

# Victim Support Scotland submission of 22 November 2022

## PE1948/C: Improve the way that unexplained deaths are dealt with

Victim Support Scotland (VSS) is the largest organisation in Scotland supporting people affected by crime. We provide practical help, emotional support and essential information to victims, witnesses and other people affected by crime within each local authority and every Sheriff and High Court in Scotland. The service is free, confidential and is provided by volunteers.

VSS welcomes the invitation by the Petitions Committee to comment on this petition.

In 2019, VSS established its Support for Families Bereaved by Crime service which supports families who have been bereaved through murder or culpable homicide. We support families who have been referred to us by:

- 1) Family Liaison Officers (FLOs)
- 2) Victim Information and Advice who are based in courts
- 3) Self-referrals where criminality has been identified.

The service recently received funding to extend this service to where the death has occurred abroad. Our current funding model for this service does not incorporate cases outwith the scope of murder or culpable homicide.

In terms of support provided by VSS for all other crime types, the provision of a service relies on there being some form of criminality having been identified, or a suggestion of criminality being present. Each request for support requires to be assessed against these criteria, as per our current funding model requirements. Where a family member considers that criminality has taken place, then VSS would assess that request carefully and compassionately. In circumstances where criminality is identified at a later date, for example where an unexplained death transpires to have

been as a result of murder or culpable homicide, then the SFBC service would be available to support the family from that point.

In cases of self-referral where no criminality has been identified and when someone has died, for example by suicide or road traffic deaths, we would signpost to a more relevant support organisation.