

## Support Agencies

*Victim Support Scotland is a national voluntary agency supporting people affected by crime in Scotland.*

The service offers emotional and practical support and information to all people affected by crime and this includes supporting witnesses going to court.

## Contacting Victim Support

The Police can put you in contact with Victim Support or you can contact Victim Support directly whether or not you want to report the crime.

Parents and carers can contact Victim Support for assistance for themselves, or their child. Young people over 14 years can contact a service directly.

The phone numbers for local Victim Support offices and the Witness Services, which are based in each Sherrif Court, can be found in a telephone directory or contact can be made through the following numbers:

### **Victim Support's local call rate number**

Tel: 0845 603 9213  
(Mon – Fri 9am-4.30pm)

### **Victim Support UK National Supportline**

Tel: 0845 30 30 900  
(Mon – Fri 9am-9pm)  
(Weekends 9am-7pm)  
(Bank Holidays 9am-5pm)

### **Victim Support Scotland National Headquarters**

Tel: 0131 668 4486  
(Mon – Fri 10am-4pm)

15/23 Hardwell Close  
Edinburgh EH8 9RX  
Fax: 0131 662 5400

Email: [info@victimssupportsco.demon.co.uk](mailto:info@victimssupportsco.demon.co.uk)  
Website: [www.victimssupport.org](http://www.victimssupport.org)

### *Other agencies who offer support*

#### **ChildLine**

Freephone National 24-hour Helpline  
Confidential phone counselling service for children  
Tel: 0800 1111

#### **Speakeasy**

Young persons (12-25 yrs) counselling service based in West Lothian  
Tel: 0800 220 424  
(Mon/Tues/Thurs 9am-5pm  
Wed 9.30am-12pm)

#### **ParentLine Scotland**

Supportline for parents  
Tel: 0808 800 2222  
(Mon/Wed/Fri 9am-4pm  
Tues/Thurs 3pm-9pm)

#### **PETAL (People Experiencing Trauma And Loss)**

Support agency for families and friends of murder victims.  
Tel: 01698 324502

#### **FOMC (Families of Murdered Children)**

Support agency for families and friends of murder victims.  
Tel: 01698 336646

SCOTTISH CRIME SURVEY 2000

**50% of young people surveyed had been a victim of crime in the last year**

SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE 2002

**25% of the young victims of violence did not report it to an adult**

# Supporting Young Victims of Crime

*A leaflet to assist carers with the aftermath of crime on children and young people*



  
Victim Support

# Children...

Any young person can become a victim of crime often their emotional and practical needs can go unmet.

The public perception of crime against children and young people tends to be centred on child abuse and bullying. While these crimes do happen, young people can be affected by many other types of crime.

Some of the more common crimes committed against young people are harassment, sexual harassment, racial harassment, violence, assault, and theft.

They can be victims of crime at school, at home, or at play.

When a crime occurs at school, children cannot escape the schoolyard, their classroom or changing room and a school cafeteria can be the scariest place in the world. For some young victims this can generate feelings of isolation and alienation and school work will often suffer.

# and Crime



Crimes that happen to their family and friends can also cause great distress resulting in young people becoming co-victims of a crime.

A burglary or vandalism that has occurred at a home may result in great stress for all those living there.

# ...young people

Being a witness to crime can also be very distressing for young people. In the aftermath, some young people face repercussions such as intimidation, harassment and stigmatisation from within their local communities. This can lead to feelings of fear and isolation and can result in a reluctance to participate in any ensuing proceedings.

If a loved one has been murdered, young people can find themselves involved in an experience where the people they have generally relied upon for support, are in great pain, grief and sometimes fear.

Adults have difficulties dealing with their own reactions to such crimes, so responding to the reactions of their children and young people at the same time can be very hard.

# Impact of crime on children and young people

Every young person reacts differently to a crime.

Some may have immediate reactions, some may not display anything for weeks or months, some may never show any reaction at all. Because a young person is not displaying a reaction, it does not mean they are not affected.

How young people react can depend on many different factors, for example, their age, the support that is 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'

for their carers, or in some cases take on the role of an adult to look after a parent and/or siblings. All of this can impact on the young person's own well being.

*"if I hadn't done that then it wouldn't have happened."*

Young people may also feel they are responsible for a crime occurring.

This can manifest itself in a fear that others will also blame them, including the reporting authorities. Whilst these thoughts are irrational, they can be very real, confusing and frightening for young people.

**24% of young people who had suffered some form of sexual harassment did not report it**

# Reporting crime

Many young people are reluctant to report a crime that is committed against them.

Often this is due to the fact that they fear that the situation will get worse or they will be labelled a 'grass'. Sometimes it's because they fear they will get into trouble or because they think nothing can be done or, they think it isn't important enough.

These fears can also manifest themselves in an additional reluctance to report a serious crime. Young people often feel guilty about a crime happening as they can feel that they must have contributed to it in some way.

Children and young people may therefore be carrying the burden alone.

If they do report a crime young people can find themselves suddenly involved in the criminal justice system for which they are not prepared and do not understand. This can, again, cause fear, confusion, and distress, which adds to the trauma that many are experiencing from the event itself.

# How can I help?

You can help by simply being there for them.

- Listening is one of the most useful things a carer can do. Allowing young victims to talk about what has happened and how they feel is so vital to their well being.

However, try not to rush in with your thoughts, comments or suggestions.

- Let them know that what they are feeling is OK and normal, even if their reactions are different to the other people who may be going through the same kind of experience.
- Reassure them that what happened was not their fault and that you are there and you care for them.
- If they tell you something that makes you angry or upset try not to be judgemental. Instead, thank them for telling you.
- Ask what they would like you to do with the information they give you. Well meaning adults often decide what is best without consulting the young person. This can sometimes add to the confusion and stress a young person is going through in the aftermath of crime.
- Lack of self esteem and confidence in a young person can be so devastating. Involve young people in decision making and problem solving processes, no matter how minor you may think they may be. This will allow them to regain a little more control.

**55% of theft was carried out by two or more people**

- Some children may regress emotionally. Be as patient as you can while this happens.
- Young people, like adults, will want to know what will happen next. Try and be as honest as possible and access other agencies for information and support if necessary.
- Speak with the school about what has happened to your child and ask for their support.

**30% of bullying victims suffered in silence (Hawker & Bolton 2000)**

# How can a school help a young victim?

*Schools need to be prepared for a young victims reactions to a crime.*

Find out what the young person wants from their school. Preparation can begin through communication with the carers and the young victim themselves.

Create school policies and responses, in consultation with young people, on how to tackle the issues. Involve external agencies in this process.

Reassure young people in the school that their reactions are normal and OK.

All staff need to recognise that it may take a long time for a young person to cope with their reactions. Young victims will need support and may need guidance through the different stages.

Ensure all staff have a good understanding of the impact of crime on young people and know where to access appropriate support.

If a young victim has been away from a school for a period of time the way they are re-integrated into the school needs to be carefully handled so as to avoid stigmatisation and exclusion from their peers. Communication with all those involved is crucial.

**47% of violence was carried out while the young person was at school**

# How other professionals can help?

*Preparation is the key.*

Ensure everyone who comes into contact with young people is aware of the impact of crime and how it can affect young victims.

All agencies need to know where they can access appropriate, immediate support for the young person and their family.

Dialogue between agencies involved in a young persons life, including the young person, can assist in co-ordinating a response to their individual needs.

Young people need a range of services to assist them in the aftermath of a crime.

Young people have a right to information, just as adults do. Wherever possible, age appropriate materials and support/information materials adults can work through with a child or young person, should be made available. Involve young people in the design process.

