



Empowering people affected by crime
Information and support
Our services are free, confidential and tailored to individuals' needs

Help near you
VSS Emergency Assistance Fund

To be heard.

Lived experience feedback

2023

The importance of listening

As an organisation that exists to support and empower individuals affected by crime, Victim Support Scotland believes it is essential for victims and witness of crime and their families to have their voices heard. This document includes feedback from people we support, on their experiences of being effected by crime and the vital role Victim Support Scotland can play. It aims to raise awareness of the experiences of victims, witnesses and their families.

This is core to the improvement of support services and for the progression of essential change within Scotland's justice system. It is vital that within Victim Support Scotland we involve people with lived experience of the impact of crime and the justice system in all that we do, and that this involvement has a meaningful impact.

There are multiple ways that the voices of people with lived experience are heard at the centre of the work of Victim Support Scotland, and each is important in its own way.

Hearing feedback about using Victim Support Scotland's support services in the court and community

We always want to hear from people affected by crime about their experiences of our services. This is key to ongoing learning and improvement within our work, and telling people about how our support can help.

Susan's story

[Click here to read >>](#)



“ To be heard by the people who have the power to implement changes in order to improve the system for victims and their families in the future is crucial. ”

Feedback from an individual who was bereaved by crime

Our services are free, confidential and tailored to individuals' needs. Support for families bereaved by crime. Access to specialist trauma or counselling services. We will take the time to listen to you. Volunteer.

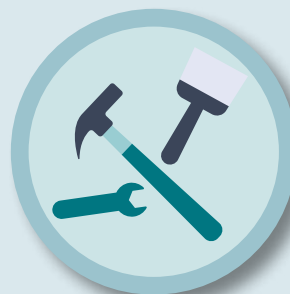
Emergency Assistance Fund:

Through **VSS Emergency Assistance Fund (EAF)** and over the course of the year, £404,405 worth of goods and services were disbursed to support 1,442 people affected by crime across Scotland. People benefiting from the fund were in urgent need of financial help as a direct result of what they have experienced, and where they have no other access to funds. We had additional referrals from over 111 partner agencies or stakeholders.

The Fund can cover include a whole variety of good and services, including:

- Emergency household goods
- Food, utility, or clothing expenses
- Costs to repair or replace damaged property or goods
- Contributions to funeral costs
- Moving costs
- Travel costs to a place of safety
- Security equipment costs

The Emergency Assistance Fund is also available for some people who live outside Scotland and who have been a victim of crime that happened in Scotland.



EAF case study:

Greg called the police after his partner returned home drunk and began to break doors, cupboards mirrors, and crockery after a heated argument, during which Greg was assaulted. His partner was told by police not to return to the shared property or contact Greg. However, as the two of them split the costs of living, Greg was now left to pay for all the repairs and the full rent, with no way of contacting the partner. As a result, Greg's finances were heavily impacted due to the crime.

“ I spoke to a VSS volunteer, and they completed an Emergency Assistance Fund application to cover the cost of rent backdated to the date of the incident. Thankfully, this was approved, and it gave me the space to sort out my finances and look for somewhere else to live that I afford on my own. ”



Our coproduction networks

The time and input of people with lived experience is valuable whether it is a one-off piece of feedback or ongoing co-production work.

Some individuals with lived experience choose to be part of one of our two involvement networks, the 1) VSS Reference Group and the 2) Support for Families Bereaved by Crime (SFBC) service Family Reference Group. Through participation in these Reference Groups, individuals have the option to hear about and take part in calls for input from Victim Support Scotland and from other external work.

Some of the recent work that has taken place in the last year includes contribution to the **independent review of the Victim Notification Scheme**, co-production of the **Trauma Informed Justice Knowledge and Skills Framework for working with Victims and Witnesses**, ongoing feedback on developments in justice organisations such as COPFS and Police Scotland, and participation in research and engagement work connected to the **Victims Taskforce**. All participation is completely optional, is trauma-informed in approach, and can happen at a pace and within a format that suits individuals best.



Lived experience input into the Bail and Release from Custody (Scotland) Bill

Victim Support Scotland supported a group of individuals to give their views directly to the Scottish Parliament Criminal Justice Committee on the Scottish Government's proposed Bail and Release from Custody (Scotland) Bill.

The individuals, affected by crime types including domestic abuse, sexual assault and bereavement due to murder, shared their own experiences connected to bail and/or release of a perpetrator and raised their concerns about some of the provisions within the Bill.

'A major theme [raised by the individual] was the inadequacy of the information provided by the relevant authorities about the bail and release of the perpetrator of the serious crime.'

Another individual highlighted that ***'arrangements for granting bail to defendants in murder trials in Scotland need to be overhauled as they are not fit for purpose.'***

Victims, Witnesses and Justice Reform (Scotland) Bill

There has been extensive feedback from people affected by crime throughout all the stages so far of the Victims, Witnesses and Justice Reform (Scotland) Bill. Individuals affected by crime have been core to shaping the original VSS response to the public consultation, to the call for views to the Scottish criminal justice committee, and to the evidence given by VSS in Parliament. Individuals have fed back on all parts of the bill, including the section on trauma informed justice, outlined below.

“ Trauma informed practice is important. There's no way you can feel better about what has happened, but you can feel more supported and comfortable. There should be acknowledgement, for example, that this court case is going to stay with someone for the rest of their life. ”

“ You are bombarded with so much info, and so much jargon in the justice system, it is very hard to explain to others around you even if you understand it yourself. ”

We support you no matter who you are, and no matter what the crime
We won't judge you Information

HUSH Project Edinburgh:

VSS' HUSH exhibition features the stories of five families who have lost loved ones to crime.

Launched at Many Studios in Glasgow, HUSH was developed jointly by Victim Support Scotland's Support for Families Bereaved by Crime service, and families who have been bereaved by murder and culpable homicide in Scotland.

The project saw the families come together to produce the multimedia exhibition, which included photography, voice recordings and written stories.

“ It has been an amazing experience working alongside the SFBC team in producing this exhibition.

Losing a loved one to crime is an experience like no other. The HUSH project has given me the opportunity to have a voice and to actually be heard, rather than being part of a report, statistic or case study.

I am grateful to be able to tell the story of my family's grief in this unique way, while also learning new skills.

Claire, who lost her brother to crime in 2020

”



Former Cabinet Secretary for Justice, Keith Brown, with Support for Families Bereaved by Crime Manager Alice Nottage.

Championing the voices of people affected by crime

Victim Support Scotland also hears from individuals about the impact of crime, or about their experiences of the justice system. The experiences and viewpoints that Victim Support Scotland hears are core to shaping our **policy, research and partnership work** such as the VSS responses to consultations on Bills and when presenting evidence to Parliamentary Committees. This input has the potential to directly shape future laws around justice in Scotland.



Ian's story

[Click here to read >>](#)



Moira Fund:

This year VSS partnered with the Moira Fund at Queens Park in Glasgow to host the annual Moira Run, in memory of Moira Jones who lost her life in 2008.

Over 480 signed up to take part in the run, with winner Richard Cooper finishing with a time of 19 minutes.

Several Victim Support Scotland staff, volunteers and families supported by the Support for Families Bereaved by Crime service took part in the event, which raised over £5,000 for the Moira Fund.

This summer the Moira Fund funded several SFBC families to have a day out or activity free of charge.

Feedback on the Moira Fund

“Thank you very much it made my day. It was a great surprise and was delighted. I very much appreciated the gifts and will be put to good use.”

“The events I booked with my gift card are next year but it's still something to look forward to with my family.”

“It was amazing. Whole family loved it.”

“We absolutely loved this the kids more than anything was great to spend that time together we would also like to thank everyone for that opportunity it was greatly appreciated.”

“I was very thankful and appreciative of the gift card, I plan on spending it well.”

VSS chief executive Kate Wallace with Bea Jones.



Victim Support Scotland staff and volunteers taking part in the 2023 Moira Run.



Family Reference Group room





Awareness raising

Throughout the year, across our **website** and social media channels Victim Support Scotland also highlights the stories of people affected by crime, especially on notable awareness days and weeks such as Victims Awareness Week, Hate Crime Awareness Week and the 16 Days of Action campaign.



VSS staff took part in Reclaim the Night in March

Reclaim the night

The VSS team in Aberdeen attended the Reclaim the Night march to raise awareness of violence against women and girls and the safety of the streets across Scotland. Taking part in events like these help us represent people affected by crime and to campaign for a safer society.



16 Days of Action

“ I felt very vulnerable coming to court, but I was reassured and supported by Victim Support Scotland who kept me updated as the case approached. They consistently reassured me that none of the abuse had been my fault. They supported me in a pre-trial familiarisation visit to court, which helped greatly. ”

Paula's story

[Click here to read >>](#)



Get involved and be heard

Anyone affected by any type of crime is welcome to tell us their feedback or take part in involvement work, whether or not you have accessed the support services of Victim Support Scotland. You can email getinvolved@victimsupportsco.org.uk or [tell us about your experiences online](#). Suggestions about our coproduction work are always welcomed too.

Queries are also welcomed from organisations working in and around the area of justice who want to work collaboratively to hear the voices of people affected by crime. Organisations that support people affected by crime might also be interested in getting involved as a member of [Victims Organisations Collaboration Forum Scotland](#).



Helpline Our services are free, independent and confidential. We will explain your rights in a way you can understand.


Victim Support Scotland

Helpline 0800 160 1985

info@victimsupportsco.org.uk

victimsupport.scot

Scottish Charity Number SC002138

