

## Support

You may also wish to contact **Victim Support Scotland (VSS)**, a voluntary organisation that offers practical and emotional support to those affected by crime. Telephone:

**0845 60 39 213** during office hours  
**0845 30 30 900** evenings and weekends  
[www.victimsupportsco.org.uk](http://www.victimsupportsco.org.uk)  
VIA can put you in touch with other organisations too.

## Further Information

Please contact your local VIA office at the

Alternatively contact our Enquiry Point by telephone on 01389 739557 or visit our web site at [www.copfs.gov.uk](http://www.copfs.gov.uk)

Our Commitments to Victims and Prosecution Witnesses

We will:

1. Give you respect and a professional service at all times.
2. Communicate with you clearly and effectively.
3. Give you the information you need at the time you need it.
4. Deal with your case as quickly as possible.
5. Require you to give evidence in court only when we have to.
6. Ensure you can communicate with us if your first language is not English.
7. Make sure we take account of any extra support you may need.
8. Give the judge information about the effect of the crime on you.
9. Advise you how to claim expenses and deal with your claim as quickly as possible.
10. Work with other agencies to help you get the services you need.

VIA

How we can help you



Victim Information and Advice  
A part of the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service

## Information and advice

If you are affected by crime, you may become involved with the criminal justice system.

This can be stressful and confusing when you are also coping with the physical and emotional effects of crime.

**Victim Information and Advice (VIA)** is part of the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service. The Procurator Fiscal is responsible for investigating and prosecuting crime in Scotland.

VIA staff are not prosecutors. Our job is to assist victims, witnesses and also, in certain cases of sudden, unexpected or crime-related deaths, the nearest relatives.

*“I found your service and staff very helpful at all times, especially as I have had no previous experience of our legal system.”*

## What VIA can do

### VIA can help you by:

- providing information and advice about how the criminal justice system works and what you can expect
- keeping you updated on the progress of your case

- helping you get in touch with organisations that can offer you practical and emotional support
- discussing what support may be available to help you give evidence or attend court if the case goes to trial. This can include arranging for you to be shown round the court before a trial

If at any point you do not want VIA's help, just let us know. If you then change your mind, please contact us.

## Who we can help

**VIA helps victims and witnesses** of crimes reported to the Procurator Fiscal which involve:

- Domestic abuse
- Hate crime
- Sexual offences
- Child victims and witnesses
- Other serious crime

### We also help:

- Nearest relatives in cases of deaths which may involve criminal proceedings, or if there is to be a Fatal Accident Inquiry or extensive investigation.

- Vulnerable victims or witnesses.
- Victims or witnesses with additional needs. For example, some witnesses may need support to give evidence or help getting to court.

*“The service you are providing is essential. I dread to think how we would have coped without your support.”*

## Please note

- VIA cannot decide or influence who is prosecuted for a crime or what they are charged with. The Procurator Fiscal (the fiscal) makes this decision based on the evidence available and whether it is in the public interest to prosecute.  
(The public interest means that the fiscal will look at the case from all angles – from the point of view of the wider community as well as of the victim and the accused).
- It is not possible for someone affected by a crime to "drop the charges". The fiscal makes this decision.
- VIA cannot offer counselling or financial support, although we can put you in touch with other agencies that may be able to help.