



# Victim Support Scotland

Surviving crime by making people stronger

ANNUAL REPORT 2018/19



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

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Victim Support Scotland  
HERE FOR VICTIMS  
AND WITNESSES  
OF CRIME

HELPLINE  
0345 603 9213  
[www.victimsupportsco.org.uk](http://www.victimsupportsco.org.uk)



providing guidance through  
the criminal justice system

# From our President, HRH, The Princess Royal

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**Crime impacts individuals, families and communities in countless ways, making the bespoke services that Victim Support Scotland provide essential.**

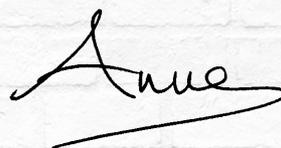
In February of this year, I visited Victim Support Scotland's Glasgow office. I met families who had suffered from crimes, and they revealed how the crime had affected them and the challenges they experienced with the criminal justice system. I was impressed by the courage and determination in their individual efforts to achieve justice for their loved ones, but also their desire to create a more responsive justice system for victims and their families. I witnessed the commitment of staff and volunteers to support families experiencing the emotional and practical impact of crime, to guide them through the justice system and to help them move forward with their lives.

Victim Support Scotland's volunteers and staff are crucial to the support of people affected by crime across Scotland. They provide critical services to victims and witnesses who can be completely traumatised by their experiences and empower them to rebuild their lives.

I congratulate Victim Support Scotland for achieving the Investing in Volunteers accreditation, which recognises its developments toward inclusion in team and organisational activities, and good practice in volunteer recruitment and training.

This year is the first of Victim Support Scotland's three-year strategy to transform into a modern, adaptable organisation that will reach more people and deliver high quality services for new and emerging crime types. The charity is focused on a victim-centred approach, which will involve service users in the development of key projects to fulfil unmet need; for example the Support for Families Bereaved by Crime service, which is in its inception this year.

As President, I applaud the staff and volunteers for their dedication to providing compassionate support to people affected by crime and wish them the best in the year ahead.



# Victim Support Scotland

## Support for people affected by crime

LINE

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# Chair Foreword

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**It's been another busy year with many challenges and many successes. In February 2019 we were delighted to welcome our patron, HRH the Princess Royal, to our Glasgow office where she spoke with staff, volunteers and service users. She met staff setting up the new service for Families Bereaved by Crime, and talked to families who had personal experience of bereavement by crime about what they most needed in these circumstances. She is a huge supporter of the work we do and I am gratified she was able to see for herself the difference that our service can make.**

A major focus over the last year has been developing our strength and capability as an organisation, so that now and in the future, we can deliver support for people affected by crime. Our responsive strategy commits us to incorporate insight and learning into our way of working. It is more important than ever for Victim Support Scotland to be able to understand victims' needs, to respond and adapt our services and support, and to stand up for victim's and witnesses' rights and wellbeing in the justice system. Building strong partnerships will raise awareness of Victim Support Scotland and help us deliver high quality support to and achieve improvements for victims of crime in Scotland.

Alastair MacDonald, Victim Support Scotland's Chair stepped down in April 2019 from the Board. In his time on the board, first as a trustee and then as Chair, he devoted significant time learning about VSS, meeting with many of the staff and volunteers across the country. He applied his strong strategic and leadership skills for VSS' benefit as well as his problem-solving abilities which enabled VSS to take some significant decisions to secure its future. Combined with a dry sense of humour and a genuine care for people, he leaves VSS in better shape than he found it. We would like to take this opportunity to thank Alastair for his valuable contribution to the organisation since January 2016 and wish him well in his next ventures.

**Liz Taylor**  
Acting Chair

**“Victim Support Scotland supported me through the trial and gave me the confidence to tell the jury what the abuser did to me. VSS was absolutely brilliant throughout. They were so reassuring – I always felt supported.”**

Amber, Service User

## CEO Foreword

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**Victim Support Scotland is the leading Scottish charity, playing a vital role in helping, advising and supporting people affected by crime across the country.**

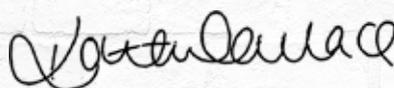
Our vision is that with our support, anyone affected by crime in Scotland survives the experience and becomes stronger. We are guided by our mission: supporting people affected by crime and keeping them at the heart of justice in Scotland. This drives us to work tirelessly to ensure that our organisation is in the best possible place to deliver our strategic plan and to reach every victim and witness in Scotland with our life-changing support.

This first year of our new organisational strategy has been busy, challenging and exciting. We created a strategic change programme to coordinate development of our organisational capability over the three-year period to April 2021. Investing in change across work-streams, we have developed our capabilities in strategy, planning and performance, as well as initiating developments in services, technology and people. We reviewed the organisational capabilities that we needed to deliver our strategy and shaped our organisational structure to align it with our business purpose – to put victims and witnesses first. We created new job roles to support Victim Support Scotland in

meeting the changing needs of the wider environment, reach more victims and witnesses of crime and support flexible and adaptive ways of working to keep up with digital technology and modern-day crime. We are empowering staff members from all job roles and locations to be part of our thinking for the future and contribute ideas about how to deliver our strategy.

We have welcomed new talent into our team, energising the organisation and bringing new ideas and ways of working to create opportunities for the future. A key part of this is having roles dedicated to service users, victims and witnesses and also roles that support volunteers in their front-line delivery of services – making sure they are confident, knowledgeable and supported in everything they do.

Victim Support Scotland, at its best, saves lives, supporting vulnerable people who have experienced a catastrophic event in their lives due to a serious crime. I look forward to working with our staff and volunteers to continue to support all those who need us over the coming year.



**Kate Wallace**  
Chief Executive Officer

“Victim Support Scotland, at its best, saves lives, supporting vulnerable people who have experienced a catastrophic event in their lives due to a serious crime.”





Our court-based  
witness services had  
**38,141** interactions  
with people at court

## Who we are

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**Victim Support Scotland continues to be the leading charity dedicated to helping people affected by crime across Scotland. We strive for excellence in delivering services that meet the complex needs of victims of crime, witnesses and their family members, regardless of the circumstances. The dedicated work of our volunteers, supported by paid staff in our national and local offices across Scotland, as well as our teams in the Sheriff and High Courts, helps us to fulfil our aim of providing high quality support to those affected by crime.**

Our services are independent, free, non-judgemental and confidential. We strive to be responsive to the needs of victims by providing services in a compassionate way that suits their individual needs, in the right way and at the right time for them.

Victim Support Scotland champions the voice of people affected by crime. We influence key national policy decision making which shapes and drives legislative reform for the benefit of victims and witnesses, making Scotland better equipped as a nation to deal with the aftermath of serious crimes.

Our work could not exist without our partners. We collaborate with government, local authorities, criminal justice organisations, academics, the third sector and community-based partners to champion victims' rights and improve services. As a national charity, we are committed to continuing to build upon and extend our partnerships and alliances with other organisations so that all people affected by crime are well supported.

Victim Support Scotland provides information, practical help, emotional support and guidance through the criminal justice system. We offer specialist services to support people who face specific crimes including murder, terrorism, rape and sexual assault, domestic violence and hate crime. We empower people to cope with the aftermath of a crime and find the strength to move on with their lives.

**“Victim Support Scotland has made such a difference to my life. You are always there for me and I don't know what I would do without you – you are only a phone call away.”**

Charlotte, Service User

## Looking ahead

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We have completed the first year of our three-year strategic plan for **2018-2021**. Over the next two years we will continue our journey to deliver our goals, guided by the following aims:

**DELIVER** high quality support for anyone affected by crime that needs it.

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**BUILD** partnerships and alliances with other organisations so that we can work together on putting victims and witnesses first.

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**CHAMPION** the rights of victims and witnesses.

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**DEVELOP** VSS so that we provide excellent services that meet the needs of victims and witnesses

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## Looking ahead

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“Our vision is that with our support, anyone affected by crime in Scotland survives the experience and becomes stronger.”

Kate Wallace, CEO

### **DELIVER** high quality support for anyone affected by crime that needs it

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Our new Support for Families Bereaved by Crime service was developed during 2018/19 with extensive research and consultation to ensure we were able to meet the specific needs of families at this difficult time. Bereaved next of kin and families affected by murder or culpable homicide are now able to access specialist support from Victim Support Scotland. We recruited and trained a specialist team which is now in action, supporting those who need this critical service. The service launched in April 2019 and will continue to develop in the next two years.

We are progressing on our digital journey, using technology to improve the way our services are delivered, including providing easier access to hard to reach groups. We recently piloted our WebChat

service which opens up a new avenue of communication with some of our service users, allowing people to be supported anonymously for the first time. Over the next year we will develop an improved user-focussed website to support more people affected by crime. We will continue to be responsive and receptive to new technology – particularly given that we aim to target our services more at younger people aged 16-24 – to provide our services to the highest possible standard to those who need us.

We aim to improve our effectiveness by extending our local services, Helpline and Webchat opening hours to allow those impacted by crime to access our services at a time that suits their needs.



# Looking ahead

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## **BUILD** partnerships and alliances with other organisations so that we can work together on putting victims and witnesses first

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We aim to increase engagement with the communities in which we work and those we are yet to reach. We are working to raise our profile so partners within the sector understand who we are, what we do and what the reciprocal benefits can be of working together. A key strand of work is developing new partnerships, as well as strengthening and formalising our existing ones. For example, we have signed a Partnership Agreement with the charity Children 1st to support the development of our support centre and helpline.

Over the next two years we will work to achieve improved community engagement. Working with community-based groups and organisations at a local level, we will better understand and deliver what victims and witnesses need within their own local areas.

As part of our equality and diversity work, and in support of victims of hate crimes, we will continue to build strong links with third sector organisations that champion rights particularly in the LGBT+ community and Black and Ethnic Minority groups.

## **CHAMPION** the rights of victims and witnesses

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We serve as the voice of people affected by crime and are putting in place structures to ensure closer service user involvement in policy influencing and developments within Victim Support Scotland. We will listen to and consult directly with those affected by crime, ensuring their experiences and

voices are heard at a national level by key decision makers in the Scottish Government. We will also introduce a co-production strategy to enable increased service user engagement in the development of our work, ensuring we continue to deliver an effective and meaningful service.



# Looking ahead

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## **DEVELOP** VSS so that we provide excellent services that meet the needs of victims and witnesses

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We will continue to redesign our structures and resources to enable the delivery of excellent needs-led services. During 2018/19 we began to set up a new People Development function, bringing together recruitment, human resources, learning and development, and volunteer engagement. We will continue to develop this function to ensure all employees are recruited, developed, resourced and

rewarded. We will support our workforce by exploring options for more flexible working and reviewing our pay and conditions, to enable us to provide the best service possible for those affected by crime.

During 2019/20 we plan to extend volunteering into a variety of new roles throughout the organisation.

## **GOVERNANCE**

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VSS became a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO) on 1st April 2019. During 2019/20 VSS will establish a Nominations Committee who will recommend appropriate individuals for appointment as trustees.

This committee will be composed of 3 trustees and 2 external members. The trustees will continue to maintain strong, supportive governance to lead the way. The Nominations Committee will be operational by September 2019.



## 2018/19 Outcomes

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Victim Support Scotland's work is guided by four key outcomes that all staff and volunteers work towards in all that they do.

1. People affected by crime feel have improved health and well-being
2. Victims and witnesses are more informed
3. Those affected by crime feel safer and more secure
4. VSS is a more effective organisation that makes a lasting difference

Victim Support Scotland's work contributes directly to the Scottish Government's Justice Strategy for Scotland (2017 – 2020), a plan for a just, safe and resilient Scotland.

# Achievements & performance

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## Overview of our strategic aims

In 2018/19, we embarked on the first year of our three year strategic plan, guided by the plan's four strands: to deliver supportive, accessible, personalised and excellent services to those who need our help; to build partnerships and alliances with other organisations so that we can work together on putting victims and witnesses first; to champion the rights of victims and witnesses; and to develop Victim Support Scotland so that we can provide excellent services that meet the needs of victims and witnesses.

Staff and volunteers across the country have worked hard to make excellent progress and we are in a strong position to deliver our remaining priorities over the coming two years.

**“VSS helped me and didn’t judge me, they just made me feel really supported.”**

Jane, Service User





**Our community-based  
victim services helped  
more than **20,071**  
people affected by crime**

# What's been achieved with DELIVER?

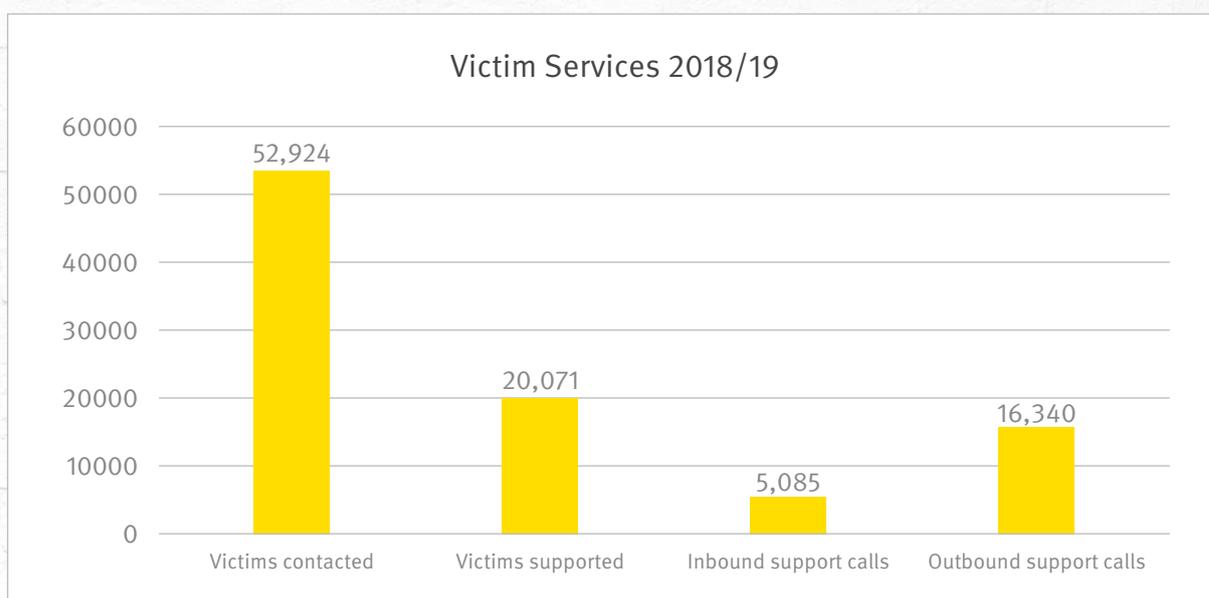
## Community Services

Our dedicated staff and volunteers provided personalised and specialised support in a range of areas and through a number of channels as a core component of our Victims and Witnesses First: VSS Strategy 2018-2021. We provided specialist support to families affected by murder, cases of domestic abuse, rape and sexual assault, victims of violent crimes, hate crime and antisocial behaviour, as well as supporting vulnerable witnesses, and carrying out court familiarisation visits.

Our community-based victim services helped more than **20,071** people affected by crime to access information, navigate through the criminal justice system and cope better in the aftermath of a crime. We made personal contact with victims on **52,924** occasions.

We contacted victims of serious crime an average of 1.66 days after receiving a referral, within the two-day target set by the Scottish Government.

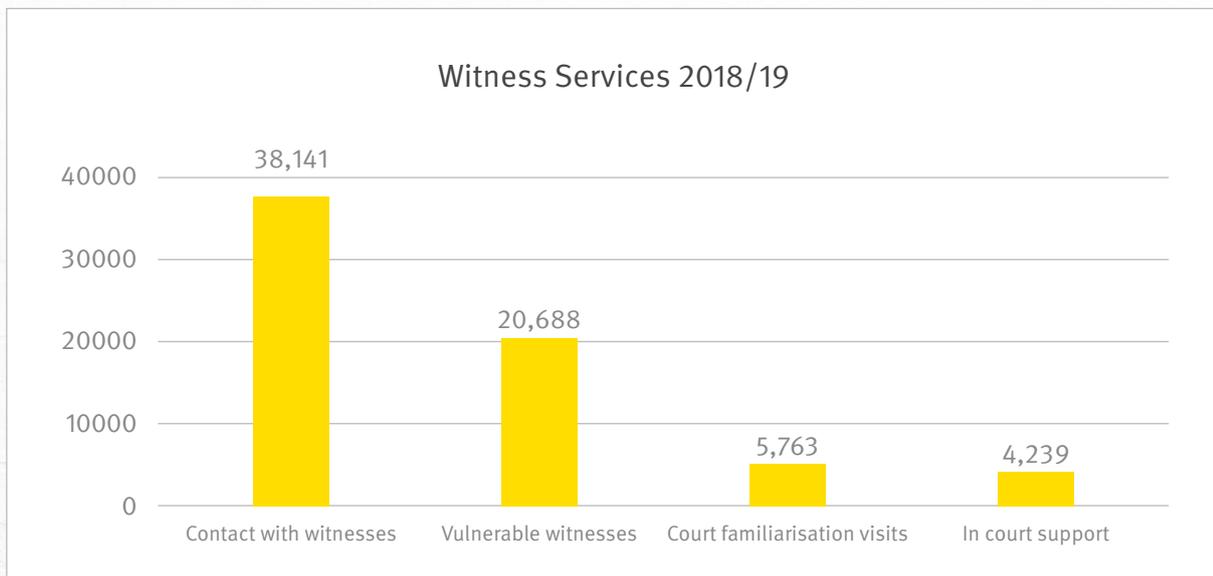
We operate a national helpline service which is available to support anyone affected by crime and is open Monday to Friday between 8am-8pm. During the year we assisted **5,085** callers who contacted us through the helpline and made **16,340** proactive telephone calls to victims offering initial help and access to further support from our local services. To improve accessibility to our services, we launched a free helpline number (0800 160 1985) in January 2019 and promoted this widely across the country through media channels and partners.



## Court Based Services

Our court-based witness services had **38,141** interactions with people at court. We supported over **20,688** vulnerable witnesses, such as children and victims of sexual assault, domestic abuse and stalking, helping them to give their best evidence at court.

We provided in-court support to **4,239** witnesses, so that they had increased confidence to give the best evidence possible and **5,763** witnesses took up the offer of a court familiarisation visit in advance of the trial.



## Service Supporting Families Bereaved by Crime

A key priority for the past year has been the development of a new service supporting families who have been bereaved by murder or culpable homicide as a key element of the Deliver part of our strategy. Although Victim Support Scotland was already delivering this support from different offices, there had been no dedicated service or staff in place to provide a nationally consistent response, something our service users told us was essential.

We involved people with lived experience in the design of the service so we could

understand their perspective and experiences. Key stakeholders, including Police Scotland and the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service, gave valuable input and insights into the development of the service and we have continued this steering group to help guide further service development. Following a tender, we worked with service design consultants Thrive who used their expertise and our knowledge and experience to develop a support solution to improve outcomes for families and next of kin. Working in collaboration with an external agency provided a new perspective on what the most effective model to meet the needs of families could be.

By the end of 2018/19, we had designed a service blueprint to inform service delivery, developed a suite of products to provide improved and consistent information for families and developed referral pathways and designed and produced publicity material. A full team has been recruited with a National Coordinator, five support workers and administration staff. We were able to test the service model before commencing support delivery on 1st April 2019.

### Digital Service Delivery

The development of Victim Support Scotland's resources and the delivery of our support services through digital channels were both key priorities in our 2018-2021 strategic plan. Our vision was to develop digital methods of accessing our services to engage with new audiences who need supportive, accessible and personalised ways to access what we provide. We are also on our journey of upgrading our own IT resources to enable improved service delivery as well as effective monitoring and evaluation. We have made good progress towards these goals in 2018/19.

#### ■ New website

In 2018/19 Victim Support Scotland began the creation of a new website to better meet the changing needs of people affected by crime and to develop a platform which could host a variety of new digital services. The new site is designed to be user-centred, focusing on providing fast, accessible information and support

through effective navigation, engaging and clear content, self and agency referral channels and immediate help via webchat. We have progressed with discovery and design, with the planned website launch set for 2019/20.

#### ■ Data Storage transfer to the Cloud

The on-premise servers used for data storage were too slow for our developing needs and server performance had started to diminish. During 2018/19, Victim Support Scotland transferred all data to the cloud using Microsoft SharePoint, a better solution in terms of cost, flexibility and scalability. This system has the added benefit that it will integrate seamlessly with the Microsoft Dynamics 365 CRM (Customer Relationship Management) system we are installing in 2019/20.

#### ■ New Customer Relationship Management system

To better deliver victim and witness-centred services, Victim Support Scotland changed its Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system to Microsoft Dynamics 365, developed by SeeLogic. Not only does the arrangement of this CRM system allow a person-centred organisation system, rather than a case-based one, but it will integrate with our cloud-based data storage on Microsoft SharePoint. It will allow for self-referrals as well as automated police and court referrals, ensuring better service delivery to people affected by crime.

## Victim-centred criminal justice system: One front door

The concept of a multi-organisation, coordinated approach to justice systems has become particularly prominent in Scotland since the 2017 review by former Solicitor General, Dr Lesley Thomson QC, Review of Victim Care in the Justice Sector in Scotland. Thomson uses the phrase ‘victim-centred’ in this report when describing the multi-agency victim care model that has emerged in other parts of the world.

As part of our strategy to deliver supportive services to those that need our help, we are playing a key role in developing an ‘integrated model’ or ‘one front door’ as Thomson terms it, in Scotland. We have made some progress in the following ways:

- Through the establishment of our Service for Families Bereaved by Crime
- Our support of Scottish Children’s Reporter Administration (SCRA) has been able to improve descriptions of Victim Support Scotland’s services in letters provided by SCRA to victims of young offenders
- Our engagement in the Scottish Government’s Taskforce including a victim-centred service re-design, making sure it is informed by the experiences of the people whose lives the Taskforce exists to improve.

## Monitoring and Evaluation

Development of the Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy was a core commitment within the 2018-2021 strategic plan. The strategy, created in 2018/19, guides Victim Support Scotland’s approach to evaluation and aims to support greater consistency in the way evaluation is understood and used throughout the organisation by having:

- Victim and witness-centred support, focused on achieving Victim Support Scotland’s core outcomes
- A full assessment of service users’ needs and aspirations at each contact
- One ‘Outcomes Form’ that is compatible across all Victim Support Scotland’s services
- A process for supporting consistent delivery and accurately measuring the difference Victim Support Scotland makes.

A new tool has been introduced based on these criteria, structured around our service user focused outcomes and using learning from piloting and implementation that took place throughout 2018. The wider Evaluation Framework is based on the four outcomes Victim Support Scotland uses in its strategy and in its contracts with funders.

## Anti-social behaviour

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Our anti-social behaviour service is now supported by a team of trained volunteers who provide personalised emotional support and practical advice to our service users.

In total, 741 contacts were made for the service, with 227 victims engaging in personal contact and 181 requesting and receiving on-going and targeted support from the service.

Of the 741 engaged contact with the victim, 77.6% requested telephone support from Victim Support Scotland, with only 12.02% requesting to call the service directly. Interestingly, 8.52% requested face to face contact, either via home visit or office appointment, which is a stark increase from 3.21% at this time last year. The remaining 1.86% requested contact via email.

**“I feel like I’m finally being taken seriously with your help and intervention”**

**“I found the support knowledgeable, calming and reassuring”**

**“I feel better knowing there are consequences to their behaviour and I’m not tackling it all by myself”**



Around **800** police probationers have been trained so far. New police recruits have a comprehensive understanding of Victim Support Scotland and our services.



# What's been achieved with BUILD?

## Homeless victims of crime

Homeless people are often vulnerable, contending with assault, rape, robbery and human trafficking. As a critical part of Build within our strategy, we have been working with organisations such as Glasgow City Mission and Social Bite to engage with people experiencing homelessness who have been affected by crime. We have distributed personal alarms and raised awareness of our third-party reporting centres that allow a crime to be reported without attending a police station, and our Witness Service which helps people navigate through the criminal justice system. We are continuing to seek additional ways to engage with the homeless community who have been affected by crime and encourage self-referrals.

## Scottish Prison Service

We have developed a joint work plan with colleagues from the Scottish Prison Service to ensure that victims and bereaved families participating in the Victim Notification Scheme have access to support at an earlier stage. We trained Scottish Prison Service staff on victim impact and awareness. Victim Support Scotland staff and volunteers will receive training on the Victim Notification Service so that they fully understand the impact on the victim and bereaved families.

## Police Scotland

We held high level strategic meetings every six weeks with Police Scotland and created a joint work plan to improve the number of referrals they send to Victim Support Scotland enabling us to work together on putting victims and witnesses first. We continued to work closely with Police Scotland on a range of initiatives to raise awareness of our work and highlight the need for officers to make victims aware of our services. Victim Care Cards, informing victims of their rights and providing contact details for support organisations including Victim Support Scotland, were issued by Police Scotland to all active 'on duty' police officers across Scotland. We assisted Police Scotland to re-design and deliver a probationer training module on supporting victims, which will eventually become a Scottish Qualification Authority (SQA) accredited course. Around 800 probationers have been trained so far. As a result of this, new police recruits have a comprehensive understanding of Victim Support Scotland and our services. We have also produced a film to increase awareness of our work, which has been shown as part of mandatory briefings for all officers.

## **Scottish Children's Reporter Administration**

We are building a close partnership with the Scottish Children's Reporter Administration (SCRA) in supporting child victims referred to courts for a proof hearing. We have been able to improve descriptions of Victim Support Scotland's services in letters provided by SCRA to victims of young offenders. We have also created a leaflet to accompany the letters which gives guidance to victims of child offenders about the justice system and the service that we can provide for them.

## **Victims' Taskforce**

The Scottish Government established the Victims Taskforce to improve support, advice and information for victims of crime. The Taskforce is led by Scotland's Cabinet Secretary for Justice, Mr Humza Yousaf MSP. The primary role of the Taskforce is to co-ordinate and drive action to improve the experiences of victims and witnesses within the criminal justice system, while ensuring a fair justice system for those accused of crime. Victim Support Scotland is a member and attends the quarterly meetings helping ensure this forum drives forward changes to make sure victims' experiences of the criminal justice system are much improved and that we create more effective policies.

At the second meeting of the Victims' Taskforce in March 2019, a joint paper was presented by Rape Crisis Scotland and Victim Support Scotland about placing engagement mechanisms with victims at

the heart of the work of the Taskforce. Such engagement is essential in order to ensure that the work of the Taskforce, including victim-centred service re-design, is informed by the experiences of the people whose lives the Taskforce exists to improve.

Last July, Mr Yousaf visited our Edinburgh office, meeting with staff and volunteers and learning about our services. We were able to talk to him about a range of victim and witness issues that need to be addressed to improve the justice system, putting victims' voices front and centre. He also met with a mother whose son was murdered and who has helped us shape our new services for Families Bereaved by Crime.

## **Victims Organisations Collaboration Forum Scotland**

Critical to our partnership working is our involvement in the Victims Organisations Collaboration Forum Scotland (VOCFS). The Forum is a collective of key victims' groups who have a knowledge and understanding of what impacts on victims in the justice sector and what needs to be done to achieve effective services to victims across the country. We host and chair quarterly meetings for the group. VOCFS partners work collaboratively to help inform Scottish Government decisions and press for meaningful changes on issues affecting victims of crime in Scotland. We work towards collective consultation responses and developing a distinct and consistent voice for victims' organisations in our sector. We worked with organisations on VOCFS to feedback on Standards of Service for the Scottish Prison Service and Parole Board Scotland.

## Local Initiatives

Victim Support Scotland continued to build strong local partnerships across the country. Examples included work with the Scottish Courts and Tribunal Service and other justice partners in Inverness in advance of the new Justice Centre due to open early 2020; engaging with local LGBT+ services; involvement with Fife College; and success in our Central

region accessing more remote areas to provide support to local communities. Most local offices participate in community justice partnership meetings for their region, bringing the victim's perspective to the fore. During Victims Awareness Week, staff and volunteers were active in each community, raising the profile of the organisation locally and through the media.

## Choose Life project

We have a dedicated suicide intervention service in Perth and Kinross. Choose Life supports vulnerable victims of crime who have suicidal thoughts or use self-harm as a way of coping.

Throughout the last year, Victim Support Scotland supported 46 users, the majority who have had thoughts of suicide and/or self-harm and/or have an existing mental health condition.

Our services involve prevention and intervention, person-centred care and working with partner agencies.

All service users were given long-term one to one support usually over several weeks, sometimes several months. If they felt stronger, they would often stop the support but then restart again some time later when things got on top of them again.

Out of the 46 users that we supported, 43 of them reported feeling less suicidal/self-harming thoughts. The majority of this group of 43 had either stopped feeling suicidal/self-harming altogether or said 'only occasionally' and that coping mechanisms had helped.

**“Victim Support Scotland places victims and witnesses first and foremost in all that we do, which is right at the heart of our three-year organisational strategy.”**

Kate Wallace, CEO



# What's been achieved with CHAMPION?

## Improving rights

Improving the rights of those affected by crime remains the focus of our policy and influencing work and relates directly to a desired outcome within our strategy. Through our consultation responses and presenting evidence to Parliament, Victim Support Scotland played a pivotal role in representing the needs, interests and voices of victims and witnesses at a national level and contributed to parliamentary processes to ensure victims' rights were effectively represented and embedded in future legislation. In 2018/19 we contributed to consultations on a variety of topics including providing comment in support of the campaign to introduce "Michelle's Law"; giving a response to the Family Justice Modernisation Strategy around Domestic Abuse; and submitting evidence to the Petitions Committee about changes to post mortem examination protocols to allow for the deceased to be released as early as possible to enable families to make funeral arrangements for their loved ones. We worked with the Scottish Sentencing Council (SSC) to highlight issues raised by victims regarding sentencing policy and to influence the prioritisation of issues victims raise as part of the SSC's forthcoming Business Plan.

We were part of an Expert Group on preventing sexual offending involving young people, and worked closely with the Hate Crime working group in Glasgow, reviewing how individuals from marginalised communities can access support, which included an initiative to recruit more volunteers from such communities to better understand and support their needs. Part of the Scottish National Stalking Group, we helped develop terms of reference for the group and led creation of a work plan.

## Victim Notification Scheme

Victim Support Scotland has been involved in a short life working group with Scottish Prison Service and the Parole Board. This group has been created to consider ways of improving the Victim Notification Scheme to ensure victims' rights are embedded in decisions affecting them, including giving them notice of potential release of offenders. We have agreed to widen the support we currently provide to victims in relation to parole hearings, where the perpetrator is being considered for parole while serving a life sentence. Plans are being developed to widen this support for victims to include all release decisions relating to life prisoners including temporary and home release.

## **Vulnerable Witnesses Bill**

In August 2018 we provided evidence to Parliament supporting the presumption that child and other vulnerable witnesses have all their evidence taken in advance of the criminal trial. We have evidence from feedback from our service users that the process of giving evidence in criminal trials can have adverse mental, physical and psychological effects on child witnesses. Victim Support Scotland believes that a greater use of pre-recorded evidence will help alleviate stress and anxiety experienced by victims in court. Our evidence has supported the passing of the Vulnerable Witnesses (Criminal Evidence) (Scotland) Bill which aims to improve the quality of evidence given for the most serious offences.

## **Age of Criminal Responsibility (ACR) Bill**

We provided oral evidence in the Scottish Parliament, supplied an extensive case study report as supplementary evidence to the Equality and Human Rights Committee, submitted a written response and remained involved in the Age of Criminal Responsibility (ACR) Bill.

## **Victims' Week Scotland**

Using Victims' Week Scotland in February 2019 as a hook, we highlighted our new freephone helpline number and our services as widely as possible, using press, broadcast and digital media, gaining Scotland-wide coverage. On the final day of the Week, for the European Day for Victims of Crime, we focussed on raising awareness of victims' rights to align with the Victim Support Europe's campaign Making Victims' Rights A Reality.



## What's been achieved with DEVELOP?

### Investing in our volunteers

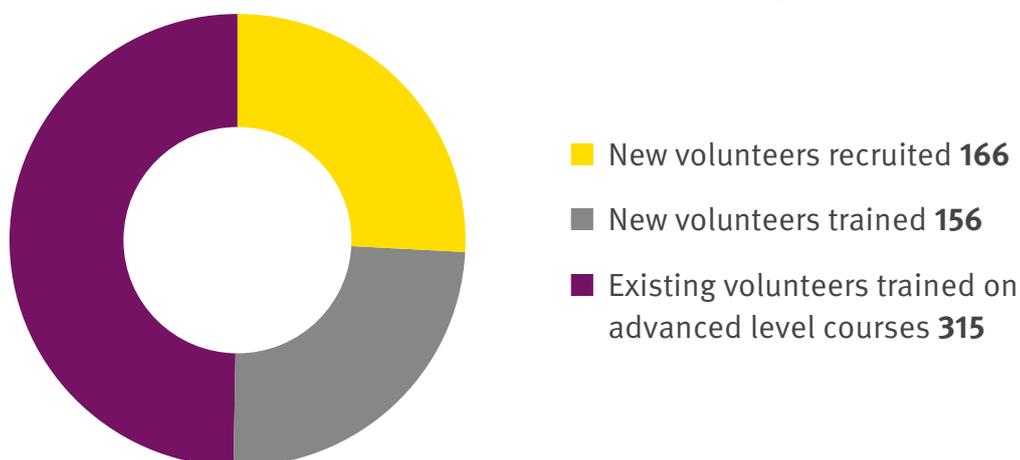
Victim Support Scotland has a predominantly volunteer workforce – hundreds of our volunteers provide direct support to victims and witnesses all over Scotland. We currently have more than 400 volunteers who contributed over 85,000 hours. This figure equates to approximately 52 FTE staff and would cost £1.2M. We are always looking to recruit new volunteers that represent the diversity of Scotland's population.

Our volunteers are the lifeblood of what we do. They provide critical services to those that have been traumatised by crime, and support them up until the point they feel they no longer need our services. This work takes place in courts throughout Scotland, in homes, and at Victim Support Scotland's offices ensuring our support is as accessible as possible to those that need it.

In January 2019, Victim Support Scotland achieved three-year accreditation for Investing in Volunteers (iV) which is the UK quality standard for good practice in volunteer management. During 2018, our organisation undertook several workshops resulting in Victim Support Scotland being assessed in over nine criteria standards, followed with assessor interviews with a random selection of volunteers, staff and Board members. This process confirmed that Victim Support Scotland reached the high standards set by iV. It also showed our volunteers, and potential new volunteers, how much they are valued and gives the organisation confidence in our ability to provide an excellent volunteer experience.

We have also created a new post as Volunteer Engagement Officer who will work closely with our community of volunteers to support their development needs and in the recruitment of new volunteers.

Volunteer recruitment and training



**“It’s a good feeling to go home knowing that I’ve supported someone, reduced their anxiety and made a real difference to their life that day.”**

Ralph, Court based volunteer

## **“Life-changing” work of a volunteer**

**One of our volunteers is Ralph. He has been with Victim Support Scotland for the last two years providing a crucial service for witnesses in the Sheriff and High Courts. His inspiration for volunteering was his wife, who already volunteers with us.**

“Appearing in court can be highly pressured,” explains Ralph. “Before doing this role, I wasn’t aware of how anxious witnesses can become. If my support can help relieve some of that anxiety, I’ve done a good job.”

Like all of our volunteers, Ralph completed a fully comprehensive three-training programme when he first joined VSS, then shadowed a more experienced volunteer to gain more insight into the role.

*“As well as learning about court processes and the criminal justice system, I have developed strong skills in supporting people,” he explains. “Working with witnesses in stressful situations requires a calm manner, excellent listening skills and the ability to empathise without being patronising.*

*“Volunteering at the High Court means that I support victims and witnesses in some serious cases. It can be hard accompanying people as they relive terrible experiences while giving evidence. But in these stressful situations, I know that my silent support is all the more important to enable witnesses to give their evidence as calmly and clearly as possible.”*

*“Volunteering with Victim Support Scotland is so worthwhile. I’ve found the experience rewarding, interesting and varied, with no two days the same. It’s life changing!”*



## Strengthening our workforce

This year we began the process of reshaping our workforce to better meet the needs of victims and witnesses. We prioritised a more focused approach to service delivery, with employees supporting volunteers, and changes to National Office roles to provide better support to the front line.

As part of this process, we have created some new key roles to the organisation including: Head of IT and Digital, HR People Development Business Partner, Head of Performance and Quality, Head of Communications and External Affairs and Service User Engagement Officer.

We are now looking at our service delivery area of our organisation. The process is about making sure that we have a consistency of service for victims and witnesses across the country and that we reach out to all victims in ways that meet their needs. It's important we have the correct structure, systems and processes in place to deliver for victims and witnesses. VSS recognises that this has been, and continues to be, unsettling for some and VSS has put in support for affected staff.

We have a very committed workforce, with staff who constantly aim to provide the best service possible. They look for and create opportunities to engage with members of the community, often those that are hard to reach, to provide support in a way that best suits their needs.

VSS continues to be accredited as a Living Wage employer.

## Learning and Development

Our Learning and Development team provide an ongoing programme of training and development, which is CIPD (Chartered Institute of Professional Development) accredited, allowing our staff and volunteers opportunities to grow professionally and personally. Our courses include: Foundation training, a three-day course; victims' and witnesses' rights; victims of sexual crime; mental health awareness; managing volunteers; domestic abuse; working with children and young people; hate crime; and safeguarding. In 2018/19 our staff attended 195 training days on in-house courses.

## Cultural Development

Following a series of engagement activities in March/April 2018, a lateral leadership programme was developed for Victim Support Scotland, to support capacity building and engagement with staff and volunteers to implement the Strategic Plan. As part of this programme, four Learning and Improvement Groups (LIGs) were established in September 2018, each focussing on one of the four strategic priorities. The LIGs brought staff together from across Victim Support Scotland to build skills and knowledge among staff as well as support implementation of the Strategic Plan and have left a lasting legacy for the way we work.

“You will feel a great sense of satisfaction in the knowledge that you are helping people through an extremely traumatic experience by giving them emotional support and really helping them through difficult times.”

Gill, Volunteer



**“I think the best thing about this approach was that there was no hierarchy or anyone taking over – everyone had a chance to have their say in a relaxed and understanding environment... I think this allowed people to flourish in the organisation and enhance their skill sets/use their current skill set which is sometimes underutilised/over shadowed in the organisation.”**

LIG participant

We have made some good progress towards our main outcomes:

■ **Build capacity, knowledge and skills across VSS to support the implementation of the Strategic Plan 2018-2021** The LIG evaluation feedback shows good progress towards this outcome. LIG members report that they have increased knowledge in each of the ‘topic’ areas which were explored. Alongside this self-reported feedback, LIG members were actively involved in the development of the ‘How To’ Guides, as well as developing other resources, such as surveys, leaflets and indicators for the monitoring and evaluation framework, which further shows their improved understanding and knowledge of the elements of the strategic plan on which they focussed. Moreover, LIG members also report increased understanding of how the elements of the strategic plan interlink, and their individual and collective responsibilities to support implementation.

■ **Develop leadership behaviour across VSS – from management level to delivery staff and volunteers**

The approach taken in the LIGs appears to also have had success in developing leadership behaviour, with LIG members pro-actively taking on responsibility to progress action between meetings, leading on sharing learning in their own teams and beginning to take an active role in presenting their work and in discussions at the recent LIG Rep meeting with members of the senior management team.

■ **Develop learning and improvement plans for each of the strategic objectives** Outcome three was achieved during the first meetings of the LIGs where priorities were agreed and set.

■ **Identify learning and improvement leads for each of the four strategic objectives** Outcome four has been partially achieved through the identification of LIG Reps who have met twice, most recently with ELT to discuss next steps. However, it is recognised that this is an area for further consideration and development as VSS begins to explore the potential roll-out and embedding of the work and approach.

# Structure, governance and management

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**In 2018/2019 Victim Support Scotland was a private company limited by guarantee incorporated on 31 March 1988 and was registered as a charity with the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR). The company is governed by its articles of association. Under the terms of this document, the strategic policy and direction of the organisation and the implementation of this is vested in its board of trustees. The trustees are the directors of the company and the trustees for the purposes of charity legislation.**

VSS is a membership organisation and each company member has one vote. There is an upper limit of 40 members of VSS. A full list of the members is available on request from the registered office.

Trustees are appointed for an initial term of three years and may thereafter be re-elected for an additional three-year period. In exceptional circumstances, a final additional three-year term may be approved subject to a 75% endorsement by the residual trustees. The maximum total length of service as a trustee, irrespective of any office bearing positions held or gaps in service, is nine years.

## **Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO)**

During 2018/2019, following legal advice the trustees consulted with the company members to approve a transition to becoming a Scottish Charitable

Incorporated Organisation (SCIO). A new SCIO constitution with updated charitable purpose was drafted. The main advantages identified were to simplify the governance of the organisation and to streamline regulatory reporting requirements for VSS. After approval from members was secured at the AGM in December 2018 for the transition and the new constitution, VSS applied to OSCR to become a SCIO. OSCR approved this transition and VSS became a SCIO on 1st April 2019.

## **Appointment of trustees**

The articles state that the maximum number of trustees is 12. During 2018/19 VSS had 12 trustees on the board, with Alastair MacDonald stepping down in April 2019. At the AGM in December 2018, Liz Taylor was re-elected as Vice-Chair for another year. Details of changes to trustees during the year are listed on page 36. At the AGM in 2019/20 Liz Taylor is due to step down and Alex Gauld and Kirsten Gilbert's first terms of office will expire.

## **Trustees' recruitment, induction, training and development**

As VSS recruited 7 new trustees in 2017/2018, no recruitment was required in this financial year. Throughout the year, trustees committed to personal and collective development opportunities achieved through self-learning, appropriate courses, a facilitated board development day and attendance at professional seminars.

## Key management personnel remuneration

The board of trustees, the CEO and senior management team comprise the key management personnel of the charity in charge of managing the charity on a day-to-day basis. The trustees are volunteers and do not receive remuneration. Details of trustees' expenses reimbursed are disclosed in note 7 in the accounts.

All staff roles (including senior roles) are evaluated using a bespoke job evaluation tool and set within job and pay grades benchmarked against the median point of the Croner Charity Rewards survey, which is recognised as the main provider of UK charities' salary data.

## Committee structure

The board of trustees provides strategic leadership, governance, direction and overall accountability. The board decides the organisation's strategic direction, mission and priorities. It ensures that VSS complies with its governing documents, charity and company law and other relevant legislation. In addition, the board scrutinises, evaluates and accounts for the organisation's performance, ensuring that there is an effective risk management system in operation to safeguard sustainability, finances and otherwise to protect its assets and reputation and always act in the interests of the organisation. The board meets every two months.

The finance and audit committee provides a strategic overview of VSS's financial and fiscal position to ensure that all the financial resources necessary are secured and managed effectively to deliver the objectives in the organisation's

corporate plan, to ensure the long-term sustainability and viability of the organisation, and to ensure the effective management of the financial risks which may threaten the organisation. This committee meets quarterly.

The governance committee provides an overview of VSS's governance to ensure that the board fulfils its legal, ethical, and functional responsibilities, and ensures that adequate governance policy development, recruitment strategies, training programs and monitoring of board activities, and evaluation of board members' performance is in place. This committee met twice during the financial year.

During the year an external review of our governance procedures was carried out by charity governance specialists at Burness Paull. Improvements identified were implemented. As part of this review the terms of reference for the committees were adapted and specific decisions were delegated to finance and audit committee and governance committee. On non-delegated matters the committees make recommendations to the board of trustees on matters within their terms of reference.



# Reference and administrative details

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## President

HRH, The Princess Royal

## Directors & trustees

The trustees of the charity are its directors for the purposes of company law. The directors serving during the period are as follows:

David Alexander

Laura Battles

Alex Gauld

Kirsten Gilbert

Ashok Khindra

Alastair MacDonald (resigned on 24/4/19)

Lynne Staples-Scott

Liz Taylor

Jon Turner

Fiona Young

George Welsh

James Wilson

## Company secretary

Jane Sturgeon

## Key management personnel

Kate Wallace, Chief Executive

Alison Love, Director of Operations & New Business (from 17/12/18)

Jane Sturgeon, Director of Finance & Business Planning

Alan McCloskey, Director of Operations (until 18/1/19)

Andy Heapy, Director of People Development (until 14/9/18)

## Company details

### Company Registration Number

SC110185

### Scottish Charity Number

SC002138

### Registered Office

15-23 Hardwell Close, Edinburgh, EH8 9RX

## Our advisors

### Auditors

MHA Henderson Loggie,  
11-15 Thistle Street, Edinburgh, EH2 1DF

### Bankers

The Royal Bank of Scotland plc.,  
2 Blenheim Place, Edinburgh, EH7 5JH

### Solicitors

Turcan Connell, Princes Square,  
1 Earl Grey Street, Edinburgh, EH3 8UL  
Burness Paull, 50 Lothian Road, Edinburgh, EH3 9WJ

### GDPR Advisors

Bruce Tait Associates, 12 Pitt Terrace, Stirling, FK8 2EZ

### Insurance advisor

Keegan & Pennykidd, 50 Queen Street, Edinburgh, EH2 3NS

### Monitoring & Evaluation

Wren & Greyhound Ltd,  
10 Milburn Road, Westfield, EH48 3BT

### Organisational Design

Dorothy McKinney Ltd,  
Scott House, 10 S. St Andrews Square, Edinburgh, EH2 2AZ

### Programme Advisor

JWED Associates,  
33 Ontario Way, Liphook, Hampshire, GU30 7LD

### Leadership Development

St Andrews Consulting,  
53 St Albans Road, Edinburgh, EH9 2LS

### IT Project Management

CBC Outsource Management,  
13 Anderson Green, Livingston, EH54 8PW





## Financial Review

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### Income

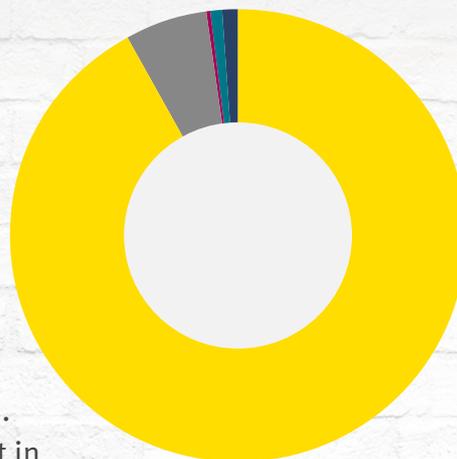
Our total income for the year was £5.05m (2018: £4.6m) an increase of £416k from the previous year. This year VSS received a 10% increase in funding of £421k from Scottish Government to deliver additional services.

### Expenditure

Our total expenditure for the year was £4.9m (2018: £4.6m) – an increase of £371k. Our net income for the year was £136k (2018: £74k). Overall, there was a negative movement (of £2k) (2018: (£12k)) with respect to movement on the pension reserves. This led to a positive net movement in funds for the year of £134k (2018: £61k).

### Principal Funding Sources

The principal funding sources for the organisation are grants from the Scottish Government and local authorities and VSS appreciates their continuing support.



- Scottish Government **92%**
- Local Authorities **6%**
- Donations & legacies **0.3%**
- Other funding **0.6%**
- Income generated **1.1%**

### Lothian Pension Fund

In 2017/18 VSS successfully negotiated an exit from Lothian Pension Fund (LPF) with an agreed repayment schedule over a 20-year period. The actuarial valuation of VSS's liability was determined as £1.463m at 31 August 2018 and the agreed total level of repayments was settled at £676k. Under certain conditions, LPF may claim additional repayments but these conditions were not met in 2018/19. VSS pay compensatory additional years to 2 ex-staff. These unfunded pension liabilities are recorded separately on the balance sheet.

### Principal Financial Risks

The principal financial risks facing us are: the fact that 92% of our funding is from one source, the Scottish Government; continuing reductions in funding from local authorities; the level of unrestricted reserves; and the LPF withdrawal debt that is repayable over 20 years.

In 2017/18 we secured a three-year funding agreement in principle with Scottish Government for 2018-2021. A new income generation strategy, linked to an associated reserves replenishment plan, will be developed in 2020/21.

### Balance Sheet

The pension liability continued to have a significant impact on the balance sheet. However, the agreed exit debt from LPF brings more stability to the balance sheet as the majority of the pension debt will not vary with actuarial fluctuations.

### Reserves Policy

The trustees recognise the need for unrestricted reserves to be maintained at an appropriate level. Our reserves policy is to maintain a sufficient level of reserves to enable operating activities to be maintained, taking account of potential risks and contingencies that may arise from time to time. The policy is reviewed annually by the trustees.

The policy identifies the estimated amounts required to meet financial risk associated with potential contingencies and uncertainties relating to the charity's operating activities. These include:

- the provision for an orderly winding-down of operations in the event of a significant adverse event that is outside the control of the charity
- the funding of unforeseen major projects that have not been provided for in the normal financial planning process

Elements of the target figure will include the costs for redundancy and contractual liabilities for such items as rent of offices. The trustees are working towards having three months running costs in reserves.

### Reserves Position at 31 March 2019

The total balance of unrestricted reserves held as at 31 March 2019 is (£126k) (2018: (£241k)). The balance held on restricted reserves as at 31 March 2019 is £346k (2018: £327k). Total funds have increased by £134k to £221k.

The pension liability continues to have a significant impact on reserves. There are 2 components to the pension liability; negotiated exit debt from LPF of (£446k) at 31 March 2019 (2018: (£463k)); and unfunded pension debt of (£139k) at 31 March 2019 (2018: (£137k)). The overall pension reserves at 31 March 2019 are (£585k) (2018: (£600k)).

Discounting the impact of the pension liability the position on unrestricted reserves improved from £355k to £457k in the year. The target for reserves replenishment in 2018/2019 was £99k, and if the impact of the increase to the pension reserve is disregarded, the target set out in plan was met – actual increase £102k.

### **Going Concern**

The board consider it appropriate to prepare the financial statements on a going concern basis. In reaching this view, we have looked at the budgets prepared for the two-year period 2019-2021. The charitable company's key source of income is the grant from the Scottish Government and a three-year agreement has been confirmed for the period from April 2018 – March 2021. The trustees recognise the need to supplement this with other sources of income for specific projects.

### **Investment Policy**

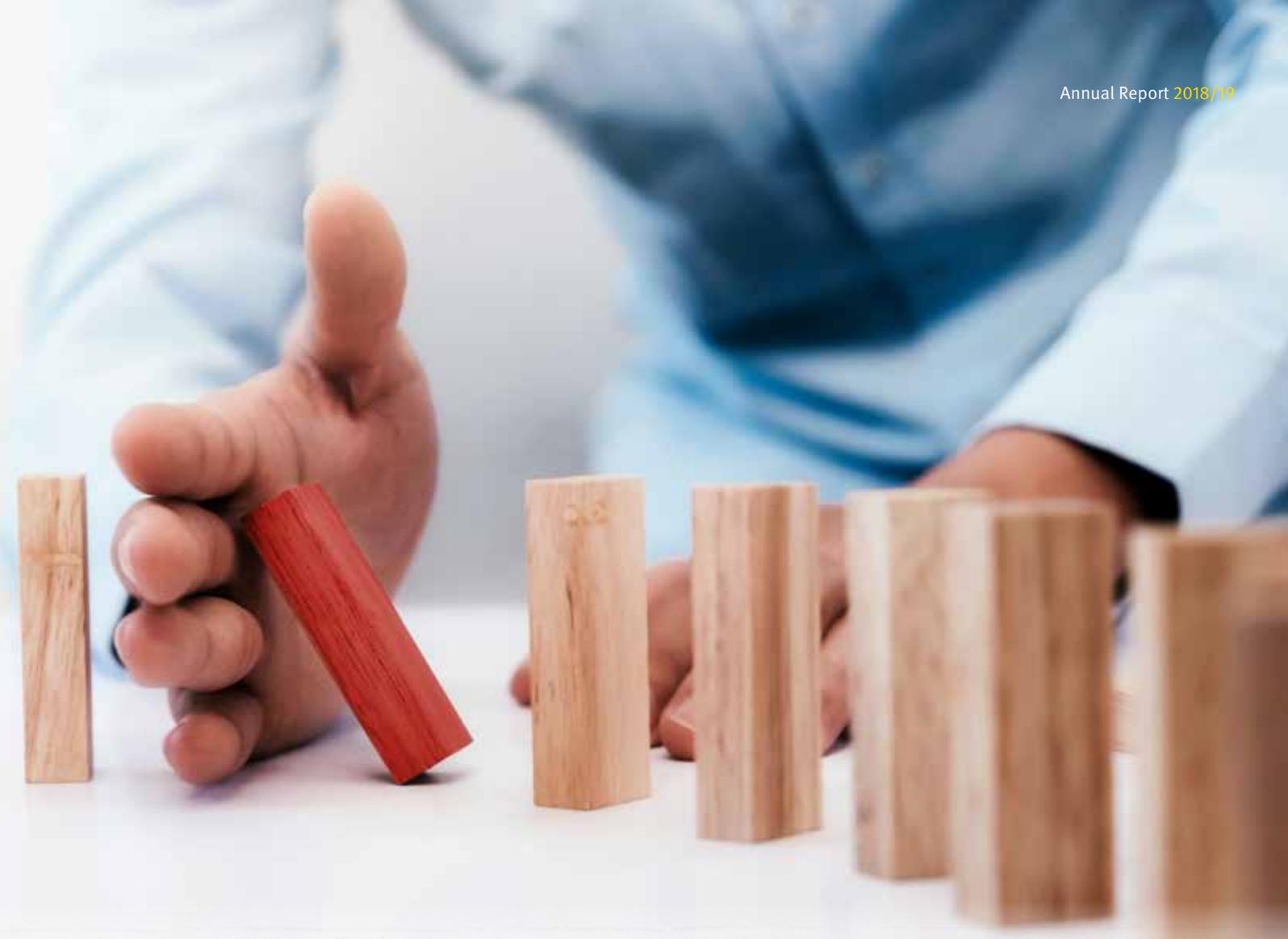
The organisation has an instant access bank account where funds not required for day to day activity are held on deposit. Transfers are made as required to cover expenditure in the current account.

### **The Victims' Fund**

We established a new Victims Fund specifically to manage and administer funds anticipated from the provisions of the Victims and Witnesses (Scotland) Act 2014. The Fund has been designed to continue to offer help and support to victims and persons affected by crime who find themselves in immediate need of assistance. In 2017/2018 the Scottish Government decided to disburse these funds directly and so the purpose of the two entities that were set up to manage the funds generated from the Victims' Surcharge Fund no longer exists. As a result, the board of trustees decided to dissolve the Victims' Fund (Trustee) Ltd and Victims' Fund Charitable Trust. The Victims' Fund Charitable Trust was removed from the charity register in 19th September 2018. An application to wind up Victims' Fund (Trustee) Ltd was made in March 2019 and this process will be completed in 2019/2020.

### **Victim Support Enterprise Ltd**

During 2013/2014 Victim Support Enterprise Ltd suspended trading but has maintained its company status. There has been no activity in 2018/19. The company will play a role as part of our future income generation strategy.



## Risk Management

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It is the responsibility of the board of trustees to ensure that there are effective and adequate risk management and internal controls systems in place. The board reviews all strategic risks and issues at each meeting.

We recognise that effective risk and issue management relies on sound systems and an understanding of risk management throughout all levels of the organisation. A risk and issue management strategy is in place, as well as the following processes and controls:

- Three levels of risk registers and issues logs in place – strategic, senior management and operational
- Escalation process in place between registers so key risks are reviewed by senior management, with regular feedback to the board
- Risk and issue management is core to the agenda of the board, senior management team and operational meetings
- Annual risk workshops carried out by the board and senior management

The board of trustees ensures that all appropriate steps are taken to mitigate and manage the risks and issues facing us. The principal risks faced by the charity and mitigation factors in place are as follows:

Description of risk	Plans and strategies to manage risk
<p><b>Overly reliant on one funder with annual funding awards making financial planning difficult</b></p>	<p>A three-year funding agreement for 2018-2021 in place with the Scottish Government, which was the source of 92% of our funding in 2018/19.</p> <p>In the second half of 2019/20, year 2 of our strategy, a Fundraising function will be established. An Income Generation Strategy will be developed, aligned to a reserves' replenishment plan.</p>
<p><b>That VSS does not have the right capabilities to deliver its strategic plan</b></p>	<p>Restructure of the organisation began in August 18 to align the strategy capability requirements with VSS resources. The management layers of VSS were reconfigured in 2018/19.</p> <p>New roles were created that incorporated the capabilities required to deliver the strategic plan. For example, service user engagement; organisational design; and monitoring &amp; evaluation expertise.</p> <p>In the short term these capabilities were carried out by external consultants. Recruitment for the new roles was carried out in 2018/19. Appointments were made for the majority of the new roles by March 2019. The use of external consultants was phased out in March 2019.</p>

**People affected by crime are not accessing our service due to drop in referrals**

We continue to work with Police Scotland and other stakeholders on a range of national and local approaches to ensure that their officers are aware of the support & help VSS can supply.

All police cadets receive training from VSS on what services VSS can provide to victims of crime.

Our community-based services are carrying out more outreach and increasing visibility in the community.

**That compliance requirements are not met**

All staff and volunteers have completed mandatory training on GDPR.

External DPO in place for 2018/19. New role with DPO responsibilities created and recruited for in March 2019.

Health & Safety forum set up in year to focus on this matter.

All staff received safeguarding training in year.

Board agenda has a standing item on compliance matters

Clear management reporting on compliance matters.

**That legal action will be brought against VSS with respect to services provided**

We took legal advice on the best approach to handle this risk.

In October we retained professional indemnity insurance with our insurance provider at an increased premium but with an excess of £2,500.

During the year 2 cases have been settled. Lawyers, appointed by our insurers, review all claims that are lodged.

# Staying in touch

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

Or follow us on Facebook or Twitter:

 [victimsupportsco](https://www.facebook.com/victimsupportsco)

 [@vsscotland](https://twitter.com/vsscotland)

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

Company Registration Number SC110185. Scottish Charity Number SC002138. Registered Office 15-23 Hardwell Close, Edinburgh, EH8 9RX

Please join us on our journey