

# VSS Strategy 2021-2026

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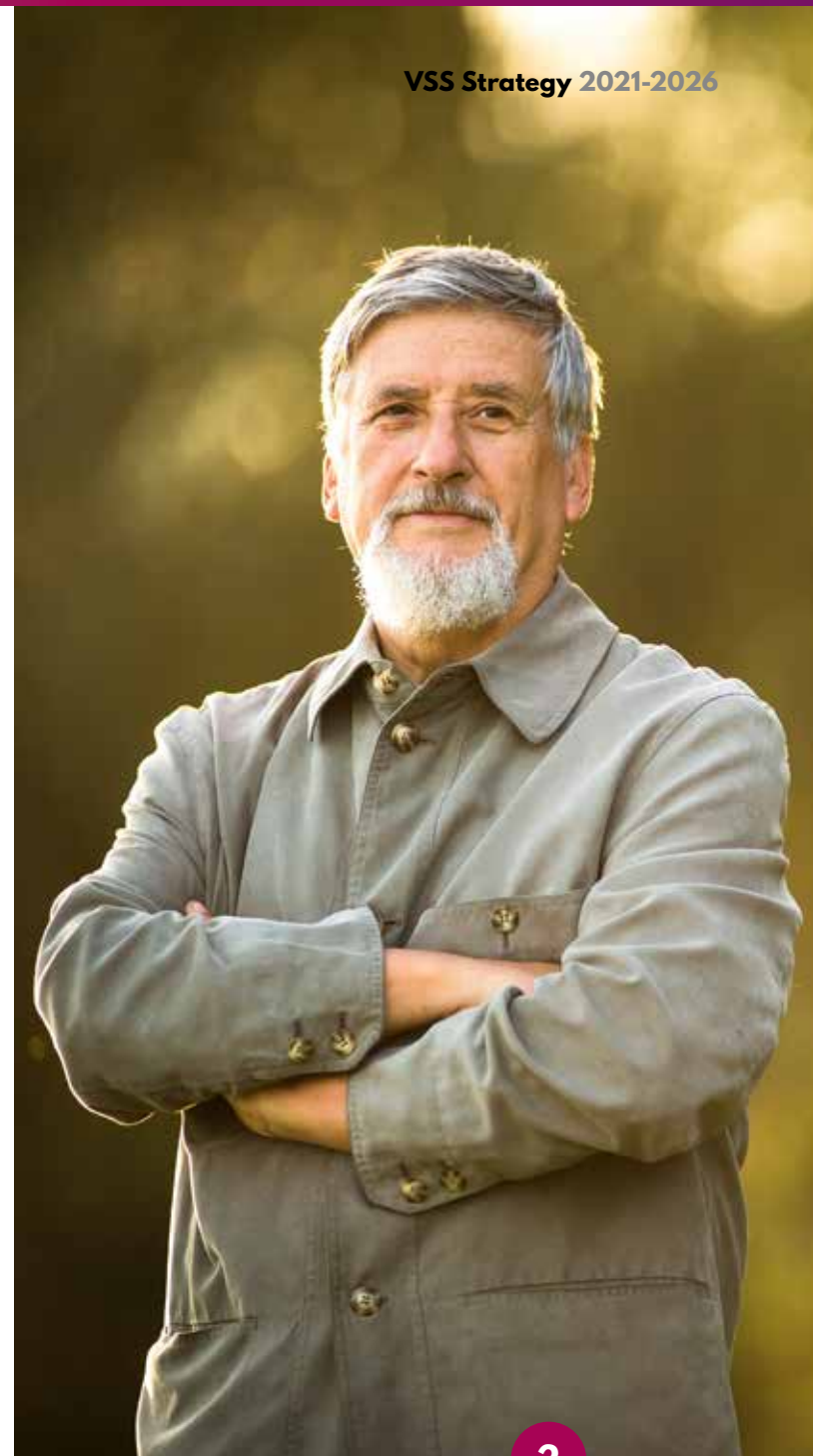
**Empowering people  
affected by crime**



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# CEO Foreword

## Empowering people affected by crime

**W**hen you work within an organisation, it's sometimes easy to get caught up in daily matters and lose sight of the bigger picture. Craig's comment below is however a good reminder as to what Victim Support Scotland does best: empowering people to move forward in the aftermath of crime.

At the time of writing, Scotland is entering the 'recovery phase' from the Coronavirus pandemic. None of us could have predicted the ripple effect that Covid-19 would have on us all. I am however immensely proud of everything we have managed to achieve in this uncertain time: the resilience and flexibility of our employees and volunteers; our ability to adapt to the digital world; and the success of the Victims' Fund in supporting hundreds of victims who would otherwise be left in financial destitution. These are just some examples of the impact VSS has had during challenging times.

VSS continues to have strong working relationships with key partners and stakeholders within Scotland's justice system. Scotland now has the chance to look at how justice is being delivered and to think innovatively about the future, particularly how we adapt services to the changing needs of victims and witnesses.

Our five-year strategy builds on the foundations we have already created within VSS over the last few years. It also takes our ambitions a step further.

Looking ahead, our vision is that people affected by crime – victims, witnesses and their families – are treated with dignity and respect. Our new strategy outlines our mission that all those affected by crime receive the high-quality support and care they need to move forward with their lives.



We will be guided by our six core principles, as outlined in this document, which are: **Engaging and compassionate; Inclusive and accessible; Person-centred; Adaptive, flexible and responsive; Collaborative; and Knowledgeable and skilled.**

As we strive for excellence in all that we do, I am personally very excited to see what VSS can achieve by 2026, and I hope you are too.

**Kate Wallace, Chief Executive, Victim Support Scotland**

**“Speaking to David at VSS makes me more confident and stronger. I feel better about the trial and know I will be supported when it happens. I feel more positive about the future, like I can get the things I want from my life.”**

Craig, child abuse survivor

# Our role in the sector

**O**ur strategic plan for 2021-2026 seeks to ensure those affected by crime have access to justice, are treated with dignity and respect, receive high-quality support, and are involved in the development of justice priorities.

Since a record-high peak in the early 1990s, Scotland has seen an overall downward trend in recorded crime, however, for some types of crime, such as sexual offences and hate crime, recorded levels in recent years are on the rise.

## Crime is evolving

Crimes have also emerged alongside new technologies, such as abusive behaviour and financial crime, that occur in fast-evolving digital spaces.

Working alongside our partners, VSS is committed to developing knowledge around how support services and legislation can adapt to emerging crime types, including those influenced by Covid-19. Services are highlighting increased demand related to domestic abuse, fraud, anti-social behaviour, and the major delays to trials. Beyond the recorded statistics, many crimes continue to go unreported.

Behind every statistic are individuals, families and communities. As a partner in the wider justice sector, VSS highlights the impact of crime on people across Scotland, including the wide ranging effects on emotional, social, physical and financial wellbeing.

## Transformation of the justice sector

We are involved in a number of national justice reforms, including initiatives to better support vulnerable victims and witnesses, digital transformation, programmes to prevent offending, restorative justice and the development of trauma-informed, rights-based and joined-up approaches to services and support.

VSS believes that fair and equal access to justice and giving people affected by crime a voice, is critical to the future success of our justice system. We have a unique ability to link people's experiences of crime and the justice system directly to decision makers at a national level. We can positively influence policy and legislation in a way that puts victims and witnesses first.



# Scotland's changing crime trends

Anyone can be affected by crime. Over time, there has been an overall decline in violent crime in Scotland, however, a range of key offences remain relatively high. Cases of sexual crime, some types of hate crime and stalking have increased, and many crimes go unreported. Now, more than ever, VSS is needed to provide essential support to everyone after a crime, regardless of whether the crime has been reported or not.

Covid-19 will have an ongoing effect on victim and witness needs as crimes evolve and court delays increase.

**60%**

of crimes are not reported to the police\*



**34%**

increase in antisocial behaviour in the first six months of lockdown\*\*



**52%**

of violent incidents are not reported\*



**774**

domestic abuse cases in the first six months of lockdown\*\*



**4 years**

to clear High Court covid-related backlog†



**11.8%**

of adults experienced at least one type of stalking or harassment\*



## Hate crime in the last year^

**24%**

increase in crimes regarding sexual orientation



**29%**

increase in crimes regarding disability

**24%**

increase in crimes regarding religion



- Scottish Crime and Justice Survey 2019/2020
- Quarterly Policing Performance Report – Q2 2020/21, SPA
- ▲ Hate Crime in Scotland 2019/20 report, COPFS
- ◆ SCTS, March 2021

# Our purpose

**As Scotland’s leading charity for victims, VSS has a distinct role both within the justice and third sectors.**

**A**lthough our core funding comes from the Scottish Government, we are independent from them and therefore can provide a critical lens to all that is happening within justice from a victims’ perspective.

VSS has a depth of experience from our years working on the frontline directly with victims, witnesses and their families. We combine this experience with our knowledge and contacts at a national level, to drive influence and positive change to policy and legislation informed by the voices and experiences of those that have been impacted by crime.

We are part of the wider ecosystem in Scotland of justice agencies and third sector organisations who depend on each other to deliver services to victims, as well as ensuring that they access their rights.

VSS itself is also an ecosystem. Our interdependent parts ensure that we provide excellent universal services of practical and emotional support. At the same time we are personalised in our approach to ensure that people receive the right support they need, in the right way, at the right time for them.



**“It’s hard to find someone to tell about what’s going on inside your head when it comes to domestic abuse. Rita reminds me it’s not my fault. I really need to hear that.”**

Amy, Domestic abuse survivor

# Our vision and our mission

## OUR VISION

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

## OUR MISSION

All those affected by crime receive the high-quality support and care they need to move forward with their lives.

## MAYA'S STORY

Throughout the course of a year, Maya's teacher made sexual jokes and gestures, showed her pornography and touched her. Maya and her mother both came to Victim Support Scotland for a safe space to discuss how they were feeling and to receive emotional and practical support.

When the trial started, Maya was scared and anxious about giving evidence but with the help of Victim Support Scotland she felt more confident giving evidence at the trial last year.

Laura, her support volunteer, commented: "I support people to feel more confident, safer and aware of their rights so that they can see a way forward to a better future. People often attribute their progress to me but, really, I just give them the tools to make these achievements themselves."

# Our principles

All our work is guided and underpinned by six core principles. We are:

- 1 Engaging and compassionate:** people affected by crime are at the heart of what we do and what we say, as ‘experts-by-experience’ they inform our approach to service design and how we communicate about our services and what we do.
- 2 Inclusive and accessible:** reaching all those who need us, being there every step of the way.
- 3 Person-centred:** role modelling in our own organisation what we expect from the wider criminal justice system (victim-centred, trauma-informed and rights-focused).
- 4 Adaptive, flexible and responsive:** using evidence and learning to continuously improve and adapt our organisation and the support we provide.
- 5 Collaborative:** working with others to improve people’s experience of the criminal justice system.
- 6 Knowledgeable and skilled:** our highly trained and dedicated volunteers deliver emotional and practical support, working with our employees to ensure high-quality and consistent support to people affected by crime.

**“Kerry is helping me to get hold of my police statement before I give evidence and making it accessible because I am partially sighted. She talks with my supporter at Deaf Links to help make sure I can read all the letters I receive about my case. I’m feeling a little bit safer now that I have Kerry.”**

**Eilidh, assault and domestic abuse survivor**



# To achieve our **VISION** and **MISSION** we will focus on **FOUR** strategic priorities:

## KYLE'S STORY

One night, Kyle stopped to help someone posing as an injured driver, but the person violently assaulted Kyle and threw him over the car.

He contacted Victim Support Scotland and was supported by Laura, a volunteer who helped him to explore his reactions and feelings after the crime.

Kyle comments: "VSS were incredible, they give me such amazing support. They saved my life. I wouldn't be here without them and will be grateful for the rest of my life."

### EMPOWER

people affected by crime by providing high quality, outcome-focused support and care to **all** who need it.

### BUILD

productive partnerships aimed at improving the experiences of those affected by crime.

### SUSTAIN

our impact by focusing **all** we do, in every area of our organisation, on making a lasting difference for people affected by crime.

### TRANSFORM

victims' and witnesses' experiences of the criminal justice system.

# Our strategic objectives

**HIGH-QUALITY AND JOINED-UP SUPPORT.** We provide a range of high-quality, joined-up support services to victims and witnesses across the whole of Scotland, based on evidence of need.

**ACCESSIBLE AND RESPONSIVE.** Our support services provide choice and are available when, where and how people need them, at every stage of their journey.

**INCLUSION AND REACH.** Our support services are provided across Scotland in an inclusive and culturally sensitive way that reflects and responds to the needs of all those affected by crime in our communities.

**PERSON-CENTRED AND TRAUMA-RECOVERY FOCUSED.** Develop and embed a person-centred, trauma-recovery-focused, compassionate approach to all our support services.

**CO-PRODUCTION AND SERVICE DESIGN.** Develop and embed a service-design approach to the development of our support services.



## EMPOWER

people affected by crime by providing high quality, outcome-focused support and care to **all** those who need it.

**ENGAGE AND INVOLVE.** Engage and involve victims and witnesses to deeply understand their experiences of the criminal justice system.

**ADVOCATE FOR CHANGE.** Share the experiences of victims and witnesses with key stakeholders to inform rights-based and trauma-informed reforms in criminal justice policy and practice.

**REDUCE RE-TRAUMATISATION.** Support the development of approaches to reduce re-traumatisation of victims and witnesses across the criminal justice system (including, for example adoption of ‘tell us once’, victim-centred approach, single point of contact, and understanding restorative justice from a victims’ perspective).

**PROVIDE ACCESSIBLE INFORMATION.** Provide straightforward information on the justice system so those affected by crime understand the criminal justice process and how to access their rights.



TRANSFORM

victims’ and witnesses’  
experiences of the  
criminal justice system.

**JOINED-UP AND PERSON-CENTRED SUPPORT.**

Actively engage and collaborate with our service delivery partners to ensure a joined-up approach to support services that puts victims and witnesses at its heart.

**SUPPORT AND DEVELOP THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE ECOSYSTEM.** Work collaboratively to ensure all parts of the criminal justice ecosystem in Scotland work together and each organisation plays to its strengths.

**IMPROVE VICTIMS' AND WITNESSES' EXPERIENCE OF THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM.** Work collaboratively with national and local policy makers and other stakeholders to influence and lead improvements in criminal justice policy and practice.

**REACH ALL THOSE WHO NEED US.** Develop our partnerships to better understand and support people from diverse communities and those whose needs are not being met.



**BUILD**  
productive partnerships  
aimed at improving the  
experiences of those  
affected by crime.



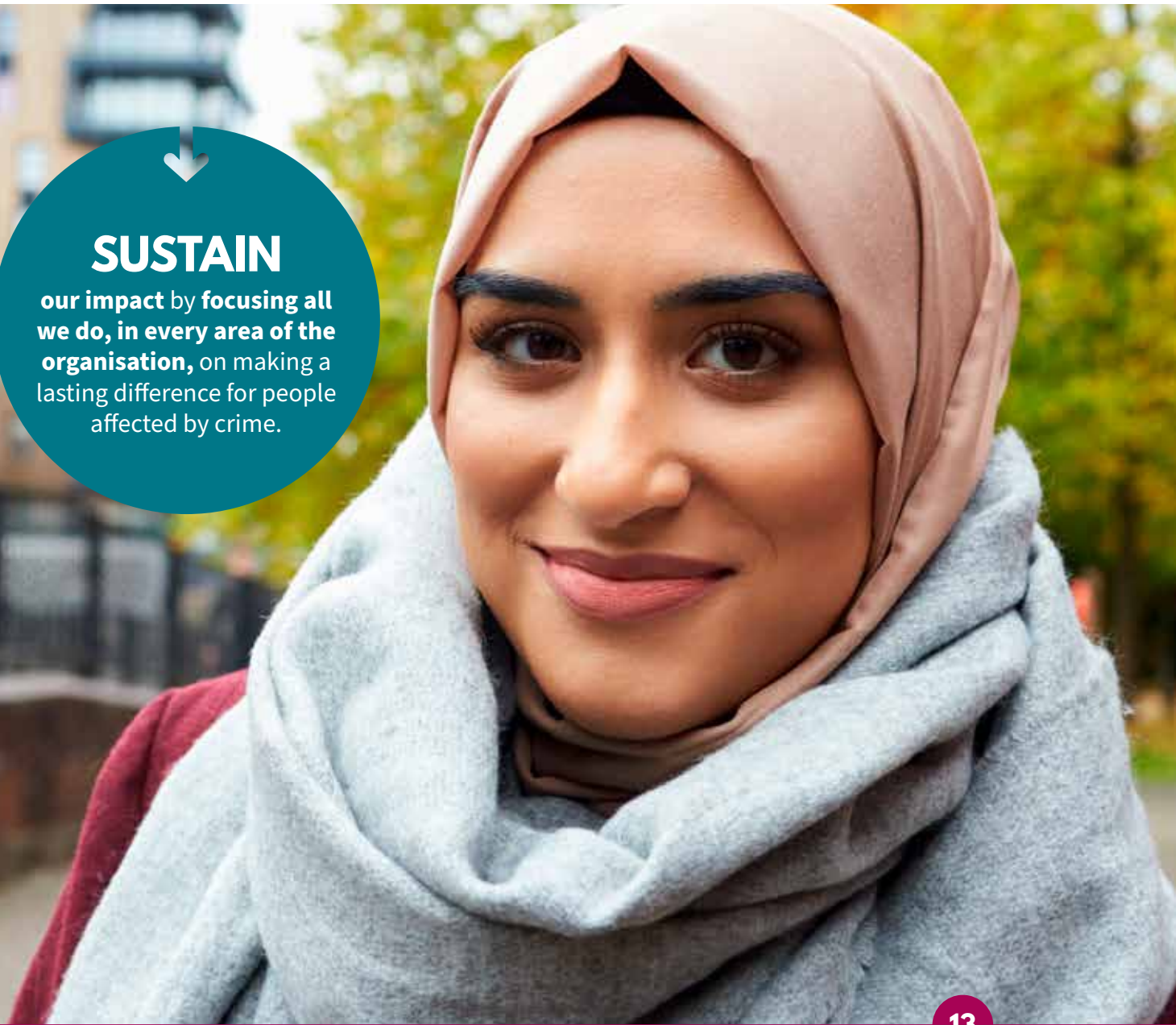
**SUSTAIN**  
our impact by focusing all we do, in every area of the organisation, on making a lasting difference for people affected by crime.

**HIGH PERFORMANCE AND GOOD GOVERNANCE.** Our organisational functions, systems and processes align and support the delivery of excellence for people affected by crime.

**LEARNING AND IMPROVING.** Evidence our impact and enhance our knowledge and skills to continuously improve, learn and adapt so we make a lasting difference to people affected by crime.

**ENGAGING AND SUPPORTIVE.** Engage with our volunteers and employees, value their insights and experiences and support them to be the best they can be.

**STRATEGIC AND SUSTAINABLE INCOME GENERATION.** Build our profile and increase the diversity of our funding to ensure our organisational sustainability and resilience.



# Making a difference

## For people affected by crime:

- Victims and witnesses should report improved health and mental wellbeing
- Victims' Fund can reduce financial hardship for people affected by crime
- People feeling less isolated and lonely
- Victims and witnesses feeling more informed about the criminal justice system
- People feeling safer and more secure as a result of our support

**“I wouldn't be here today if it wasn't for Kirsty, my supporter. She's a rock of support and a saviour.”**

Fraser, domestic abuse survivor

## For the criminal justice system:

- All victims and witnesses are treated with dignity and respect within a trauma-informed criminal justice system. Key areas of reform, e.g. Victim Notification Scheme, victim-centred/single point of contact approach and 'tell us once' philosophy, are embedded
- Victims' and witnesses' experiences are better represented at the highest levels of national government and in local policy development, planning and decision-making e.g. Community Justice and Planning Partnerships
- Improved referral pathways and information sharing protocols with key organisations enabling person-centred and joined up support

## For our organisation:

- A co-production and service-design approach that informs and supports all we do
- Increased profile – VSS are the 'go-to' organisation supporting and empowering victims and witnesses
- Maintain and achieve accreditations: Investors In People and Investors In Volunteers, LGBT Charter, Healthy Working Lives, Disability Confident, Cyber Essentials, Digital First Standard for Scotland, etc
- A culturally confident organisation with increased engagement and reach to support diverse communities and 'unmet need' groups
- A confident, committed and capable team who are well supported and engaged
- A learning organisation that adapts and responds to evidence of emerging needs
- A sustainable and resilient organisation with diverse funding streams



**Empowering people affected by crime**

**0800 160 1985**

**[www.victimsupport.scot](http://www.victimsupport.scot)**

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please contact us.**