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Company No: SC357649
Scottish Charity No: SC040464



SCSN hosts
Neighbourhood Watch Scotland
SCIO
Scottish Charity No: SC036510

25th August 2021

For attention of:
Police Scotland and Victim Support Scotland (VSS)

Thank you for the opportunity to input on your joint survey: *How can we provide the best support to people affected by crime?* - about the aftercare options provided by Police Scotland for people who have been a survivor or witness of crime. We welcome this opportunity to inform the development and shape of your services and to improve aftercare for those affected by crime.

As this survey is written for the individual and not an organisation, we have decided to feedback through this letter on the relevant sections of the survey, which we hope will be acceptable.

The Scottish Community Safety Network (SCSN) is the national forum for officers who are responsible for the strategic development of community safety at both local and national level, in the private, public and voluntary sector. We are the strategic voice for community safety in Scotland and through working collaboratively with our members and partner agencies, we champion community safety and influence the shaping and development of national policy and local delivery. In 2019, we became an umbrella organisation for community safety, also hosting [Neighbourhood Watch Scotland](#) and [Home Safety Scotland](#). You can find out more about us at our website <https://www.safercommunitiesScotland.org>

Section 4 - Victim Care Card (VCC)

We are pleased that Victim Care Cards are given to victims of crime to provide aftercare information and important contact details and would be supportive that these are given to all witnesses of crimes too. We think an electronic version of the card could be useful but hard copies should be available for those who need them. Offering hard copies may be more inductive for those less confident to access support at the time of the incident.

There is definitely scope for the VCC to be made more user-friendly, to encourage recipients from all demographics to reach out to the services available. We would strongly encourage the card is redesigned with accessibility in mind, for example - those with eyesight difficulties, low literacy, learning difficulties, little access to the internet and no English or English as a second language.

In line with trauma-informed practice, the VCC should be non-intimidating, calming and promote a feeling of safety, if possible. We feel the current VCC could do better to meet this criteria and is currently very formal, which may be intimidating to some. If the card is issued to children or young people, we would strongly encourage the card to be designed to be 'child-friendly' and trauma-informed.

We would be keen to see the [Neighbourhood Alert System](#) provided by Neighbourhood Watch Scotland, included more prominently on the following site <https://www.scotland.police.uk/keep-safe/> which is sited on the card.

Section 5 - Future Thinking

We would strongly agree that an automated system that sends the victim or witness a message with helpful details after the incident, would be useful. This message should also be accessible to those without a mobile phone or internet e.g. by post or landline.

For an aftercare system that has victims 'at its heart', we would encourage consideration *beyond* the VCC and follow-up message, because we know some victims or witnesses suffering trauma from their experience are often not ready to access support until after some time has passed. While we understand there are many demands on Police Officer time, and depending on the severity of the incident, we feel small acts such as a follow up phone call or visit from the reporting Officer to 'check-in' on a victim or witness afterwards, could have a large impact. Moreover, we strongly recommend consulting the Equally Safe Scottish Government team and the Violence Against Women and Girls Partnership to discuss considering the best method of supporting victims who may need or want support, but because of circumstances (e.g. domestic abuse, controlling family) cannot accept or keep a VCC for fear of abuse.

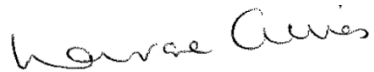
Some feedback from our discussions with Community Safety Partnership Leads has highlighted what is perceived to be a 'gap' in support for victims of anti-social behaviour in recent years due to budget cuts leading to the unfortunate removal of VSS projects and posts. While we understand the issue of funding is difficult for all, we are keen to stress that although anti-social behaviour is often regarded 'low level', the effect on victims can be long lasting and pervasive and is therefore deserving of a fitting aftercare system.

In response to your question around a non-stigmatising replacement term for 'victim', the term 'person affected by crime' could be a useful alternative as this moves the language to be person-centred without labelling or stigma. Both 'victim' and 'survivor' can be considered stigmatising and emotive. There will be some who identify with neither.

As a final point, we would like to refer to the widely documented 'victim/offender overlap' which takes into account that statistically, offender status correlates with an elevated risk of later becoming a victim of crime. With this evidence in mind, we would stress the importance of first responders engaging in trauma-informed practice and aftercare as a crucial part in helping to break the cycle of offending.

Once again, we very much welcome efforts to improve aftercare for people affected by crime and are grateful to be given the opportunity to influence this.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lorraine Gillies". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Lorraine Gillies FRSA
Chief Officer