week starting with European Victims' Day (22nd Feb 2016).

- + We reached **673,754 people** through a thunderclap and thousands of people saw our facebook, tweets and STV feature throughout the campaign.

**Our local services continue to raise awareness of VSS at local events and our Learning and Development Team provide courses on the impact of crime to a wide variety of employers, individuals and agencies.**

# Supporting witnesses of crime

Going to court is a traumatic experience for anyone. Our services help people through the criminal justice system. We can show witnesses what a court room looks like before they have to give evidence, and help to reduce any anxiety they may have. We can organise the use of separate entrances if they are available in the court, and can also be a reassuring presence to witnesses giving their evidence through the provision of in-court support.

## How we helped Claire overcome her fear and apprehension of going to court

*“In 2014 I was raped, which left me shocked, scared and confused. When it first happened I got little support and felt like the best thing to do was to try to forget about the whole thing, which is easier said than done. Over the next year, my life turned to constant worry of another letter from the Procurator Fiscal of a court date. When I got a phone call saying he had pled not guilty and the trial was to go ahead it was one of the lowest points of my life – I panicked and was petrified.*

*But Victim Support Scotland is one of the best services ever to help. Before any trial went ahead the Witness 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.*

*On the date of the trial the court I was in meant going through other offices which I was dreading. The Victim Information and Advice (VIA) officer and Witness Service team arranged to meet me to take me to the witness room. I was alone and felt at a loss but I had a supporter who stayed with me and gave me all the information and encouragement to stand in court; they also sat behind me and although they couldn't speak or look at me it was a great comfort knowing I was not alone.*

*The whole court ordeal was very difficult and afterwards I needed some support which VSS offered, even after a positive verdict of guilty they supported me. It was the scariest time of my life and I can't thank them enough for helping me through it.”*

“Victim Support Scotland is one of the best services ever to help.”



# Supporting victims to survive financially after crime

The financial impact of crime on victims, communities and society as a whole is immense. People may find it difficult to work or to replace belongings if they have been ruined as a result of a crime. Many can fall into debt as they struggle with day-to-day living in the aftermath of a crime. One area of potential compensation for some victims is through criminal injuries compensation.

VSS provides support to people who may be eligible to apply for criminal injuries compensation. We use our knowledge of the claims system to help victims apply, including completing forms and advocating for them through the process, all the way to appeal stage if required.

## Daniel received support from Victim Support Scotland after he was a victim of a horrific attack...

*“Back in 2010 I was brutally attacked by some youths. I experienced a horrible feeling to my forehead – it was like a thud and all I remember was blood everywhere. After that, I remember further thuds to my head, as I tried to defend myself.*

*I was rushed to hospital – I have never been so scared in all my life. I had to go through all this on my own as my then partner had to stay at her house with her children and the police, and my own family and friends didn’t know at this point what had happened to me. It was terrible. I went into surgery for approximately seven hours. I did survive, but I have a reconstructed sinus with ongoing nasal problems. I have a huge recess on the top of my head where the surgeons had to try and reconstruct my forehead and I have five metal plates in my head. I have a scar right across the top of my head.*

*I had a terrible pressure in my right ear, which is now part of a 24/7 unbearable torture that I have to endure now for the rest of my life. I am totally deaf in my right ear with severe tinnitus that is unbearable and at times I feel so depressed, with horrible thoughts. I have headaches most days but I can’t thank the surgeons and nursing staff enough for saving my life.”*

## How we supported Daniel to apply for compensation from the Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority...

*“Before I went into surgery, the police photographer gave me a VSS leaflet. After a period of recovery and trying to get back to my normal life, I contacted VSS.*

*Two representatives came out to see me, and they were very helpful and warming to what I had endured. When I received a letter of confirmation from Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority (CICA) that they were dealing with my case, this was very comforting.*

*My first meeting in the office was very supporting and gave me a great lift or some hope to get my life back. I then had regular contact with VSS who went through all the help available to me including the Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority on-going procedure which included organising two interim payments that helped me so so much, as due to not working to my previous level, I had incurred some worrying debt. I was awarded a very agreeable compensation figure, which helped me clear my debt and took away the short term pressure of having to work to the level of which I had before.”*

## We supported Daniel in court...

*“I attended every day of the seven day trial in 2012. I had to endure two days in the witness stand being cross examined by their three lawyers. That again was a terrible experience, I even broke down in court having to relive that horrific night. The Procurator Fiscal in court did a fantastic job to ensure that justice prevailed. The three thugs were found guilty by a jury and served their time in a Young Offenders Prison.*

*Due to that night, I am now living a life sentence... but with the help and caring support that I have been shown by the VSS team, it has made me appreciate that there are a lot of good people out there. I will never get back to the life I had before, but Victim Support have given me a chance of a relatively decent life, as close as possible to what I had before. Thank you to all at VSS throughout Scotland that give so much to help people like me that need their help.”*

# Volunteers and staff

## Our skilled volunteers and staff

Our volunteers and staff are at the heart of everything we do. They are our ambassadors and are central to providing our services to help people affected by crime rebuild their lives. We have 137 staff and 640 volunteers who give their time generously to support our work across communities in Scotland.

We provide training and development opportunities and support people through their work with us so they have the confidence and skills to help others.

Volunteering has many benefits including improved mental health, physical health, employability, and

a sense of belonging, but research has shown that volunteering can provide many benefits to the local community as well, including: economic benefits, crime prevention, thriving communities and active citizenship. You can find out more at: <https://scottishvolunteeringforum.files.wordpress.com/2015/10/why-volunteering-matters-the-case-for-change.pdf>



### How volunteering with Victim Support Scotland can benefit you

Kevin received support from Victim Support Scotland after he was a victim of an attack. He suffered from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and it was suggested to him to give a little back to society to boost his self-esteem...

*“I decided to become a volunteer with Victim Support as I had been a victim of a violent crime myself and Victim support were there for me when I needed them – I wanted to give a bit back to the charity. Due to being attacked I suffered from a condition called Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and I had to undergo cognitive behavioural therapy sessions with a psychologist. One of the things that she advised me to do was to give a little back to the world as this in turn would help me boost my self-esteem and ease the depressive thoughts that I was enduring, and it certainly has.”*

### Our training gave Kevin the confidence and skills to support others

*“What I really like about volunteering with Victim Support is that at no point have I felt alone or unsupported. The training I have received has been excellent and the support from both my local office where I am based and the national office has been brilliant. I’ve never at any point felt out of my depth.*

*You come out of your basic training and you feel confident that you have the skills and knowledge that are required to do the role. I enjoy the variety that comes with the job – you deal with a wide range of cases and people from all walks of life. I know from my own personal experience of being a victim that it isn’t easy to open up to friends and family. I found it easier to talk to the volunteer who was supporting me, they weren’t there to judge me and it also helped that I knew what I told them remained confidential within the organisation.*

*Volunteering with Victim Support has genuinely played a part in turning my life around and giving me so many useful life and work related skills. I’m currently studying psychology at university and I believe the experience I’ve gained will only be of benefit when I graduate.*

*There is this immense feeling of pride when you see the difference in the person you are supporting and you see them getting their confidence back in life, society and themselves.”*

We want to create more opportunities for people from all backgrounds to volunteer and work at Victim Support Scotland, and we also want to provide our training to other organisations so their staff can benefit from our knowledge and experiences.



# Help us to continue our vital support to victims and witnesses of crime

We provide an essential service to people who have been victims of crime, including:

**Assault**

**Hate crime**

**Anti-social behaviour**

**Knife crime**

**Bullying/cybercrime**

**Murder & culpable homicide**

**House breaking/burglary**

**Rape/sexual assault**

**Childhood abuse**

**Sexual exploitation**

**Domestic violence & abuse**

**Stalking/harassment**

**Fraud**

**Theft**

**Gun crime**

**Violent crime**

We can only continue and develop the support we give to victims and witnesses of crime with your support.

For more details of how you can support us by volunteering with us, leaving a gift in your will or by raising funds for us, visit our website:

## Staying in touch

Website: [www.victimsupportsco.org.uk](http://www.victimsupportsco.org.uk)

Or follow us on Facebook or Twitter:

 **victimsupportsco**

 **@vsscotland**

Email: [info@victimsupportsco.org.uk](mailto:info@victimsupportsco.org.uk)

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**Please join us on our journey**



*"Victim Support made me feel a little better when I just wanted to run with my wee girls and hide."*

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*"From the first day the Victim Support team were excellent and gave us a lot of reassurance during this difficult process. Myself and my family are incredibly grateful for all the support offered throughout the court case."*

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*"I received a call from Victim Support today. I had my car stolen and burned out at the weekend... It was such a lovely thoughtful phone call. Thank you so much for reaching out to my elderly father and I."*

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*"Your help with the statement removed one burden from us, many thanks."*

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*"At a time of great stress and worry, we were given all the relevant information, guided through what would happen once in court and afterwards, given time to talk/ask questions and have these answered honestly."*

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*"Having never been a situation like this before, it was a great comfort to have this guidance and support. Without it, we would have been left sitting in a room with little communication from anyone else with regards to process and protocol."*

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*"Well done for helping people, I wish I hadn't been through what I've been through, I hope if I come to you I get help, really opens up the world and helps us know we have a voice."*

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*"A very valuable service, I was alone mostly and unable to speak openly about my experience, on how best to deal with a very awkward set of problems. The person I spoke to helped very much. Unfortunately, I had to move because of the anti-social behaviour, but full credit to Victim Support for their valuable help. Victim Support were very helpful and gave me information that was very important to me."*

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*"Would have liked to have found you earlier in my case to make life a lot easier. Justice system never told me about Victim Support – I found you myself after much torment."*

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*"They are a very good source of support to someone like me maybe thousands of us but they are very supportive when others were not and I came through the other end and I am starting to get myself together. Thank you Victim Support and long may you all continue to support people like me who had none from the proper authorities. They believed in me and the support was, back then, very much needed because I didn't get it from the police or housing but VS were and still are a very good source of support and point you in the right direction."*

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This document would not have been possible without the courage of those who have shared their experiences. Thank you to Michelle, 'Ben', 'Claire', 'Daniel' and Kevin for allowing us to include your stories.

