



Do you know how  
supporting victims of  
crime is helping Scotland?

  
Victim Support Scotland

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Victim Support Scotland

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## Foreword

In Scotland, like many other countries, we know that we can be preoccupied with crime. We can be a victim of crime, a witness to a crime, a perpetrator of a crime or we can hear about a crime and for many people, become fearful. This fear is real. We fear for our safety, our loved ones' safety and our wellbeing.

The cost of crime in Scotland is simply immense. Our legitimate need to be safe and secure in our neighbourhoods, the impact of crime on our jobs and on our homes, our communities and our businesses is vast. However, what is clear is that no one chooses to be a victim of crime. Yet each year approximately one million people from our communities in Scotland; our families, children, friends, neighbours and acquaintances can all be affected by crime.

It is known that the majority of victims will not report the crime to the Police. Some people will in fact never tell anyone about it or about what they feel, and some will try and get on with their lives, pushing it to the back of their minds usually only for it to reoccur later. Approximately 16% of all victims in the European Union with expressed needs are provided with support in the aftermath of a crime, so what does this mean for the other 84%? Sadly, I believe that it means the majority have no routine access to support or services.

It is also well known that for many victims of crime their lives are altered forever; physical, emotional, financial and social aspects are affected. Going to work may be a release from these pressures or for some it can be just too much to cope with. The physical and mental health of victims can also be damaged and relationships and family life can suffer.

This book aims to look at all of these aspects in detail by providing statistics, information and knowledge about the wider impact of crime, and is designed to widen the current mindset to allow for future development of services. The author has gathered a vast amount of factual information and has been able to demonstrate how, in practical terms, 33 of the national outcomes and indicators could be met by supporting people affected by crime.

As demonstrated in the book, Victim Support Scotland is an agency that can assist with helping to achieve some of these, but it is the wider services of health, education, employment and local authorities that may truly benefit from this knowledge, to assist them to develop strategies of their own. Victim Support Scotland's vision – 'No More Victims' – identifies the need for all agencies to work together to ensure that people of all ages affected by crime, are not re-victimised. We must ensure they are informed, respected, protected and supported, then Scotland will have made real progress in the reduction of the significant impact of crime.

We hope you find this 'Do You Know...?' book useful, and believe that if we work together in our local communities we can alleviate the effects of crime on individuals, communities, businesses and agencies, and contribute to making Scotland a safer, wealthier, stronger, healthier, smarter place to live and visit.

Susan Gallagher  
Director of Development  
Victim Support Scotland

*"Thank you for the support you gave us that day, it was invaluable." - Witness*

*"Thank you very much for being so helpful and understanding; your time and patience and the help you gave us. You made us feel a lot more comfortable and that we weren't on our own." - Witness*

# I. Introduction

There are around one million crimes and offences committed in Scotland each year<sup>1</sup>, half of which never come to the attention of the Police<sup>2</sup>. Crime is a main concern to many people in our society and the provision of support to people affected by crime is critical to the continual development and success of Scotland. This document provides an overview of statistics and information, to help illustrate the link between crime and the fulfilment of Scotland's main targets. It shows how Victim Support Scotland can directly assist in delivering services in line with the national outcomes, indicators and targets; for instance to ensure we live our lives safe from crime, disorder and danger; reduce reconviction rates; and reduce overall crime victimisation.





## 2. New approach for the Scottish Government

### 2.1 Focus on outcomes

The Scottish Government has moved to an outcomes-focused approach of delivering services. The approach is built on effective partnership working across the public sector and with stakeholders. The whole public sector is, for the first time, expected to contribute to one overarching purpose: namely **to focus government and public services on creating a more successful country, with opportunities for all of Scotland to flourish, through increasing sustainable economic growth**. As part of fulfilling the purpose, the Government has created *purpose targets*, supported by five *strategic objectives*. Progress against these objectives and further *national outcomes* will be measured by 45 *national indicators and targets*. Victim Support Scotland has an important part to play in the fulfilment of these targets and the improvement of life across Scotland.

#### 2.1.1 Link between Government aims



Source: Scottish Government, *Scottish Budget Spending Review 2007*, p. 43

## 2.2 Relationship between national and local government

The Concordat, between the Scottish Government and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA), sets out the terms of the new relationship between the Scottish Government and local government. The Scottish Government has set the direction of policy and the overarching outcomes that the public sector in Scotland will be expected to achieve. Consequently, the day-to-day management of services will be left to local governments and their partners, primarily those who can best understand and tailor their resources and activities in line with local priorities.

The Third Sector is renowned for its front-end services and while the Scottish Government will concentrate on providing direction and strategic priorities, local government will have more say in how the work is carried out locally. This includes building local partnerships with the Third Sector.

“Where local authorities and their partners, including third sector, show they can deliver, the Scottish Government will stand back from micro-managing that delivery.”<sup>3</sup>

The new agreement gives local authorities greater flexibility. For instance, by reductions in the ring-fencing of funding, local governments have more freedom to choose which services they wish to fund within their respective areas. With greater freedom comes greater responsibility; the onus will increasingly be on authorities to decide where to spend money in order to achieve the agreed outcomes.

“Local government will be expected to contribute to the delivery of the national Strategic Objectives, outcomes, indicators and targets, and in this way to support the Scottish Government in the delivery of its overarching Purpose.”<sup>4</sup>

## 2.3 What is the role of Victim Support Scotland?

The work of Victim Support Scotland impacts directly on the fulfilment of national outcomes, indicators and targets that the local authorities are expected to deliver. It is therefore of vital importance to create well-functioning local partnerships, so we can assist local authorities in delivering services to people affected by crime.

“Local authorities will be held accountable to the Scottish Government for their performance against the set national indicators and related targets.”<sup>5</sup>

The importance of support to victims today is well recognised and the quality of the assistance and support is a major factor influencing a victim’s recovery from the effects of crime.<sup>6</sup> Victim Support Scotland is the leading voluntary organisation in Scotland that provides support to people affected by crime. Our services are free and confidential, provided by trained volunteers and staff through community-based victim support services and court-based witness services. Established in 1985, we provide assistance to around 175,000 victims and witnesses each year.

Victim Support Scotland offers a variety of support and information in the aftermath of crime, which are looked at in detail throughout this document. Our services include:

- Information/explanations regarding the procedures and processes of criminal justice investigation, prosecution and court proceedings
- Practical support (insurance, criminal injuries compensation, installing alarms, accompaniment to doctors, etc.)
- Emotional support
- Advocacy on crime victims’ and witnesses’ rights in the criminal justice process
- Liaising with justice agencies on behalf of the victim/witness
- Support for crime victims in providing input into the criminal justice process through victim impact statements

- Liaising with appropriate agencies regarding antisocial behaviour
- Crime prevention
- Professional training and community education
- Effective and appropriate referrals to other suitable organisations

Victim Support Scotland's services are spread across Scotland; there are victim services in every local authority area and a witness service in each Sheriff and High Court. We have created this booklet to show the value of our work and to demonstrate how we can assist in supporting local authorities' delivery on set targets to create a more successful country.

*" Thank you for all your  
patience, support and  
understanding throughout this  
difficult time." - Witness*

## 3. Scottish Government purpose

The Scottish Government's overarching purpose is:

***To focus government and public services on creating a more successful country, with opportunities for all of Scotland to flourish, through increasing sustainable economic growth.***

### 3.1 Strategic objectives of the Scottish Government

To fulfil the purpose, the following strategic objectives have been set.

**Wealthier & fairer** – Enable businesses and people to increase their wealth and more people to share fairly in that wealth

**Smarter** – Expand opportunities for people in Scotland to succeed from nurture through to life long learning, ensuring higher and more widely shared achievements

**Healthier** – Help people to sustain and improve their health, especially in disadvantaged communities, ensuring improved access to local health care

**Safer & stronger** – Help local communities to flourish, becoming stronger, safer places to live, offering improved opportunities and a better quality of life

**Greener** – Improve Scotland's natural and built environment and the sustainable use and enjoyment of it

## 4. National Outcomes

To measure the fulfilment of the purpose and strategic objectives, the Scottish Government developed the following national outcomes as goals for services to accomplish. **Under each outcome, Victim Support Scotland demonstrates how crime affects the fulfilment of the outcome and how our work is of vital importance to its achievement.**

### 4.1 We live in a Scotland that is an attractive place for doing business in Europe

**4.1.1** Criminal activities cost a lot of money each year. Serious and organised crime alone is costing Scotland about £2 billion a year.<sup>7</sup> It is difficult to pinpoint the exact cost of crime on businesses. UK estimations vary from £780 million for retailers and £275 million for manufacturers, to as much as £9.1 billion for the commercial and public sectors combined. On average, the loss per incident for manufacturers is £690, compared to £95 for retailers.<sup>8</sup>

#### Crimes against Scottish businesses

**4.1.2** There are few up-to-date figures on crime statistics for businesses in Scotland, but information from 1999 show that in general about six in 10 businesses (58%) experience crime per year. Those businesses which experience crime suffer on average nine incidents. Over half of the businesses surveyed have experienced some form of property crime (with vandalism and break-ins proving the most common crimes), but only about one in seven have experienced violent crime. The types of crime most likely to be repeated are threats of violence, thefts by employees and thefts by 'outsiders'.<sup>9</sup> 39% of UK businesses are found to be re-burgled at least once a year.<sup>10</sup>

**4.1.3** Crime in Scotland is heavily targeting a relatively small proportion of businesses; one in ten premises account for 66% of the total crime count, and one in 20 premises account for 54% of all crimes. Well over half of all cases of repeat business victimisation occur within eight weeks of the previous incident. The most victimised businesses are restaurants/take-aways, public transport and taxi firms. Other high risk businesses are motor and fuel retailers, post and telecommunications operators and pubs/clubs.<sup>11</sup>

**4.1.4** Apart from the type of business carried out, various other issues affect crime risks, such as the area of Scotland in which the business is located, socio-economic features of the surrounding area, the hours staff work and the type of goods held on the premises. Taking all these factors into account, the most likely factors for victimisation are area<sup>12</sup> and staff working patterns.<sup>13</sup>

**4.1.5** Where comparisons can be drawn, crime rates for crimes against businesses are much higher than those experienced by individuals and households. In fact, the likelihood of any business premises experiencing a break-in is around six times higher than that of a home.<sup>14</sup>

#### Home Office Commercial Victimisation Survey

**4.1.6** The Home Office Commercial Victimisation Survey (CVS) specifically looks at manufactures and retailers. The survey states that around half of **manufacturers** (53%) have experienced some crime in the past 12 months. Just under half (48%) have experienced crime against property, with one manufacturer in five (22%) having experienced a burglary or attempted burglary. Repeat victimisation is common, with high proportions of retailers suffering the same type of crime on at least six separate occasions.<sup>15</sup>

- 4.1.7** About three-quarters of **retailers** (74%) state they have experienced crime in the past 12 months. Some 70% have suffered theft or other property crime and about 25% were subject to violent crime. The smallest retailers (i.e. those with only one or two employees) are least likely to experience violent crime regardless of their location or what they sell, despite their apparent vulnerability due to lack of staff present. It is thought that larger retailers – those with at least 50 employees – are more likely to be victims due to an increased number of potential crime opportunities in larger establishments.<sup>16</sup>
- 4.1.8** Three-quarters of retailers and manufacturers report concern about the impact of crime on their business. About one in three consider it to be a very or fairly serious problem. Retailers are slightly more likely to express concern than manufacturers.<sup>17</sup>

### Economic impact of Victim Support Scotland's services

- 4.1.9** Victim Support Scotland provides practical and emotional support and information in the aftermath of crime, which brings important social and economic benefits. With the right support, victims may return to work earlier with less impact on the economy in terms of costs and productivity.<sup>18</sup> Apart from providing support to individuals affected by crime, we also work actively in partnerships with organisations, justice agencies and businesses. We provide information on victimisation, best practice and crime prevention, which decreases the risk of re-victimisation and assists to ensure that Scotland is one of the most attractive places to conduct business in Europe.

## 4.2 We realise our full economic potential with more and better employment opportunities for our people

### Absence from work due to crime

- 4.2.1** Crime can affect all parts of an individual's life. Many victims need to take time off work as a consequence of the emotional, physical and practical impacts of the crime.<sup>19</sup> Each individual's circumstances are different and caution should be exercised when aiming to detail the time of recovery for different crimes. The Home Office has however developed overall calculations of how long a victim usually needs to stay off work as a result of a violent crime, both for physical and psychological causes. It estimates that a victim who has suffered a broken bone will generally take time off work corresponding to 31 working days; a victim with a broken nose will take 11 days off work and a victim with concussion will need approximately six days in total off work. A victim suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder on average takes time off work corresponding to 257 working hours. A victim suffering anxiety needs 259 days and a victim suffering from depression on average takes between 89 (mild) to 835 (severe) days off work.<sup>20</sup>
- " Thank you very much for your help. I probably wouldn't have gotten through without it." - Victim*
- 4.2.2** The time taken off work adversely affects the individual victim as well as society and the Scottish economy. The difficulty in going back to work may be further strengthened by the fact that 10% of crimes take place in, or around, the victim's workplace and may therefore remind the victim of the event.<sup>21</sup>

■ **Crimes in Scotland are spread fairly evenly throughout the year.**<sup>255</sup>

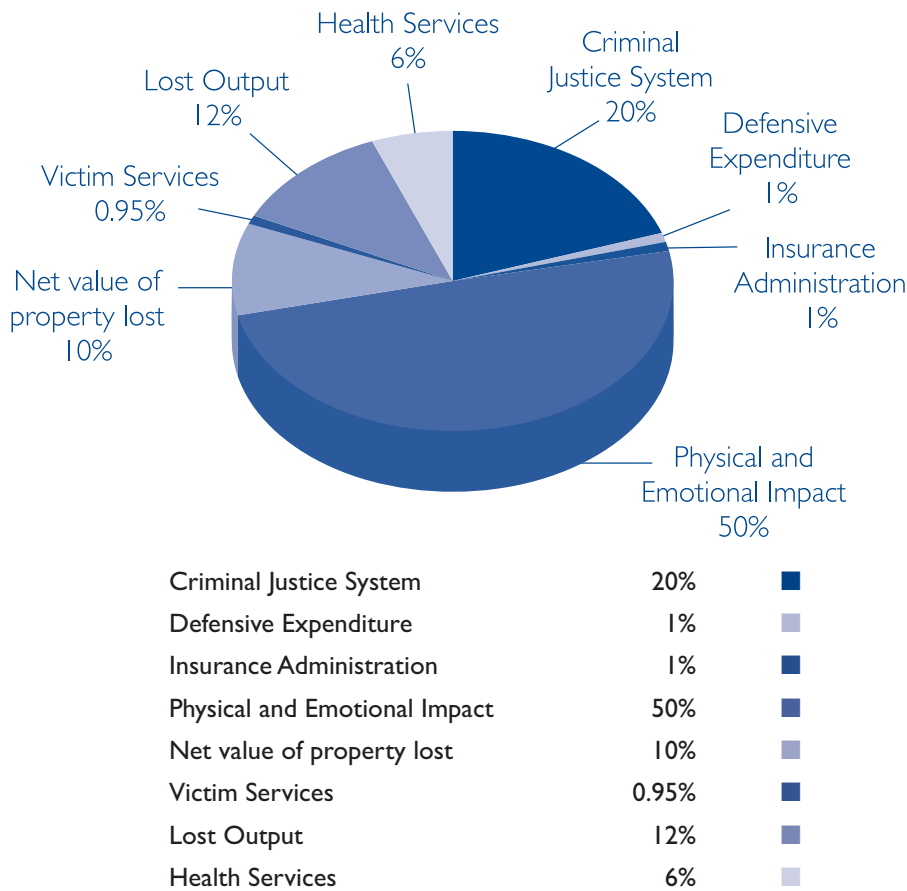
### Cost of individual crimes

**4.2.3** It is extremely difficult to estimate the cost of crime; no price can be put on the ‘intangible’ costs associated with the pain and suffering of the victim. Some estimations have been made regarding domestic violence,<sup>22</sup> where the total cost was estimated to over £5.7 billion a year. All costs of domestic violence for the state, employers and victims are however estimated to around £23 billion.<sup>23</sup> Costs for other crimes have been estimated at:<sup>24</sup>

Violence against the person:	£11,617
Common Assault:	£1,607
Sexual Offences:	£35,095
Robbery/Mugging:	£8,129
Theft:	£942

**4.2.4** The Home Office has also developed calculations on where money is spent in the aftermath of crime.<sup>25</sup> Victim Support is a very small cost in the whole process of dealing with a crime, but we provide a vital and much appreciated service. Around 98% of our service users feel that the support from Victim Support Scotland is helpful.<sup>26</sup> Victim Support Scotland’s internal user survey shows that 95% of victims find our victim service helpful; corresponding figure for the witness service is 96%.

### The cost of crime



Source: *The economic and social costs of crime against individuals and households 2003/2004*, Home Office Online Report 30/05, (2005)

- 4.2.5** Victim Support Scotland aims to minimise the effects of crime by providing support and information to victims, witnesses and family members. If crime victims are provided with access to the support they need, they can more speedily return to work and to as normal a life as possible. This lessens the costs of both health and social benefit services.

### **4.3 We are better educated, more skilled and more successful; renowned for our research and innovation**

- 4.3.1** Education is a human right<sup>27</sup> and it provides people with the skills and knowledge to understand and participate in society. Without a safe learning environment, students may find it difficult to learn and fully absorb the education provided.

#### **Crime in school**

- 4.3.2** The majority of incidents against 10-15 year olds take place in school, perpetrated by pupils or friends.<sup>28</sup> Across the UK, almost half of all children (49%) have had property stolen at school. Around 57% of children have had property deliberately damaged, 46% of young people have been called racist names and 70% say they have been hit or kicked. Overall, a staggering 95% of children claim to have suffered some kind of victimisation; this mainly refers to low-level offences taking place in schools and playgrounds that are unlikely to be reported to the Police.<sup>29</sup>

“The very institutions where children should feel safest – their school environments set up and patrolled by adults – are where children are most commonly victimised”.<sup>30</sup>

- 4.3.3** A young person’s reaction to crime will depend on many different factors; for example, their age, the support available to them, the type of crime committed, their cultural beliefs and how they interact with others. Some young victims may find it difficult to understand what has happened and the feelings that they are experiencing. Others may hide their emotions to appear strong to the people around them. In some cases the child may take on the role of an adult to look after a parent and/or siblings who are also affected by the crime. All of these factors can impact on the young person’s own well being, safety and security.

#### **Victim Support Scotland’s work with children**

- 4.3.4** Victim Support Scotland provides assistance to between 12,000 and 17,000 children affected by crime each year, in addition to the support given through a parent/carer. Our underpinning ethos is to always act in the best interest of the child. By providing support, information and a listening ear to the young person, along with support and information in the aftermath of crime, we strive to make him/her feel safer and able to concentrate and gain knowledge through the education system.

#### **Victim Support Scotland provides training for the justice sector**

- 4.3.5** Victim Support Scotland delivers training on the needs of people affected by crime. We want to ensure that everyone who engages with victims and witnesses has the skills, knowledge and tools to provide the best possible service, which also reduces the risk of re-victimisation.
- 4.3.6** Victim Support Scotland has received the ‘Skillsmark’ award from Skills for Justice. ‘Skillsmark’ is the quality mark for learning and development in the justice sector. Victim Support is the second organisation in Scotland to be given the award and the first voluntary organisation to meet the required criteria.



## 4.4 Our young people are successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens

### Young victims of crime

- 4.4.1** The types of crimes that young people experience change with age. For instance, robbery and thefts from the person are less common for 10-11 year olds compared to 16-17 year olds.<sup>31</sup>
- 4.4.2** In Scotland, young people aged 16 to 24 (both male and female) are most likely to become victims of personal crime. 21% of men and 19% of women in this age group have been a victim of personal crime.<sup>32</sup> These figures mainly reflect the higher risk for young people to become victim of violent crime, in particular assault. 16% of 16-24 year old males and 8% of females in the same age group have been victim of assault.<sup>33</sup>
- 4.4.3** Young people are more likely to experience multiple crimes, with 10% of 16-24 year old men having experienced multiple personal crimes. One in four women in the same age group has been a victim of both personal and household crime.<sup>34</sup> Young people are also at high risk of being repeat victims of violent crimes, with 19% of 10-15 year olds experiencing five or more incidents in one year.<sup>35</sup>

A study on girls and overall violence in Scotland found that:<sup>36</sup>

- 98% of girls reported having witnessed at first hand some form of interpersonal physical violence
- 41% stated having been victims of violence
- 30% admitted to having deliberately hurt another person
- 10% of girls reported routinely using physical violence against others
- 91% stated having been verbally abused
- 72% admitted to verbally abusing others

### Link between victimisation and offending

- 4.4.4** Many young offenders have previously been victimised and many young victims go on to offend. One reason for this may be that young offenders tend to group together and commit offences on each other. Personality traits such as being impulsive and taking risks may lead to both offending and victimisation. Another link between victimisation and offending is that victims may become traumatised, leading to later offending or simple retaliation. As a result, programmes aiming to rehabilitate young offenders and those that support young victims must consider that they are often the same people.<sup>37</sup>

*"You've been really really helpful and you are very understanding and I know that if I phone up, you will be there for me." - Victim*

- 4.4.5** Recent Victim Support research confirms the link between victimisation and offending in young people. It states that if a young person is victimised through a violent crime, there is a risk that the person will go on to become an offender him/herself.<sup>38</sup> In fact, "offending by young people was the factor most strongly associated with their being victims of personal

■ **The majority (56%) of violent crimes take place at the weekends.**<sup>256</sup>

crime”.<sup>39</sup> Being a victim of crime at the age of 12 is one of the most prevailing indicators that a child will offend at 15. Likewise, offending at age 12 brings a strong possibility of victimisation at 15.<sup>40</sup>

**4.4.6** Generally there are three pathways through which victimisation can lead to offending:<sup>41</sup>

- Retaliatory violence towards to offender
- Displaced retaliation against someone other than the offender, for instance if the victim feels the offender is too strong
- The victim befriending offenders to prevent future victimisation

**4.4.7** The research locates several risk factors in a young person’s life that makes the victim-offender link more likely. These factors include: poor relationship with parents, social isolation, negative adult role models and friends who engage in criminal activities. Other risk factors relate to the victim’s attitude, in particular the view that:

- The only way to deal with anger is through violence
- Retaliatory violence is acceptable behaviour
- Involvement of the Police is ineffective or socially unacceptable
- The victim will gain respect and protect him/herself from further victimisation through violence

**4.4.8** Victim Support Scotland has a vital role to play in providing young victims of crime with appropriate support and guidance to break the link between victimisation and offending. This will assist in preventing the victim going on to become an offender.<sup>42</sup>

## **4.5 Our children have the best start in life and are ready to succeed**

**4.5.1** Children need a safe and secure home environment in order to have the best possible start in life. Domestic abuse, including threat and violence, is an unfortunate part of many children’s lives; around a quarter of children are estimated to have experienced one or more forms of physical abuse during childhood.<sup>43</sup>

### **Children and domestic abuse**

**4.5.2** About 5% of people with children are victims of domestic abuse.<sup>44</sup> The presence of children in a household nearly doubles the risk of domestic abuse for women.<sup>45</sup> Findings suggest that in around half (48%) of all incidents of domestic abuse where children exist in the household, they are present at the time of the abuse. In around half of all cases of abuse, the perpetrator is the victim’s current partner or spouse.<sup>46</sup>

**4.5.3** There is a strong link between domestic violence and child abuse. Studies show that between 30%-66% of children in homes where the mother is being abused are also at risk of being abused.<sup>47</sup> The effects of domestic abuse are both physical (43% of victims express physical injuries ranging from minor bruises to more serious internal injuries) and psychological (42% experience psychological and/or emotional problems and 23% find it harder to trust people and form relationships).<sup>48</sup>

**4.5.4** Children who witness domestic violence have significantly worse psychosocial outcomes compared to children who have not witnessed it. In fact, children who witness domestic violence have similar outcomes to physically abused children. They may get physical, emotional, learning, behavioural and/or developmental problems. These symptoms can be wrongly assessed or misdiagnosed as illness, permanent learning difficulties or general misbehaviour. Short-term effects of domestic violence on children include aggressive behaviour, problems at school, fear, anxiety, depression and becoming withdrawn. Long-term effects contain an increase in violence and aggression, being harder to control, resentment, low self-esteem and problems trusting people and forming relationships.<sup>49</sup>

## Victim Support Scotland work with victims of domestic abuse

- 4.5.5** Children who live in a household with domestic abuse are at an increased risk of behavioural problems, emotional trauma and mental health difficulties in adult life.<sup>50</sup> By providing support to victims of domestic abuse and other family members who may be affected by the abuse, Victim Support Scotland aims to improve home environments for children across Scotland.
- 4.5.6** Victim Support Scotland is currently involved in an EU project called *Increasing Self Awareness – Victims of Intimate Partner Violence – Assessing risk of repeat victimisation and enhancing resilience strategies*. The project aims to prevent and combat violence against children, young people and women, as well as protect victims and groups at risk.

## 4.6 We live longer, healthier lives

**4.6.1** Crime affects people in many different ways. Victims are sometimes shocked and confused over what they are feeling and how much impact the incident has on their daily lives.<sup>51</sup> Regardless of whether the victim sustains any physical injuries, the incident may still leave a substantial psychological impact.<sup>52</sup> Reporting the crime to the Police and going through an investigation and subsequent court procedure can add to the strain the victim is already feeling and further traumatise and re-victimise the individual.<sup>53</sup>

**4.6.2** The amount of impact a crime will have on the victim depends on factors such as:<sup>54</sup>

- The victim's personality, including age and gender
- The type of crime
- Whether the victim knows the person who committed the crime
- Past experiences in the victim's life, including previous victimisation
- Social networks and support given by family, friends, the Police and other people/organisations that the victim comes into contact with



### Crime affects mental health

**4.6.3** Of victims who come in contact with Victim Support Scotland, 90% experience psychological or emotional consequences as a result of crime. Of them, 52% are extremely bothered by these consequences and 18% somewhat bothered. Feelings vary depending on the offence. Victims of personal offences are most likely to report emotions indicating anxiety (40%) compared to victims of household theft (27%) and vandalism (29%).<sup>55</sup>

**4.6.4** Anger, as a reaction to the crime, is not only directed at the offender. Anger can also be directed at family, friends and employers, who, from the victim's perspective, fail to see the significance of the event. Many victims also feel angry with themselves for having failed, or been unable to protect themselves, which can lead to feelings of guilt or depression.<sup>56</sup>

**4.6.5** Looking more closely at domestic abuse, 75% of cases of domestic violence result in physical injuries or mental health consequences for women.<sup>57</sup> Domestic violence and other abuse is the most prevalent cause of depression and mental health difficulties for women.<sup>58</sup> Around 70% of female psychiatric in-patient and 80% of those in secure settings have experienced physical and/or sexual abuse.<sup>59</sup> Abused women are more

■ **Personal crimes (48%) are in particular more likely to take place at the weekend, compared to household crimes (35%).<sup>258</sup>**

likely to suffer depression, anxiety, psychosomatic symptoms, eating disorders and sexual dysfunctions. Violence can also affect their reproductive health<sup>60</sup> which may further impact on their mental wellbeing.

### Crime affects physical health

- 4.6.6** Apart from an emotional impact, crime can also have a strong physical impact on victims. Primarily, the incident itself may result in life threatening injuries from, for instance, gunshots and knife wounds. Secondly, the crime may lead to future health conditions such as rapid heart rate, heart attack and stroke. Being a victim of crime can lead to an increased risk of cardiac distress and chronic pain,<sup>61</sup> so decreasing the effects of victimisation has a positive impact on victims' physical health conditions.

### Victimisation linked to self-harm

- 4.6.7** Domestic violence commonly results in self-harm and attempted suicide. About 33% of women attending emergency departments for self-harm are victims of domestic violence; abused women are five times more likely to attempt suicide; and 33% of suicide attempts can be attributed to current or past experience of domestic violence.<sup>62</sup>

### Support impacts on recovery

- 4.6.8** Early intervention can have a substantial effect on a victim's recovery.<sup>63</sup> Victims who wish to, but lack the ability to, engage with support services are likely to experience a more severe impact in the aftermath of crime.<sup>64</sup> Victim Support Scotland provides support and information to people affected by crime. We aim to help the person cope with the incident and lessen both the psychological and physical impact. Some victims will never be able to leave the crime behind completely, but with the right support most people are able to get back to some form of normality, living longer, healthier and happier lives.

## 4.7 We have tackled the significant inequalities in Scottish society

### Inequalities encourage offending behaviour

- 4.7.1** Scottish prisons draw their population from the areas with the highest levels of social and economic inequalities.<sup>65</sup> One in nine men from the most deprived communities in Scotland will spend time in prison before they are 23 years old.<sup>66</sup>
- 4.7.2** "The severity and pervasiveness of drug and alcohol problems as well as histories of physical and mental health problems among the prison population is difficult to over-emphasise. These rates show how prisons can act as the catchall for the social problems we have failed to deal with elsewhere. Although deprivation should not be accepted as an excuse for criminal behaviour, there is clearly a strong link between the two."<sup>67</sup> As a result, people living in deprived areas are more likely to become victims of crime.

### Fear of crime is affected by inequalities

- 4.7.3** Fear of crime is higher in deprived areas. Research shows that the following socio-economic factors are associated with higher levels of fear of crime:<sup>68</sup>
- Being in a partly skilled or unskilled occupation
  - Living in low income households (less than £10,000 per annum)
  - Living in council or housing association accommodation

- **Regarding the time, the majority of both household crimes (73%) and personal crimes (59%) take place between 6 p.m. and 6 a.m.**<sup>259</sup>

- 4.7.4** Those classified as living in more deprived areas are more likely to feel that the crime rates have increased in their local area during the last two years (44%), compared to people living in affluent areas (17%). People renting from the council or a housing association are also more likely than private renters and home owners to feel that the crime rate in their local area has increased over the last two years (39%, compared to 29% and 30% respectively).<sup>69</sup>

### **Victim Support works in partnership across all Scottish communities**

- 4.7.5** In addition to crime itself, fear of crime has a detrimental effect on communities. Victim Support Scotland provides information and guidance, which helps people form realistic expectations and estimations of the actual risk of crime.

- 4.7.6** Victim Support works with communities across Scotland to improve local social and economic conditions by diminishing the effects of crime. We work in close partnerships with external justice agencies, for instance the Police, Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service, Scottish Court Service and other victim organisations. We also serve as a partner on the eight Scottish Community Justice Authorities, aiming to tackle re-offending and find local solutions to criminality. Working with people affected by any type of crime, from all parts of society, Victim Support Scotland brings extensive knowledge and experience of how crime and victimisation affects different people throughout Scotland and what practices may be used to lessen the impact of crime.

## **4.8 We have improved the life chances for children, young people and families at risk**

### **Young offenders**

- 4.8.1** Abuse, neglect and unstable family backgrounds can have a devastating effect on children's lives. Many of the children in custody in the UK are among the most vulnerable.<sup>70</sup> About 29% of boys<sup>71</sup> and 44% of girls<sup>72</sup> in prison custody have previously been in care and 40% of girls and 25% of boys in prison report having suffered violence at home. 80% state they were excluded from school.<sup>73</sup> Only 30% of children who offend live with both their parents.<sup>74</sup>
- 4.8.2** The law in Scotland provides for children to be criminally liable at a younger age than anywhere else in Europe.<sup>75</sup> The Scottish prison system holds over 200 under-18's in prisons, which is, for instance, 40% of the number held in Italy, a country ten times larger in population than Scotland.<sup>76</sup>

### **Support decreases risk of offending**

- 4.8.3** Without the right support, children, young people and families at risk may feel let down and unable to sustain an appropriate living. As a result they may turn to criminal activities. Around 15% of children in custody have statements of special educational needs, compared to 2.9% of the general population.<sup>77</sup> The picture is the same for adult offenders, with a large proportion of prisoners experiencing multiple forms of disadvantage and deprivation.<sup>78</sup> In respect to basic skills:<sup>79</sup>

- eight out of 10 prisoners have the writing skills of an 11-year-old
- 65% have the numeracy skills of an 11-year-old
- five out of 10 have the reading skills of an 11-year-old
- seven out of 10 have used drugs before coming to prison
- seven out of 10 have suffered from at least two mental disorders
- two out of 10 male prisoners have previously attempted suicide
- 37% of female prisoners have attempted suicide

#### 4.8.4 Compared to the general population, prisoners are:<sup>80</sup>

- 13 times more likely to have been in care as a child
- 10 times more likely to have been a regular truant from school
- 13 times more likely to be unemployed
- 2.5 times more likely to have a family member who has been convicted of a criminal offence
- six times more likely to have been a young father
- 15 times more likely to be HIV positive

For younger prisoners aged 18-20 these problems are even more severe. Their basic skills, rates of unemployment and previous levels of school exclusion are a third worse than for older prisoners.<sup>81</sup>

### Victim Support Scotland work with victims of youth crime

**4.8.5** By working with victims of crime and the communities we serve, Victim Support Scotland helps individuals and families at risk to plan a way forward. Improved social and economic quality of life provides incentives and possibilities to live fulfilling lives away from criminal activities. In Scotland, Victim Support organises annual public speaking competitions for school children. Through the event, we bring together children and their schools with some of the highest judicial authorities in Scotland in a constructive and informative cooperation. The aim is to spread knowledge of crime, victimisation and associated adverse effects on their local communities, which also serves to influence the children's choice whether or not to engage in criminal activities themselves.

**4.8.6** Victim Support Scotland has, in collaboration with Dundee City Council, set up a service specifically aimed at victims of youth crime in Dundee. The VOYCE service provides emotional support and information regarding criminal proceedings, and in particular the Children's Hearing System. In addition, VOYCE provides victims with the opportunity to make their voices heard regarding the effects of the crime, by liaising with other criminal justice agencies working with the offender. This also makes the young offender aware of the consequences of their actions, which may affect their choice to commit future crimes. Victim Support Scotland encourages all local authorities to develop similar partnerships to provide information and support to victims of youth crime, who are often young people themselves.<sup>82</sup>

## 4.9 We live our lives safe from crime, disorder and danger

### Crime in Scotland

**4.9.1** During 2007/2008 there were around 385,000 crimes and 572,000 offences recorded by Scottish Police Forces.<sup>83</sup> Figures show that just over one in five adults (22%) in Scotland becomes a victim each year.<sup>84</sup> Despite this, crime is considered to be a problem in Scotland by as many as 93% of Scots, with 56% considering it to be a "big problem".<sup>85</sup>

### Crime affects people differently

**4.9.2** When asking victims what they think is the single worst thing about the crime, the response generally depends on the type of incident. The most common response in relation to vandalism is the mess caused by the crime (stated by 30% of victims). Victims of household theft give anger (19%) as their most common response and in relation to personal offences the fact that the incident happened is seen as the single worst thing.<sup>86</sup>

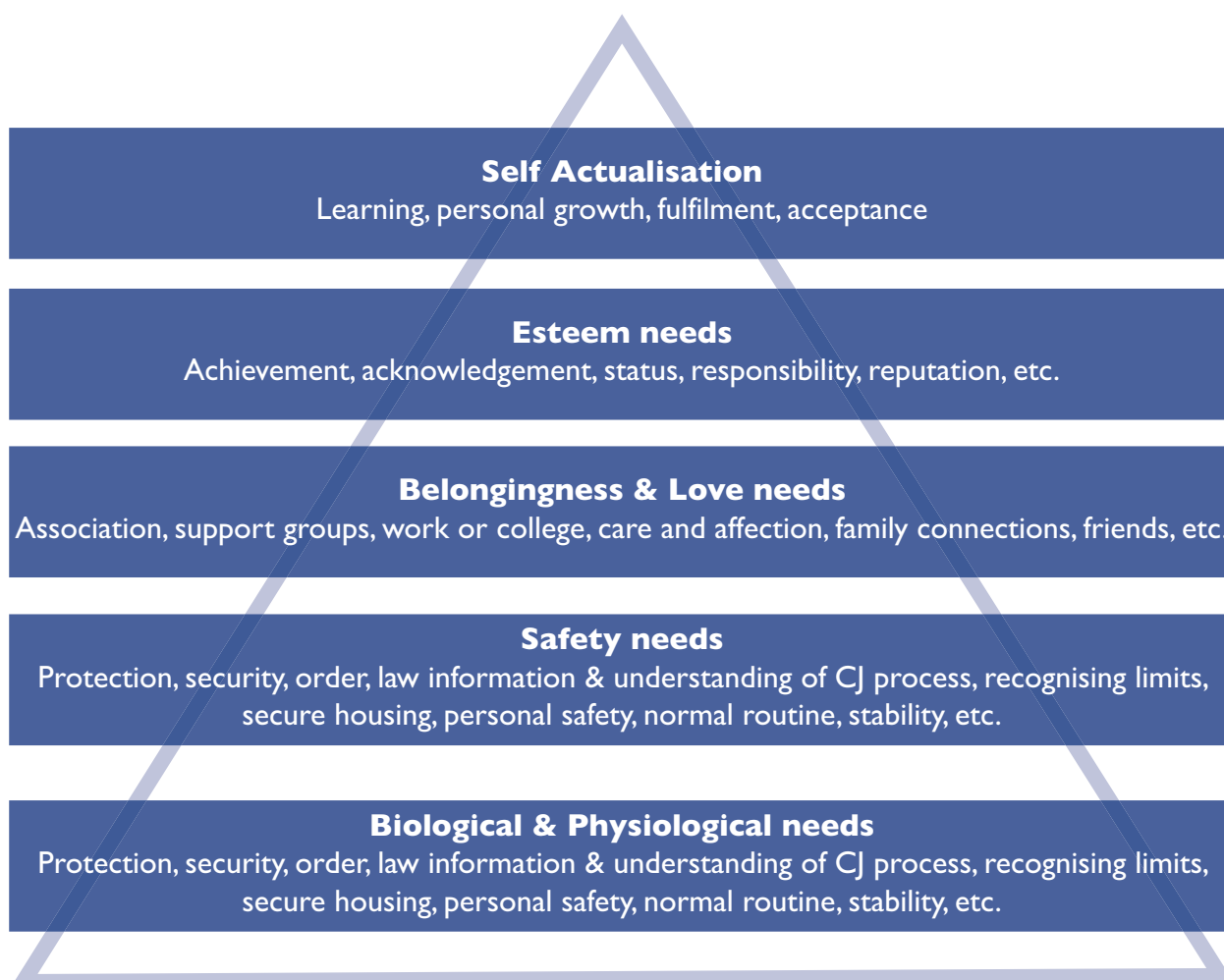
■ **The majority of offences (78%) take place within the victim's local area, defined as within 15 minutes walk from the victim's home.**<sup>260</sup>

**4.9.3** “These findings again highlight important differences between the three main crime types in terms of their impact on victims, with victims of vandalism and household theft focusing on largely practical issues (the mess caused by the vandalism or the cost of replacing stolen items), while victims of personal offences tended to focus more on the emotional impact of the crime (worry/loss of sleep)”.<sup>87</sup>

**4.9.4** The differences between the crime categories, along with the knowledge that the victim’s reaction will depend on personality, social network and other circumstances in the person’s life, highlights the fact that victims must not be treated as a homogeneous group. Research shows that there are some basic needs that are similar for most victims. These needs include:<sup>88</sup>

- Immediate assistance – cleaning up a home following a housebreaking, health care, etc.
- Information – generic information about the criminal justice system, effects of crime, crime prevention advice etc.
- Emotional support – some victims require in-depth emotional support from specialised organisations and agencies, whereas others may be able to rely solely on support from families and friends
- Practical support – for example changing locks, installing alarms, repairing property, assistance with claims to the Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority

### **Victim Support Scotland victims’ hierarchy of needs (based on Maslow’s hierarchy of needs)**





**4.9.5** Victim Support Scotland works with victims and witnesses of all crime categories, regardless of whether or not the crime is reported to the Police. In order to provide the best and most appropriate assistance in the aftermath of crime, Victim Support Scotland assesses the needs of each individual victim and tailors the support accordingly. Our Assessment Toolbox assists practitioners with the prioritisation and management of referrals, thereby ensuring that resources are deployed to support the victims with the greatest need in the best possible way. Through our practical experience working with people affected by crime, we have developed a hierarchy of victims' needs, based on Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, after which we tailor our support. We also assist people in recognising the physical and emotional effects the incident has had on them, by using a form of self-assessment.

## **Victim Support Scotland has a wide range of services**

**4.9.6** By providing support to victims and witnesses, along with a listening ear to family members and others who are concerned about crime in their neighbourhood, Victim Support Scotland helps people feel safer in their own homes and in their community. Our User Feedback Survey shows that 61% of Victim Support Scotland's service users felt that our support and advice contributed to a reduction of emotional/psychological issues, and many believed that the support contributed to them coping better with the consequences of the crime.

**4.9.7** In addition to providing support to people affected by crime, Victim Support Scotland takes part in the development of criminal and social justice policies in Scotland, ensuring that new legislation and guidance reflects the needs and wishes of victims and witnesses. We contribute to a safer Scotland, where the needs of all people affected by crime are at the heart of the justice system and where:

- People affected by crime have access to services which will reduce the impact of crime and assist them in their recovery
- Communities and people affected by crime feel supported
- The interests of victims and others affected by crime are fully represented
- There are positive initiatives aimed at reducing crime, the fear of crime, offending and victimisation
- The justice system and social policy development recognises and addresses the needs of people affected by crime

**4.9.8** We also support the work of criminal justice agencies and voluntary organisations to improve the outcomes for offenders and reduce re-offending and victimisation. A just and well-functioning criminal justice system, reflecting the views of Scottish communities and providing punishments that fit the crimes, will assist in ensuring the safety, security and prosperity of all people living in Scotland.

## **4.10 We live in well-designed, sustainable places where we are able to access the amenities and services we need**

**4.10.1** Victim Support Scotland provides information and support to people affected by crime, including victims, witnesses, family members, friends etc. Our community based victim service assisted almost 100,000 people during 2007/08, with support ranging from practical information regarding criminal injuries compensation and how to report a crime to emotional support and coping strategies. During the same time period, our court based witness service assisted over 80,000 witnesses in courts across Scotland.



**4.10.2** The main body of knowledge, understanding and experience of victims' and witnesses' needs resides within the voluntary sector.<sup>89</sup> Victim Support Scotland works with the justice agencies as well as other sectors such as community services, health, education, security and retail organisations to raise awareness, develop joint approaches and share best practice advice on how to minimise the effects of crime and victimisation.

## 4.11 We have strong, resilient and supportive communities where people take responsibility for their own actions and how they affect others

### A well-functioning justice system

**4.11.1** In order for people to take responsibility for their own actions and how they affect others, Scotland needs to have a well-functioning criminal justice system with fair treatment for both offenders and victims. Services for victims require to be continually developed, as support in the aftermath of crime is an essential element of criminal and social justice.

**4.11.2** The vast majority of victims have a wish and an expectation that the justice system will support and protect them before, during and after a crime. It is therefore essential that victim organisations and justice agencies deliver effective programmes to meet these needs and expectations. In the aftermath of crime, a central need for victims is to be believed, understood, supported, informed and involved in the decision making process. Safety and security are of paramount importance and victims need to see that their concerns are being taken seriously and acted upon.<sup>90</sup>

### Confidence in the criminal justice system

**4.11.3** Research shows that confidence in the criminal justice system is dependent on the individual's knowledge of the system. In the British Crime Survey, 53% of respondents claim to be satisfied with the criminal justice system in their local area compared to 44% at a national level. Regarding the number of crimes, around two in three people (65%) believe that crime nationally has increased during the last two years, but only two in five people think crime has increased locally.<sup>91</sup> This difference could be explained by the fact that people have a greater knowledge about their local criminal justice system compared to the national system.

**4.11.4** People across developed European countries tend to regard the justice system as cut off from the public and that they do not have an input into its working. Among all the justice agencies across Europe, the public has the highest confidence in the Police, which in part reflects the public's familiarity with

*" Thank you very much for your excellent service to me. It was very friendly, relaxed, helpful and practical. I found it very encouraging." - Victim*

■ **The most common crime location is immediately outside the victim's home, where around half of all offences take place (49%). The second most common location for a crime to take place is inside the victim's own home (14%).<sup>261</sup>**

the Police. The court system is often considered to be complex and hard to understand, which may explain why the public shows least confidence in the courts.<sup>92</sup>

### Scots' opinions on sentencing

- 4.11.5** People in Scotland tend to have a strong opinion regarding the sentencing of offenders. The opinions are generally based on hearsay and media coverage rather than knowledge.<sup>93</sup> Limited understanding of the criminal justice system and the involved agencies creates unrealistic expectations, which in turn undermines the confidence in the system. News/media coverage, emphasising the most serious and violent crimes, are likely to encourage the public's perception that crime is getting worse in terms of both seriousness and volume. This further decreases the public's confidence in the criminal justice system.<sup>94</sup>
- 4.11.6** Despite the general belief that courts are too lenient and inconsistent, when asked to consider specific scenarios, people's opinions on what sentence would be appropriate are broadly in line with what the court ruling would be.<sup>95</sup>
- 4.11.7** "This suggests that the distance between what the courts and the public deem as appropriate sentencing is not as great as the public currently perceive. This could be a result of perceptions being driven by a minority of extreme cases which tend to attract media attention, rather than reflecting the overall picture".<sup>96</sup>
- 4.11.8** By being informed of the work and functions of the criminal justice system and having information regarding crimes and victimisation put in context, the public would be able to evaluate actual risks. People would also know what to expect from the criminal justice system.

Victim Support Scotland takes an active part in advancing the general public's knowledge of criminal justice issues in Scotland. Along with general information on court proceedings, we provide details regarding the role of the victim and witness in the criminal and social justice systems.

### Reporting a crime to the Police

- 4.11.9** In order for offenders to take responsibility for their actions, the policy position of the Scottish Prisons Commission is that "punishment must be visible, swift and fair" with a view to secure public safety and support victim recovery.<sup>97</sup> To initiate a criminal proceeding, the crime has to be reported to the Police. Far from all crimes are reported; only 36% of personal and 38% of household crimes are brought to the attention of the Police.<sup>98</sup>
- 4.11.10** The frequency with which victims report crimes to the Police is strongly related to the type of crime involved. Crimes involving theft are in general more likely to be reported. This may be partly explained by the fact that insurance companies require incidents to be reported in order to process any claims for stolen property. Nearly all vehicle thefts (94%) and 62% of all housebreaking incidents are reported, but only half of all thefts from a person (51%).<sup>99</sup> Looking across all European countries, the same pattern is revealed. Household crimes are generally more likely to be reported than personal crimes, with sexual incidents being least frequently reported; only about 15% of all sexual incidents are reported throughout the EU.<sup>100</sup>
- 4.11.11** The reasons for not reporting to the Police may depend on the crime. Generally, victims' reasons include: "the incident was not serious enough" (42%), "the family solved it themselves" (24%), "the Police would do nothing to help" (14%) or "fear of reprisals" (5%).<sup>101</sup>

The choice of whether or not to report a crime to the Police is taken by the individual victim. Victim Support Scotland offers support services in the aftermath of crime regardless of whether or not the crime is reported.

## 4.12 We take pride in a strong, fair and inclusive national identity

- 4.12.1** People living in Scotland should be proud to do so. Everybody should feel that the Scottish society listens to and respects the rights of each individual. When developing support and information in the aftermath of crime, we assess the needs of each victim to ensure our services fit their individual requirements and all stages of recovery.

Scotland is ranked as the best country in Europe at providing support to victims in the aftermath of crime.<sup>102</sup> Victim Support takes great pride in ensuring that we maintain and continue to enhance our high standard of support, offered to all people who experience victimisation while in Scotland.

## 4.13 Our public services are high quality, continually improving, efficient and responsive to local people's needs

### The best service for people affected by crime

- 4.13.1** Communities and people throughout Scotland have an increased expectation that those affected by crime will receive appropriate care and support. This is particularly the case in respect of victims' needs within the criminal and social justice systems.<sup>103</sup>

- 4.13.2** Victim Support Scotland provides a public service to people affected by crime. Our offices are located throughout Scotland and we base our support on the needs of the individual victims and witnesses we meet. Our Assessment Toolbox ensures that each victim's individual requirements are identified and that our work is focused on the people who need it the most.

- 4.13.3** We work in close partnership with other agencies and organisations within the Scottish criminal justice sector to provide services and a safe environment for victims and witnesses of crime. We support a clear policy outcome for all agencies and governmental departments to ensure that all victims and witnesses receive appropriate care and support. The objective should be to maximise crime victims' potential to return speedily to as normal a life as possible.<sup>104</sup>

- 4.13.4** "We must reduce the damage that crime has on victims and communities. This requires us to respond decisively and effectively when confronted by serious, violent crime".<sup>105</sup>

- 4.13.5** Victim Support Scotland is committed to quality and we construct our work in accordance with the Balance Score Card and the Business Excellence Model. These tools drive our continuous improvement and provide clear focus on future strategies and objectives. As the first voluntary organisation in Scotland, Victim Support has been given the 'Skillsmark' award for our high quality educational programmes within the justice sector. The quality mark was awarded after rigorous assessments, where it was noted that "Victim Support Scotland demonstrates a positive attitude to diversity in its training materials".<sup>106</sup>

- 4.13.6** Victim Support Scotland has one of the most developed user feedback systems in the world. Our online user satisfaction survey measures expectations and delivered service to ensure that we maintain our commitment to provide the best quality public service to people affected by crime throughout Scotland.

■ **Of the one million (approx) crimes taking place between 1 April 2005 and 31 March 2006, 44% were committed against individuals. The remaining 56% were against property.**<sup>257</sup>

## 5 National indicators and targets

Progress against the above described national outcomes will be measured against the following national indicators and targets. Victim Support Scotland has specified how we can assist local authorities in delivering services under each heading.

### 5.1 At least halve the gap in total research and development spending compared with EU average by 2011

**5.1.1** In order to provide the most accurate and appropriate services to victims and witnesses of crime, it is essential that up-to-date information on their needs is available. Victimology is a relatively new area of study and more information is needed regarding the psychological effects of victimisation, along with the development of guidance to practitioners working directly with victims and witnesses.

**5.1.2** Victim Support Scotland works closely with researchers and academics, both nationally and internationally, to advance victimology research and develop best practice regarding the provision of support in the aftermath of crime.

**5.1.3** Victim Support Scotland is an active member of the European network Victim Support Europe, where we share our knowledge and expertise with other national victim support organisations across Europe. Our user survey has been developed following work with the Netherlands and we have shared our assessment framework with other countries.

### 5.2 Improve knowledge transfer from research activity in universities

**5.2.1** Victim Support Scotland has a close working relationship with many research institutes and Universities. We have doubled our investment in the area of research and development. The use of external academic researchers ensures that we are accessing the most relevant information regarding individual needs in the aftermath of crime to influence our work. For instance, external researchers from Edinburgh University were appointed to develop and conduct our user service pilot project.

**5.2.2** Victim Support Scotland is persistently striving to ensure that our service practices are evidence-based and we encourage collaborative projects with schools, universities and other educational establishments. We will continue the commitment of advancing research and development to ensure that we remain the best in the world at meeting the support needs of victims in the aftermath of crime.



## 5.3 Reduce number of working age people with severe literacy and numeracy problems

**5.3.1** Inadequate literacy and numeracy skills can have a big impact on a person's life, making it difficult to attain and maintain a satisfying job, which may lead to criminal activities.

- 80% of prisoners in Scotland have the writing skills of an 11-year-old
- 65% of prisoners in Scotland have the numeracy skills of an 11-year-old
- 50% of prisoners in Scotland have the reading skills of an 11-year-old<sup>107</sup>

**5.3.2** Apart from this general lack of basic skills, prisoners in Scotland are 10 times more likely to have been a regular truant from school and 13 times more likely to be unemployed.<sup>108</sup>

**5.3.3** Research also links socio-economic factors to fear of crime. People in partly skilled or unskilled occupation are more worried about crime than professionals and people in managerial positions.<sup>109</sup>

**5.3.4** By providing services to develop reading, writing and numeracy skills, people in Scotland will improve their chances of attaining a job and making their own choices in life, which in turn decreases the risk of them turning to criminality.

**5.3.5** Victim Support Scotland provides a wide range of services to people affected by crime, for instance administering criminal injuries compensation claims. Through our close contact with service users, our practitioners are able to recognise literacy and numeracy problems and, if appropriate, refer the person on to suitable agencies for continued support and learning facilities.

## 5.4 Decrease the proportion of individuals living in poverty

### Increased risk of victimisation

**5.4.1** It is recognised that people of a certain age, sex or socio-economic group are at greater or lesser risk of being victimised than other groups.<sup>110</sup> Crime concentration (victimisations per victim) is greatest in areas of highest crime<sup>111</sup> and with Scottish prisons drawing their populations from the communities with the highest levels of social and economic inequalities,<sup>112</sup> there is an increased risk for people living in deprived areas of becoming a victim of crime.

### Repeat victimisation

**5.4.2** Research on repeat victimisation in Scotland suggests that the most reliable indicator of future victimisation is past victimisation;<sup>113</sup> the probability of becoming a victim again increases along with the number of prior victimisations. It is now widely accepted in the UK that a small proportion of the population suffers a high proportion of all crime.<sup>114</sup>

*" Thank you and your team for all the help and support over the past three months. I can't thank you enough and I wish you the best." - Victim*

■ **Around three in 10 households that experience vandalism are victims of more than one incident, with one in eight households being victimised three or more times.**<sup>263</sup>

**5.4.3** Many people in deprived areas are victims of repeat victimisation<sup>115</sup> and/or multiple victimisation<sup>116</sup>. Worryingly, the statistics show that those who live in areas suffering the highest incidence of repeat household breakings are on the lowest income levels and can least afford house insurance.<sup>117</sup> Research from Victim Support shows that over half (57%) of victims who did not have contents insurance when they were burgled said the reason for this was that they ‘could not afford it’.<sup>118</sup>

**5.4.4** Around 21% of households that had been a victim of housebreaking in 2005/06 experienced two or more incidents of housebreaking during that time.<sup>119</sup> Once a house has been broken into, it is four times more likely to be victimised again compared to houses that have not been broken into before.<sup>120</sup> Even living on the same side of a street as a home previously broken into increases the risk of victimisation. Offenders admit returning to the same targets; the reasons why include the ease of previous visits, laziness and the knowledge that they left items which they wanted.<sup>121</sup>



**5.4.5** The repeat victimisation trend is similar for personal crimes. Three in 10 victims of violent crime experience two or more incidents, with one in six being a victim of three or more incidents.<sup>122</sup> Lead-ups to repeat incidents come in various forms; relatively trivial incidents may for instance precede more serious crimes.<sup>123</sup>

### Impact of repeat victimisation

**5.4.6** Repeat victims can suffer many different crime types, sometimes on a daily basis. Many of them never come to the attention of the Police. The impact of repeat victimisation is substantial; victims do not get ‘used’ to crime. Repeat victims suffer many increasing emotional and practical effects, even when the individual incident appears trivial. Anger is a common response to repeat victimisation. The incidents can also have a substantial social impact. Many repeat victims become socially excluded and withdraw, either partially or completely, from any social contact during the worst periods of victimisation.<sup>124</sup> Other responses to repeat victimisation are decreased health; feeling unsafe and negative changes in lifestyle in order to protect oneself.<sup>125</sup>

**5.4.7** “That a series of apparently trivial events can have such an impact on victims is of crucial importance to inform appropriate Police responses to incidents that may otherwise be dismissed as insignificant”.<sup>126</sup> Repeat victims often have low expectations of what the Police can do to help them<sup>127</sup>, which may lead to a failure to report future crimes.<sup>128</sup>

**5.4.8** Living in poverty may strengthen the victim’s reaction to victimisation. Victim Support Scotland’s aim in providing support is to intervene quickly after the first reported incident, to prevent any further victimisation and rebuild the victim’s confidence. Timely, accessible and appropriate victim support can decrease the effects of crime and the likelihood of individuals falling into poverty, for instance by failing to pay their bills or maintain general financial affairs. Apart from emotional support to deal with the aftershock of crime, Victim Support Scotland can also provide practical information to minimise the risk of re-victimisation. We can also provide access to, and if appropriate refer on to, other appropriate agencies and organisations regarding for instance housing, social benefit and health queries.

## 5.5 Improve the *quality of healthcare experience*

**5.5.1** Criminal behaviour can be both a reason for, and a result of, mental disorders. Research from the English Youth Justice Board shows the following characteristics of young offenders:<sup>129</sup>

- Almost a quarter are identified as having learning difficulties (IQ less than 70)
- A further third have borderline learning difficulties
- 31% are identified as having a mental health need
- 18% have problems with depression
- 10% suffer from anxiety
- 9% report a history of self-harm within the last month
- 9% suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder
- 7% have problems with hyperactivity
- 5% report psychotic-like symptoms

**5.5.2** People affected by crime can turn to Victim Support Scotland for support and information. We base our service on the needs of the individual victim and may, if appropriate, refer a person on to any health agency that may be of assistance, including the NHS. With the right support, victims may return to work and as normal a life as possible with less impact on the economy in terms of health costs and social security payments. It is widely believed that health service providers in Scotland work with more people as a result of crime than the total number of people with cancer, heart disease and stroke.<sup>130</sup> Effective early intervention by victim support organisations can reduce demands on health services, enabling it to focus on other patients.

## 5.6 Reduce the rate of increase in the proportion of children with their *Body Mass Index* outwith a healthy range by 2018

**5.6.1** Victimization is associated with adverse effects on both psychological and physical health. Some victims develop symptoms of excessive appetite or eating disorders as a direct result of the incident.<sup>131</sup> The additional vulnerability of children may increase the negative effects of crime, compared to adult victims.<sup>132</sup>

### Crime impacts on physical activities

**5.6.2** Children who experience crime often see their social lives affected, both in the school and home environment. Children may for instance choose to stay inside during breaks or after school rather than going out to play or take part in sporting activities, because of fear of meeting the offender(s).<sup>133</sup> This has adverse effects on children's health and may cause children to gain weight. Some victims use food as a means to cope with the negative effects of crime and some children turn to alcohol/drugs, which further affects their Body Mass Index.

**5.6.3** Timely and effective support in the aftermath of crime helps to rebuild the victim's confidence and enable the child to move forward in life. By feeling more confident, the victim will be more willing to engage with others in sports and other activities, which has positive effects on the child's Body Mass Index.

## 5.7 Increase the average score of adults on the *Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale* by 2011

### Crime affects mental wellbeing

**5.7.1** People affected by crime often feel a range of emotions; the nature of the crime impacts greatly on the emotions felt by the victim. Overall, the most common emotions are anger and annoyance, felt by 47% and



33% respectively. In general, victims of personal crimes report a greater range of emotions. Assault victims have expressed anger as their most common reaction (41%). 22% also reported shock, 7% felt that their confidence had been reduced or that they felt vulnerable, 7% felt afraid and 6% felt tearful.<sup>134</sup>

**5.7.2** For victims who receive services from Victim Support Scotland, these figures are generally much higher since we work primarily with high need victims. In our internal user feedback survey, almost all (90%) of our service users indicate that being victimised has had psychological or emotional consequences for them, with 52% stating they are extremely bothered by these consequences. 72% state that they still have psychological or emotional problems as a result of the crime.<sup>135</sup>

**5.7.3** Physical injuries such as scarring may also have a negative effect on the long-term psychological recovery, since the scars serve as a constant reminder of the crime.<sup>136</sup>

**5.7.4** People who have already been victimised are considerably more likely (for particular crimes, almost twice as likely) to be worried about being a victim again compared to those who had not previously experienced crime.<sup>137</sup>

### **Mental problems amongst offenders**

**5.7.5** Mental wellbeing also plays a part for offenders; the rates of mental health problems are at least three times higher for young offenders within the criminal justice population than the general population.<sup>138</sup> 96% of male remanded young offenders are diagnosed with at least one psychiatric disorder and 57% with having three or more. 95% of male sentenced young offenders are diagnosed with at least one psychiatric disorder, 54% with three or more.<sup>139</sup>

**5.7.6** By improving general mental wellbeing amongst people in Scotland, potential offenders may get the help they need to stay out of criminal activities, which will reduce overall victimisation. For people who have the unfortunate experience of being on the receiving end of a crime, Victim Support Scotland provides a range of services aimed to help the person cope with the effects of the incident and improve their psychological wellbeing.

## **5.8 Increase healthy life expectancy at birth in the most deprived areas**

### **Violence against infants**

**5.8.1** Violence and criminal activities are part of many children's lives from a very early age; between 4-9% of women are abused during their pregnancies and/or after the birth.<sup>140</sup> Some 30% of all domestic violence cases start during pregnancy<sup>141</sup> and domestic violence has been identified as a prime cause of miscarriages and still-births.<sup>142</sup> Estimations show that only 10% of domestic violence cases involve an isolated event and that the other 90% are systematic beatings, often with escalating violence.<sup>143</sup>

**5.8.2** Infants are at a remarkably high risk of victimisation. "Whilst the risk of becoming a victim of homicide is exceptionally low among children as a whole, the reverse is true of infants below one year of age. In England and Wales, infants under one year face around four times the average risk of becoming a victim of homicide".<sup>144</sup> In five out of seven years (1997/98 to 2003/04), the homicide rate for infants under the age of one has been the highest of any single age band.<sup>145</sup>

■ **Victims of other household and/or personal crimes are around three times more likely to also be a victim of domestic abuse than non-victims (6% compared to 2%).<sup>262</sup>**



- 5.8.3** Victim Support Scotland works with people and communities affected by crime, individually and through partnerships. By working closely with the families involved, we provide support and information to reduce victimisation and abuse for all age groups. Our work with victims of domestic abuse also serves to assist in the provision of a safe home environment for children.

## 5.9 Reduce the percentage of the adult population who smoke to 22% by 2010

- 5.9.1** There are many different reasons why people begin to smoke or return to smoking after having previously been smoke-free. When trying to stop after having been a regular smoker, the person experiences mental and physical withdrawal symptoms which can include irritability, anger, depression, tiredness, inability to sleep or to concentrate, restlessness, headaches and increased appetite.<sup>146</sup> Being a victim of crime can have similar effects, which may be further strengthened by the withdrawal symptoms from smoking. In order to lessen these symptoms, victims may therefore be tempted to return to smoking.
- 5.9.2** Smoking is not only addictive, it quickly becomes a routine and like many habits it can be very hard to break. Smokers also often report that smoking helps to relieve feelings of anxiety and stress.<sup>147</sup> Being a victim of crime is an extremely stressful experience and people who have previously managed to stop smoking may return to try to overcome the stress of the incident.

- 5.9.3** By providing emotional support in the aftermath of crime, Victim Support Scotland helps individuals cope with the crime itself and the following period of dealing with the memories of the incident. Speaking to someone about the experience of the crime can help people find a way to release some of the stress without (re)turning to smoking.

## 5.10 Reduce alcohol related hospital admissions by 2011

### Link between alcohol and crime

- 5.10.1** Alcohol can make people more aggressive and willing to take risks they would not take otherwise.<sup>148</sup> 95% of people in Scotland think that alcohol abuse is a problem, with 65% considering it a big problem.<sup>149</sup> While the number of violent incidents involving alcohol has fallen over the past decade, there has been an increase in the proportion of total violence involving alcohol.<sup>150</sup> Deaths caused by alcohol consumption have doubled in the past two decades, with more people becoming ill and dying younger.<sup>151</sup>
- 5.10.2** Alcohol abuse has a strong link with antisocial behaviour and crime. As well as being a factor in a significant proportion of homicides, alcohol is involved in a range of other violent offences. In fact, alcohol is the most likely precipitating factor in crimes of violence;<sup>152</sup> approximately 40% of all violent crimes are alcohol-related. The figures vary depending on the type of violence.<sup>153</sup> "Alcohol is often involved in cases of rape, and is one of the most commonly cited factors in attempts to explain or excuse it".<sup>154</sup> In around a third of violent domestic abuse cases, the offender was under the influence of alcohol.<sup>155</sup> Alcohol contributes to intimate partner violence in a number of ways. The level of consumption impacts on the likelihood and severity of violence.<sup>156</sup>
- 5.10.3** Scottish Police Forces continuously witness the problem caused by binge drinking and alcohol abuse in terms of increasing violent crime. For instance, the FIFA 2006 World Cup was associated



with an increase in the number of people drinking alcohol for prolonged periods of time, which led to a temporary increase in serious assaults.<sup>157</sup>

- 5.10.4** In 2006-07 the effects of alcohol misuse cost the Scottish society £2.25 billion. This equates to more than £500 per year for every adult living in Scotland. £385 million were costs imposed by alcohol misuse on emergency services and the criminal justice system.<sup>158</sup>

### Alcohol impact on emergency visits

- 5.10.5** Alcohol is considered to be a contributory factor in 11% of all attendances at Scottish emergency departments.<sup>159</sup> NHS research estimates that at least 70% of all assaults presented to emergency departments in Scotland may be alcohol-related. On this basis, at least 77 alcohol-related assaults are presented to emergency departments every day in Scotland,<sup>160</sup> which adds up to over 28,000 per year.

### Offenders under the influence of alcohol

- 5.10.6** A very high proportion of offenders<sup>161</sup> have received custodial sentences for crimes committed whilst under the influence of alcohol.<sup>162</sup> This could partly be explained by the fact that alcohol use directly affects cognitive and physical functions, reduces self-control and leaves individuals less capable of a non-violent resolution to conflicts.<sup>163</sup>
- 5.10.7** In the last five years, over half of those accused of homicides were reported to have drunk alcohol and/or have been under the influence of drugs at the time of the incident.<sup>164</sup> 45% of prisoners in 2007 said that they were drunk at the time of the offence.<sup>165</sup> There were almost 12,000 drink driving offences in Scotland in 2006/2007.<sup>166</sup>
- 5.10.8** The prevalence of alcohol use is extremely high among young offenders. 91% admit to using alcohol, which is more common than any other drug.<sup>167</sup> A comprehensive study into drinking and violence in Scotland shows that the number of young offenders who blame alcohol for their crimes has almost doubled in the past 30 years. Young offenders are also far more likely to carry weapons and be more violent when drunk. Some 43% of inmates admitted to drinking Buckfast immediately prior to their offence.
- 5.10.9** “The study indicates that drink per se does not cause people to be violent but it encourages them to go much further than they would have done otherwise.”<sup>168</sup> The combination of substance use with offending may increase the risk of developing substance dependence or/and becoming a persistent offender.<sup>169</sup>

### Link between alcohol and victimisation

- 5.10.10** There is a link between alcohol and offending, but also between alcohol and victimisation. 45% of victims say that the offender(s) were under the influence of alcohol when they committed the crime. This rises to 67% regarding assault victims.<sup>170</sup>
- 5.10.11** 49% of victims of assault believe that the reason the crime took place was because the offender was drunk or under the influence of drugs.<sup>171</sup> Around a third of all victims (34%) state that they had consumed alcohol immediately before the crime took place.<sup>172</sup> A minority of victims (5%) say that they were in some way responsible for the crime because they were under the influence of alcohol.<sup>173</sup>
- 5.10.12** The connection between alcohol and victimisation also works in the opposite direction; victimisation leads to an increased risk of alcohol or other drug abuse<sup>174</sup> since some victims may use it as a method of coping or self-medicating.<sup>175</sup> For instance, victims of domestic abuse have far higher levels of alcohol consumption than non-victims<sup>176</sup> with many women developing alcohol problems following the abuse.<sup>177</sup> Children who witness violence or threats of violence between parents are more likely to display harmful drinking patterns later in life.<sup>178</sup>

**5.10.13** There is also a link between alcohol and self-harming. 62% of males and 50% of females who attend an emergency department in Scotland following self-harm report consuming alcohol. 27% of men and 19% of women cite alcohol as the reason for self-harming.<sup>179</sup>

**5.10.14** With such a clear link between alcohol and crime, reducing the (mis)use of alcohol will lead to fewer offences, which in turn will decrease victimisation. By providing support to people affected by crime, Victim Support Scotland helps victims to return to as normal a life as possible. By rebuilding the victims' confidence and sense of self-worth, people may be less inclined to use alcohol as means to lessen the effects of crime. Victim Support Scotland can also, if appropriate, refer the victim on to services specifically targeting alcohol abuse.

## **5.11 Increase the percentage of people aged 65 and over with high levels of care needs who are cared for at home**

### **Older victims of crime**

**5.11.1** People aged 60 or over are least likely to become victim of either a personal or a household crime in Scotland. Around 9% of people in this age group have been a victim of a household crime, which is just over half that of any other age group. The trend is the same for personal crimes, where only around 2% of people aged 60 or over have been victimised, which is just over half that of any other age group.<sup>180</sup>

**5.11.2** Older people who are victimised tend to only experience a single incident and not be repeat victims.<sup>181</sup> Nonetheless, fear of crime is higher among people aged 60 or over (both men and women) than among any other age group. Over 53% of women aged 60 or over report feeling unsafe when walking along in their local area at night. This group is also the second largest group to report feeling unsafe being home alone after dark.<sup>182</sup>

**5.11.3** Many elderly people feel very connected to their home and the surrounding area. They have retired from previous employment, social networks become smaller and outside leisure activities decrease due to growing physical or mental limitations. These factors largely explain why the majority of elderly crime victims are victimised in or near their home.<sup>183</sup>

**5.11.4** Following a house breaking, elderly victims are more likely than other victims to want to relocate, but this may be difficult due to financial limitations.<sup>184</sup> Impairments and high levels of care needs may further limit the options where the person is able to move. If the elderly victim wishes to stay in the property, he/she may experience an emotional need to withdraw from engaging with the community in the same way as before the incident. It is therefore important to restore a sense of security and safety to the victim as soon as possible after the crime.<sup>185</sup>

**5.11.5** Victim Support Scotland understands the practical and emotional difficulties caused by crime. We provide confidential support services to people of all ages and abilities, with the aim to restore the victim's confidence and ability to return to normal life. Through our services, a larger number of elderly victims of crime would feel secure enough to stay and receive care in their own homes.

## 5.12 All unintentionally homeless households will be entitled to settled accommodation by 2012

### Homelessness as a result of crime

**5.12.1** There can be many underlying causes for homelessness. Violence, including domestic abuse, is a very common cause.<sup>186</sup> Victims can also suffer other indirect consequences of crime which may result in homelessness. For instance, victims of serious crimes such as rape and families bereaved by murder may find it difficult to deal with general financial matters, including paying bills. After a homicide, family members of the victim often describe having difficulties with routine tasks, forgetting to do them, being unable to concentrate or feeling overwhelmed at the prospect. This can often mean that bills are left unpaid<sup>187</sup> which puts victims and associated families at risk of losing their homes.

*"The Victim Support Scotland staff member helped me understand the feelings of insecurity and vulnerability that I was finding hard to deal with and I am very grateful." - Victim*

**5.12.2** The costs of cleaning crime scenes within the victim's house and high funeral costs can have a devastating effect on a family's economy in the aftermath of crime.<sup>188</sup> Victims can also incur financial costs in order to increase their sense of security, by for instance installing alarms, fitting new locks and shatterproof glass.<sup>189</sup>

**5.12.3** Victim Support Scotland can assist with paperwork such as insurance claims, legal forms and criminal injuries compensation applications to ease the financial burden and enable victims or bereaved family members to maintain their economy under control.

**5.12.4** A third of offenders lose their house whilst in prison. When released from custody, the availability of housing has a major impact on re-offending. Research suggests that a stable accommodation can reduce re-offending by 20%.<sup>190</sup> This will in turn result in less victimisation.

### Victimisation of homeless people

**5.12.5** Homeless people are more worried about crime than the wider population, with almost 70% expressing they are worried about becoming a victim.<sup>191</sup> This fear is legitimate<sup>192</sup> as homeless people are at exceptionally high risk of violence and victimisation. Much of the abuse is committed by the general public and the main part of it goes unreported.<sup>193</sup> Homeless women are more worried about crime than men (86% compared to 65%), which may reflect their greater vulnerability and higher risk of victimisation.<sup>194</sup> For homeless women, securing a partner can be a critical strategy to reduce risk of violence and victimisation.<sup>195</sup>

■ **"Crime changes people in fundamental ways that do not lend themselves to quick and easy solutions."**<sup>264</sup>

- 5.12.6** Almost 80% of homeless people have been victims of crime.<sup>196</sup> Compared to the general public, homeless people are 13 times more likely to experience violence and 47 times more likely to become victims of theft.<sup>197</sup> A study conducted in 2005 shows that almost 67% suffered a theft during the previous 12 months (compared to 1.4% of the general population); around 52% experienced violence (compared to 4% of the general population); 43% had property damaged (compared to 7% of the general public) and about 8% suffered sexual assault.<sup>198</sup>
- 5.12.7** Many homeless people also experience antisocial behaviour. Incidents range from public insults (experienced by about 33% of homeless people); harassment (22%); intimidations (19%) and having items thrown at them (experienced by around 21%).<sup>199</sup>
- 5.12.8** Homeless victims of crime and antisocial behaviour often have other problems that are further strengthened by their victimisation, for instance mental health problems, alcohol or drug dependency, sexual abuse and domestic violence.<sup>200</sup> Homeless people tend not to report crimes to the Police, with the result that many cases never come to the attention of any support organisation. By failing to access appropriate support, their experiences of victimisation only contributes to their vulnerability.<sup>201</sup>
- 5.12.9** Victim Support Scotland provides assistance and information to victims of crime from all parts of society, with the aim to minimise the effects of the crime and limit further re-victimisation. We provide support in accordance with the needs of the individual, which we assess at an early stage. If appropriate, we can also refer the person on to any other suitable agency, such as housing or social departments.

## 5.13 Reduce overall reconviction rates by two percentage points by 2011

### Current reconviction rates

- 5.13.1** Of the 49,267 offenders that were released from custody or given a non-custodial sentence in 2004/05, 44.5% were reconvicted within two years.<sup>202</sup> However, headline reconviction rates mask even higher crime rates. For each reconviction, it is estimated that five recorded offences are committed.<sup>203</sup>
- 5.13.2** Of people who were given a custodial sentences in 2006/2007:<sup>204</sup>
- 32% had never received a custodial sentence before
  - 21% had been given one or two previous custodial sentences
  - 32% had been given between three to 10 previous custodial sentences
  - 15% had been given over 10 previous custodial sentences
- 5.13.3** These statistics show that the majority of people given custodial sentences have previously spent time in prison. This presents a major financial burden to Scotland's criminal justice system, as prison sentences are by far the most expensive form of court disposal. On average, the different court disposals cost:<sup>205</sup>
- Cost of six months in prison – £15,964
  - Average cost of a probation order – £1,283
  - Average cost of a community service order – £2,205
  - Average cost of a drug treatment and testing order – £11,727
  - Average cost of a supervised attendance order – £442
  - Average cost of a restriction of liberty order – £9,000

## Criminal justice reform

- 5.13.4** Scotland is currently going through major criminal justice reforms, including changes in Scotland's sentencing policies. The Scottish Prisons Commission has researched Scotland's use of imprisonment and its effects. Their conclusion is clear: Scottish prisons are not being used to their full potential. Our prisons hold too many prisoners on short sentences where there is no real expectation of being able to punish, rehabilitate or deter.<sup>206</sup> Instead of leaving staff to only deal with the most serious offenders, many of the current prison populations are there for very short periods for a variety of reasons.
- 5.13.5** "Sometimes this is because we find it more convenient to keep an accused in prison before trial because he has no fixed abode or finds it difficult to keep appointments. And sometimes we do not know what else to do with someone whose drug problems means they are unable to stick to the conditions of their parole license or probation order".<sup>207</sup>

## Victim Support Scotland's role in advancing victims rights

- 5.13.6** Victim Support Scotland takes an active interest in the development of criminal justice policies, to ensure that the needs of victims and witnesses are taken into account. The criminal justice system serves to reflect the wishes and needs of the public and should fulfil society's expectations of punishment and deterrence. We want Scottish prisons to be used to their full potential and maximise the effects of rehabilitation and drug programmes. The sentence should fit the crime and in the same way as there is a focus on reducing re-offending, there should also be a strong commitment to reduce re-victimisation throughout our communities. To achieve this, adequate and effective resources must be put in place.
- 5.13.7** Effective practical and emotional support reduces the likelihood of victimisation, by increasing the victims' knowledge and awareness of risk factors. Crime prevention advice may also be of assistance to reduce victimisation, for instance by the victim installing alarms, new door locks or parking the car in a garage over night. As a result, the services provided by Victim Support Scotland reduce opportunities for offending and re-offending throughout our communities. An example is the 17% drop in house breakings and 10% decrease of motor vehicle thefts reported to the Police during 2007/08, compared to the year before.<sup>208</sup> This significant drop seems to be a trend throughout Scotland and could partly be attributed to increased awareness and information supplied to the public.<sup>209</sup>
- 5.13.8** Victim Support Scotland is the only voluntary organisation serving as a partner in Scotland's eight Community Justice Authorities, alongside Police forces, local health boards, Scottish Court Service and the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service. We actively contribute to the Authorities' important work of driving criminal justice reforms forward and improving the way local agencies cooperate to tackle re-offending and victimisation.

## 5.14 Reduce overall crime victimisation rates by two percentage points by 2011

### Current victimisation rates

- 5.14.1** During 2007/2008 there were almost one million recorded crimes and offences committed in Scotland.<sup>210</sup> Around one in five adults (22%) in Scotland becomes a victim each year.<sup>211</sup>

### Emotional impact of crime

- 5.14.2** Everyone reacts differently to crime; one victim may be able to cope well with the incident, while another

may be affected for a long time. The emotional impact of crime is in many ways stronger than the physical pain or financial loss; seemingly trivial offences can lead to major trauma.<sup>212</sup> In the vast majority of cases (65%) the victim or someone else in their household has an emotional reaction to, or as a consequence of, the crime. Out of these cases it is most often the victim him/herself who experiences the emotional reaction (93%), in 25% of the cases another adult in the household has a reaction and in around 8% of the cases a child (aged under 16) has an emotional reaction to the crime.<sup>213</sup>



**5.14.3** Apart from the victim and close family members, other people such as friends, partners and colleagues may be indirectly affected by the crime. As a result, one single incident may affect numerous people throughout the local community.

**5.14.4** The most frequently experienced emotion is anger; however the likelihood of having an **emotional** reaction to a crime depends on many different factors including:<sup>214</sup>

- The seriousness of the offence – victims of more serious crimes are more likely to have an emotional reaction. 32% of victims experiencing violent crime consider the incident to have long lasting effects on them
- Family circumstances – 78% of respondents who are separated, divorced or widowed have an emotional reaction, compared to 57% of respondents who are single, married or living as married
- Income – 72% of respondents with a total annual household income of less than £10,000 have an emotional reaction, compared to 61% of those with an income over £10,000
- Unemployment – 75% of respondents who are unemployed have an emotional reaction, compared to 59% of victims in employment
- Gender – 66% of women have an emotional reaction, compared to 54% of men

**5.14.5** Psychological/Emotional impact on victims may include:

- |                                      |  |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| ● Shock                              | ● Feeling of unreality   |
| ● Feeling of numbness                | ● Confusion  |
| ● Helplessness                       | ● Vulnerability  |
| ● Fear                               | ● Anger/rage   |
| ● Grief/intense sorrow               | ● Enhancement of particular senses (hearing, smell, sight)           |
| ● Anxiety                            | ● Feeling out of control   |
| ● Difficulty trusting self or others | ● Depression   |
| ● Post traumatic stress disorder     | ● Panic symptoms   |
| ● Inability to concentrate           | ● Guilt or self-blame  |
| ● Shame                              | ● Preoccupation with the crime                                       |
| ● Concerns about personal safety     | ● Increased risk of alcohol or other drug abuse                      |
| ● Isolation                          | ● Persistent avoidance of things associated with the traumatic event |
| ● Suicidal thoughts                  |  |

**5.14.6** There is general agreement that crime causes more distress than similar injury or loss resulting from other causes; physical injury caused by intent is more difficult to deal with than injury caused by accident and the loss of property through theft has bigger implications than property simply misplaced.<sup>215</sup>

**5.14.7** In attempting to understand why the crime took place, victims may begin to blame the agencies whom they regard as being there to protect them, such as the Police and the court system. This tendency is further strengthened if the victim experiences neglect and isolation, but reduced if victims receive adequate explanations and good treatment from the agencies who engage with them.



**5.14.8** The services provided by Victim Support can make a substantial contribution to reducing negative effects and impacts on victims<sup>216</sup> as people who have been victimised by crime often feel it is helpful to talk to someone about the incident and how it has affected their lives.

**5.14.9** Practitioners testify that “an important need of victims is to have their feelings validated and their reactions normalized – to see that they are not alone and that others have gone through similar experiences and survived”.<sup>217</sup>

### Practical impact of crime

**5.14.10** Apart from emotional reactions, crime creates many practical problems. In contrast to emotional reactions that are more common after personal offences, practical problems or inconveniences are most common as a result of household theft and vandalism (experienced by 50% and 54% of victims respectively).<sup>218</sup>

**5.14.11** Scottish research has found that the two most common practical problems are the effort, time or inconvenience involved in repairing or replacing items (mentioned by 37% of victims where the incident is said to have caused problems) and the inconvenience due to loss or damage to a vehicle or other item (expressed by 12% of victims).<sup>219</sup> After serious crimes such as homicide, there may be other practical problems that the victim’s family has to deal with in addition to the emotional trauma; for instance arranging alternative accommodation if the home is a crime scene, cleaning the home once investigations have finished and dispose of the victim’s belongings.<sup>220</sup>

*“I can't thank you enough...and the way you looked after me through the six weeks of the trial. I thank all your staff with all of my heart.” - Victim*

### Support from family and friends

**5.14.12** Victims often rely on family members and friends for support,<sup>221</sup> which is central to overcome feelings of isolation that is a common immediate response to victimisation.<sup>222</sup> Understanding and support from family and friends becomes even more significant in cases that are not reported to the Police, as the victims may not come to the attention of judicial agencies or support organisations. Family members and those in close relationships with the victims will, even if they are not directly involved themselves, experience their own intense distress about what has happened. Sometimes it may therefore be very difficult for the victim to tell, and for those close to the victim to hear, details of the crime.<sup>223</sup>

**5.14.13** Some victims do not have support available from close family members and friends, or would prefer not to turn to them for help. It is therefore important that support is available elsewhere; voluntary support services for crime victims may substitute as well as complement support provided by family and friends.

### The importance of support in the aftermath of crime

**5.14.14** For the people who have had the unfortunate experience of being victimised by crime, early intervention can have a substantial effect on their recovery.<sup>224</sup> Victims who wish to access support services, but are unable to receive appropriate help, are likely to experience a more severe impact in the aftermath of crime.<sup>225</sup> When reporting a crime to the Police, all victims should therefore receive information, including an offer of support, from Victim Support Scotland.



## Victim Support Scotland provides a range of services

- 5.14.15** Victim Support Scotland is the largest service provider and leading voluntary organisation in Scotland, helping people affected by crime. During 2007/08, our community based victim service and court based witness service provided support and information to around 175,000 people throughout Scotland. We take an active part in building a stronger, safer society.
- 5.14.16** Apart from providing emotional support, Victim Support Scotland gives practical information and assistance. We can for instance help people with insurance queries and criminal injuries compensation claims. If appropriate, we can also refer the person on to any other agency or organisation that may be of assistance.
- 5.14.17** Victim Support Scotland can substantially reduce the likelihood of further victimisation, by providing information on crime prevention and awareness. Victim Support services must also confront what may amount to “secondary victimisation” by the criminal justice system.<sup>226</sup> By providing detailed information about the justice system, the victim and witness will know what to expect from the justice process.
- 5.14.18** An aided recovery improves the victim’s experience of the criminal justice system, reduces the potential for (re-)victimisation, decreases fear of crime and promotes safer communities.<sup>227</sup> In Victim Support Scotland’s user survey feedback, our service users were given the opportunity to state if, and in what way, the received support was helpful. 95% of our service users found the support helpful, and the most common explanations why were “I was able to talk about the crime/I received attention for my issues” (stated by 86% of service users); “the support and advice contributed to a reduction of my emotional/psychological issues” (61%) and “the support and advice contributed to the fact that I am now coping better with the consequences of the crime” (stated by 57% of service users).

## 5.15 Increase the percentage of *criminal cases dealt with within 26 weeks by three percentage points by 2011*

- 5.15.1** Victim Support Scotland agrees with the aims of the reform of summary criminal justice; to ensure that fewer cases go to court needlessly and that those cases that do go to court get there more quickly, are better prepared and progress more speedily. This would subsequently decrease the risk of adjournments, which would significantly improve the conditions for victims and witnesses. By having to wait extended periods of time before the case goes to trials, victims and witnesses are unable to put the event behind them. Going through the trial process, including giving detailed statements of the incident, makes some victims feel re-victimised by forcing them to relive what is often the worst part of their lives. Until a final verdict is reached, victims often remain unsettled. In addition, many victims suffer intimidation and harassment during and after a trial.<sup>228</sup> By speeding up the process, victims and witnesses can move on quicker and start rebuilding their lives.

### Witness Service

- 5.15.2** Victim Support Scotland’s witness service provides information and support to witnesses in all Sheriff and High Courts in Scotland. We also assist in the administration of special measures, contained in the Vulnerable Witness (Scotland) Act 2004. Through our services, we aim to ensure that all witnesses are offered the opportunities to give their best possible quality of evidence, which in turn facilitates a speedier trial. The court based witness service is linked with our community based victim services, to ensure we provide the best possible through-care to victims and witnesses during all stages of the criminal procedures.

## 5.16 Increase the percentage of adults who rate their neighbourhood as a good place to live

### Fear of crime in the local area

- 5.16.1** To rate ones neighbourhood as 'a good place to live', basic needs of safety and security must be met. Worries about crime and antisocial behaviour will have a negative impact on satisfaction rates.
- 5.16.2** Your risk of being a victim of crime is dependent on where you live. People previously victimised are furthermore more likely to become victims again, compared to people who have never been victimised. In fact, victimisation is the best predictor of further victimisation.<sup>229</sup>
- 5.16.3** However, people's perceptions of crime levels are generally out of line with actual incidence rates. Having experienced the adverse effects of crime, victims are often more worried about crime and future victimisation than people who have never been victims. This is a lot more pronounced on the local level than at the national level. Over a third of victims (36%) felt that crime had increased over the last two years in their local area compared to 24% of non-victims.<sup>230</sup>

### Antisocial behaviour

- 5.16.4** In addition to risk of victimisation, where you live can also determine if you have problems with antisocial behaviour. Antisocial behaviour means different things to different people, but legislation defines antisocial behaviour as "acting in a manner that causes or is likely to cause alarm or distress; or pursuing a course of conduct that causes or is likely to cause alarm or distress to at least one person not of the same household as the perpetrator".<sup>231</sup>
- 5.16.5** 91% of people find that antisocial behaviour is a problem in Scotland,<sup>232</sup> with 48% stating it is 'very' or 'fairly' common.<sup>233</sup> Examples of antisocial behaviour can be rowdy and drunken groups of individuals that cause intimidation to the rest of the people living in the area; or noisy neighbours that play loud music late at night, make systematic prank calls or clutter up staircases with rubbish.
- 5.16.6** Victim Support Scotland provides emotional and practical support and information to rebuild the confidence of people affected by crime or antisocial behaviour. Practical information on preventative actions helps victims avoid future victimisation. By talking about what causes concerns and construct positive solutions, victims will increasingly feel safe and secure in the community.
- 5.16.7** Victim Support Scotland has identified victims of antisocial behaviour as among the most vulnerable in our society. We have special services provided for these victims and may assist in finding a mutual solution for all parties involved. If people are provided with support and guidance in the aftermath of crime, including antisocial behaviour, they will feel more at ease and happy with their own neighbourhood and are more likely to see it as a good place to live.

## 5.17 Decrease the estimated number of problem drug users in Scotland by 2011

### Link between crime and drugs

- 5.17.1** There is a strong link between crime and the use of drugs in Scotland. 95% of people think that drug abuse is a problem, with 76% thinking it is a big problem. Compared to other factors, drug abuse is considered to

be the biggest problem in Scotland.<sup>234</sup> 50% believe that drug dealing and drug abuse is a 'very' or 'fairly' common problem in their local area.<sup>235</sup>

- 5.17.2** Almost half (47%) of people accused of homicide in 2006-07 were reported to have been drunk or under the influence of drugs at the time of the incident.<sup>236</sup> When asking victims of assault why the crime took place, 49% believe it happened because the offender was drunk or under the influence of drugs.<sup>237</sup>
- 5.17.3** In the region of 90% of women in prison have drug and alcohol problems, and 75% have a history of abuse and major health problems.<sup>238</sup> The picture for male offenders and young people is similar.<sup>239</sup> 90% of children in custody have used illegal drugs.<sup>240</sup>
- 5.17.4** In addition to the link between drugs and offending, there are connections between drugs and antisocial behaviour. A decrease in drug problems will therefore provide a decrease in overall victimisation.
- 5.17.5** Being a victim of crime is a very stressful experience and some people who have previously managed to leave their drug abuse behind may return to the habit to try to overcome the effects and memories from the incident. With timely and appropriate support in the aftermath of crime, Victim Support Scotland aims to ease the effects of victimisation and enable people to return to a positive lifestyle. Our practitioners can also, if appropriate, refer the person on to a service specifically targeting drug problems.

## 5.18 Increase positive public perception of the general crime rate in the local area

### Public perception of crime rate

- 5.18.1** Public perception deals with the public's fear of crime. Crime surveys have often identified a discrepancy between the general public's perception of the extent of crime and the actual risk of becoming a crime victim.<sup>241</sup>
- 5.18.2** A person's perception of crime and crime levels are shaped by many different factors, including their own experiences and also the experiences of friends and family, media etc. Women are significantly more likely than men to consider crime to be a "problem" in Scotland (96% compared to 91%). The difference is even bigger in the groups considering crime to be a "big problem" (61% of women, 50% of men).<sup>242</sup>
- 5.18.3** Of people who have lived in their local area for two years or more, the vast majority (57%) feel that crime rates have stayed about the same during that time, 19% say that crime rates are a little higher and 13% state that there is a lot more crime in their local area compared to two years ago. Victims

*" I just want to say a big thank you to Victim Support staff in Clydebank. Without their kindness, help and support it may have taken some considerable time to get my life back to 'normal'." - Victim*

are more likely than non-victims to feel that crime has increased in their local area (36% compared to 24%), and women are more likely than men to believe that crime rates have increased in their local area over the past two years (33% compared to 29%).<sup>243</sup>

**5.18.4** Another way of measuring fear of crime in the local area is to assess how safe people feel while walking alone after dark. Overall, just over three in 10 (32%) report feeling unsafe while walking alone after dark, with 12% reporting that they feel 'very' unsafe. Women are more likely than men to report that they feel unsafe walking alone after dark (43% compared to 20%). The group that feel the most afraid when walking alone in their local area after dark is women aged 60 or over, where 53% report that they feel unsafe.<sup>244</sup>

**5.18.5** By providing support and information in the aftermath of crime, Victim Support Scotland helps victims and witnesses cope with the effects of crime. By listening to their thoughts and giving practical information and advice, we aim to prevent any further victimisation and rebuild the victim's confidence. Apart from direct support to people affected by crime, Victim Support Scotland takes an active part in local partnerships and community work where we provide information on victimisation. This helps to establish a more realistic view on crime, which also assists in decreasing the local community's fear of crime.

## 5.19 Increase the proportion of adults making one or more visits to the outdoors per week

### Reactions to crime

**5.19.1** Victims react differently to crime. While some victims struggle to cope with the incident others are able to move on in life fairly unaffected. Factors such as personality, previous victimisation, social network and available support determine how the victim will react in the aftermath of crime.<sup>245</sup>

**5.19.2** Reactions to criminal victimisation often extend beyond thoughts and feelings to affect everyday behaviours.<sup>246</sup> Some victims go through substantial lifestyle changes as a result, including avoidance of activities that they used to enjoy.<sup>247</sup> Particularly repeat victims have a tendency to become socially excluded and withdraw, either partially or completely, from any social contact<sup>248</sup> which will impact on their willingness and ability to enjoy the outdoors.

**5.19.3** Fear of crime has now been established as a problem in its own right and may have the effect of imprisoning people in their own homes due to fear of going out. Fear itself therefore also serves to diminish the possibility for victims to enjoy the outdoor life in their communities.<sup>249</sup>

**5.19.4** Victim Support Scotland provides support and information to rebuild people's confidence and limit the impact of crime. We also give guidance to minimise the risk of future victimisation, with an aim to make the victim feel more relaxed and able to once again go outside to enjoy Scotland's beautiful nature.



## 5.20 Improve people's perceptions, attitudes and awareness of Scotland's reputation

**5.20.1** Crime is one of the biggest fears of people living in Scotland. 22% of Scottish adults are victimised each year<sup>250</sup> and most people know someone who has been affected by crime in one way or another. By providing information and guidance on criminal justice queries, Victim Support Scotland aims to ensure that the general public is better informed of actual victimisation risks, which in turn helps to decrease the fear of crime.

**5.20.2** Calculations show that across the EU, only about 16% of victims with expressed needs of support actually receive help. This demonstrates a clear gap between supply and demand of victim support.<sup>251</sup> Compared to the rest of the European countries, Scotland is the best at providing victim support, with 40% of victims who want support receiving it.<sup>252</sup> When measuring victims' satisfaction with the way the Police handled their reports, combined with the extent to which the demand for victim support is actually met, Scotland again is ranked highest of all European countries.<sup>253</sup> We believe this is something that everyone living in Scotland can be proud of.

**5.20.3** The ability to access appropriate and timely support in the aftermath of crime has a substantial impact on a person's recovery.<sup>254</sup> Providing support and information to people with the unfortunate experience of being victimised, Victim Support Scotland aims to rebuild the person's confidence and enable him/her to return to as normal a life as possible. Being able to access individually assessed care, through the entire criminal justice process wherever in Scotland the crime takes place, Scots will be more confident and happy with the services in their neighbourhood, their society and their country. Similarly, we want to ensure that people coming from abroad, who are victimised in Scotland, are able to access appropriate support service and receive compensation.

*"You all made a big difference to a traumatic day. Speaking for all my family who were involved in witness statements, they feel the same. Hopefully your good work does not go unnoticed." - Witness*

## 6. Conclusion

This document has demonstrated how crime impacts on individuals and communities across Scotland and how criminal activity affects the fulfilment of national targets and indicators. Victim Support Scotland provides a vital service that aims to decrease the effects of crime and victimisation. Our services have a direct effect and contribution to the local authority's fulfilment of set targets to increase sustainable economic growth.

*"You made such a difference. Without the help of Victim Support Scotland I couldn't have done the things I'm doing now. I've stopped blaming myself." - Victim*

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