



VICTIM 50 SUPPORT

Championing victims and survivors since 1974

A Vision for Victims General election 2024

With over **eight million crimes** taking place every year, becoming a victim of crime sadly remains a reality for many. Those who do experience crime tell us that they still face many issues and challenges, and that much more needs to be done to help and support them.

Based on our experience of working with tens of thousands of victims every year, we have set out **five priorities** for victims and survivors for the next government.

Victims need the next government to:

Invest in support services for **all** victims



1

Ensure victims have timely access to justice



2

Bring victims' rights into action



3

Take a joined-up approach to supporting VAWG survivors



4

Close the gaps for victims of antisocial behaviour



5

Victims need the next government to:

1



Invest in support services for all victims

2



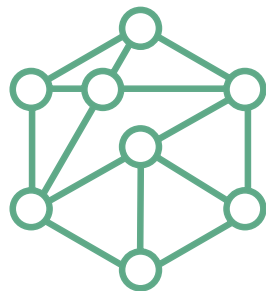
Ensure victims have timely access to justice

3



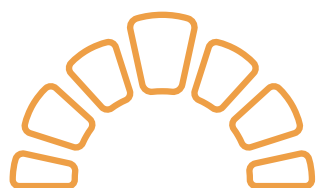
Bring victims' rights into action

4



Take a joined-up approach to supporting VAWG survivors

5



Close the gaps for victims of antisocial behaviour

1

Invest in support services for all victims

Crime has an enormous impact on people's health, wellbeing and finances. Independent support services play a vital role in helping people to cope and recover after crime, understand their experiences and navigate a complex justice system. These services are highly appreciated by those who experience crime and they feel safer after receiving support.

Despite this, there is still a pressing need for more and better-funded victims' services. Significant gaps in support services still remain across the country. In particular, there are gaps in the provision of support that is independent of the police. The vast majority of people report that it is important for them to access this kind of support. However, specialist services in some areas of the country have been de-commissioned and replaced by police-run support services.

There is also a need to ensure that all victims of all crime types have access to specialist support. Currently, provision differs greatly across the country, with those who experience some offences receiving different levels of support depending on where they live. Victims of all crimes can be profoundly impacted and high-quality, independent support services need to be in place to meet the needs of all victims – regardless of the crime they have experienced.

Victims and survivors want to see the next government ensure that this is always the case. If any victim of crime needs support from a specialist independent victims' service, they should always be able to access one.

2

Ensure victims have timely access to justice

Lengthy waiting times have long been a problem within the criminal justice system and are having a profoundly negative impact on both victims' wellbeing and their access to justice.

Many victims are particularly anxious about going to court. It can be a traumatic process; courts can be an unknown and intimidating place where they relive painful experiences in public, and many worry about coming face-to-face with the defendant or their network. Long waits for trial can compound these fears and evidence suggests that they can cause immense stress and inconvenience, not least by keeping the daunting trial date hanging over them. The old adage that 'justice delayed is justice denied' sadly rings true, and some of those we have supported through long waits have felt unable to go on.

In addition to long waits for trial, many also face the prospect of their trial date being moved a number of times, often at short notice. This is having an immense impact on those affected, who have to prepare themselves for court and then adjust their expectations about the process and when it will conclude.

Victims need the next government to tackle the twin issues of long wait times and multiple adjournments with urgent and sustained action. We would like to see ambitious targets set to bring down the court backlog and waits for trial.

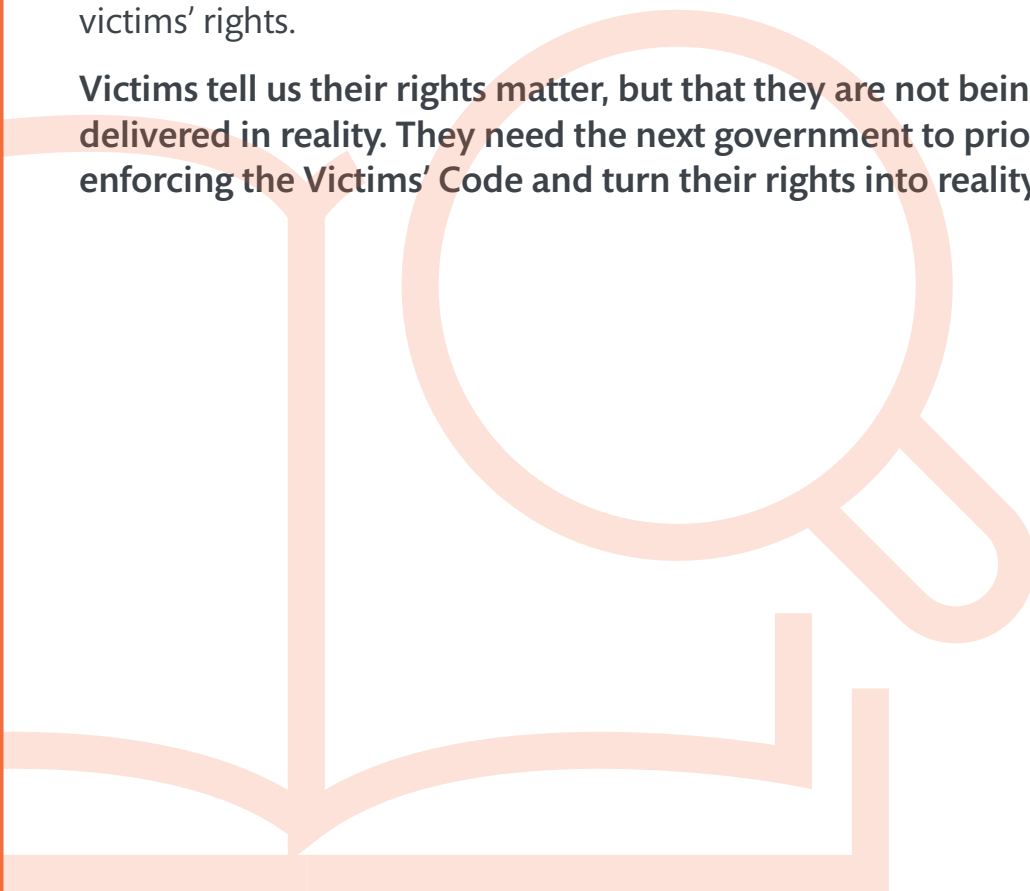
3

Bring victims' rights into action

We all have rights under the Victims' Code if we experience crime, including the right to be referred to support services, make a Victim Personal Statement and be provided with information. However, a wealth of evidence has found that these rights often only exist on paper and are not delivered in reality. Our Victim of the System report found that as many as six in ten victims do not receive their rights under the Code.

The Victims' Code needs to have teeth and victims must be granted rights, not favours. In order to drive improvements, criminal justice agencies must monitor how they deliver every single right under the Code. Robust national and local oversight needs to be established and agencies must be held to account for their compliance with victims' rights.

Victims tell us their rights matter, but that they are not being delivered in reality. They need the next government to prioritise enforcing the Victims' Code and turn their rights into reality.



4

Take a joined-up approach to supporting VAWG survivors

The scale of violence against women and girls (VAWG) is staggering. It is estimated that **1.1 million** adults, the vast majority of them women, experienced sexual assault last year, and that **2.1 million** people, again the vast majority women, experienced domestic abuse.

Last year we supported over **60,000** victim-survivors of domestic abuse and sexual violence. We know how essential support services are for women and girls and how vital it is to listen to and amplify their voices. They tell us we need a society-wide response to tackling VAWG. With the majority of victim-survivors not reporting to the police, this must go beyond a criminal justice response.

Statutory sector bodies including health, housing, social services, education, welfare and others all have a vital role to play in responding to VAWG and supporting survivors. A wide range of specialist victims' services are also essential for VAWG survivors, working with them to meet their needs and address their safety. These include multi-crime services, which work with survivors who are assessed at all different risk levels.

A priority for the next government must be to take a holistic approach to tackling VAWG and supporting survivors, and to ensure greater join-up across the government departments and public services that work with them.

Close the gaps for victims of antisocial behaviour

Antisocial behaviour (ASB) can have a profound impact on people's wellbeing, sense of safety and ability to participate in their day-to-day lives. Last year more than a third of the population experienced or witnessed some type of antisocial behaviour and the police recorded a million incidents of ASB. However, for many of those who experience ASB, reporting what they have experienced can be the start of a difficult and frustrating process lacking in support and resolution. Too often they fall through the gaps.

They tell us that they are frequently passed from pillar to post by the local agencies involved in their case. Many fall through the gaps between local authorities, law enforcement, housing providers and other services that they should be able to rely on, and feel that no-one takes responsibility for working with them or resolving their case.

In addition, they also fall through the gaps in support when seeking help for what they have experienced. All victims of crime have the right to be referred to support services but this unfortunately does not always apply to those who experience ASB. This, coupled with a lack of funding for support services, means that many are left to suffer alone without the help of victims' services.

Both of these gaps must close. Too often the approach of government is to focus on prevention and management of those who perpetrate ASB. We are calling on the next government to also prioritise those who become victims of ASB and ensure that they no longer fall through the gaps. Agencies must take responsibility for working with victims and the government must ensure that funded support services with clear referral routes are in place.



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We are an **independent** charity offering **free, confidential** support to people affected by crime and traumatic incidents.

For information and support, contact us by:

- calling: Supportline **08 08 16 89 111**
- using our 24/7 live chat service:
victimsupport.org.uk/live-chat
- using BSL: **victimsupport.org.uk/bsl**
- Online: **victimsupport.org.uk**

To find out how you can help us, visit
victimsupport.org.uk/get-involved

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