



With Financial support from
the Justice Programme
of the European Union

Victim Support Europe Newsletter – Special COVID-19 Edition

How Are Victim Support Services Responding to the Global Pandemic?



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FROM THE EDITORS

Victim support organisations around the world are innovating to minimise the impact of lockdown on victims' lives. The pandemic has prompted a [proliferation of e-crimes](#) and has given rise to domestic violence and child abuse.

Support workers are finding creative ways to cater to the new types of demand created by the pandemic: for distant support, virtual counseling, help delivered to your door, work from home, hiring and teaching support workers in a remote working environment, and more. Many have reinvented their service offerings, or are finding new ways to deliver them to victims, in the midst of a pandemic.

For this special edition of the newsletter, we asked our members and partners from around the world how they are innovating and transforming their services to meet the needs of victims.

4 KEY TAKEAWAYS:

Digital and Structural Innovations that Victim Support Services have Embarked Upon

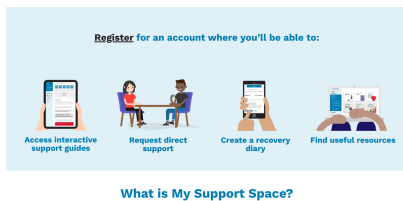
1. Invest in and explore the technology and infrastructure to support remote work and virtual support capabilities.

- ✓ While face-to-face services in the community and courts were forced to shut due to the lockdown restrictions, the support services' telephone helplines, webchat and email support methods have remained open.



[Tailored website and social media content](#) has been created to provide support and information around emerging crime trends during the pandemic, focusing on topics such as fraud, domestic abuse, hate crime, and neighbour disputes.

- ✓ The communication needs of support workers have led them to piloting other distance-based methods of support provision such as text messages, WhatsApp, and video calls.
- ✓ Training was quickly organised for all staff on working from home and self-care during social isolation. These were delivered through webinars, together with the development and distribution of information and instructions to support staff on the use of new technology and ways of working.

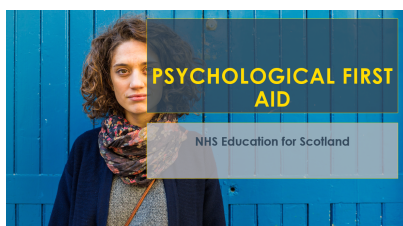


✓ The online tool, [My Support Space](#), was designed to help victims manage the impact that crime has had on them. Anyone affected by crime in England and Wales can access My Support Space, regardless of whether an incident was reported to the police. The personalised toolkit allows victims to pick and choose how they access this (on a PC, tablet or phone), which range of tools and guides they work through,

and when they decide to use the resource.

- ✓ Local associations [handled emergencies in court](#) and in connection with the investigation services (protection of the most vulnerable victims) by conducting interviews remotely: via telephone or videoconferencing. This type of interviews have quickly gained popularity, especially for psychological support, without ultimately causing any problems, either for victims or for professionals.
- ✓ There has been a move to e-learning to facilitate updates on the internal policies and systems. The lockdown time was also used [to update the knowledge resources](#) and develop ways victim support services can move their traditional classroom delivery to digital platforms.
- ✓ [Online workshops](#) were used to encourage, inform and assist participants with the most accurate and situation appropriate information

2. Team with public sector, national, state, local agencies and health officials.



✓ The establishment of [external partnerships](#) with expert organisations has led to the development of tailored online training on topics such as psychological first aid and safeguarding of vulnerable people. The trainings have supported staff and volunteers with their own mental health, as well as equipping them in their role supporting others.

- ✓ The pandemic has led to new forms of collaborations across various sectors. Weekly digital meetings between a wide range of public criminal justice agencies and victim support organisations have allowed for

emerging issues to do with crime and justice during the pandemic to be widely highlighted. This sharing of knowledge allows support organisations to be highly responsive in their victims' assistance.

3. Engage with victims and develop a robust communication strategy.



✔ While communication with service users has taken on new forms, so has everyday communication between victim support workers. Team meetings, board meetings, supervision meetings and training courses have taken place in online format using Microsoft Teams, Adobe Webinars, Zoom, Skype, etc.

✔ Support services have produced 'Working from Home' guides covering everything to do with setting up a home office, using technology and supporting one's personal wellbeing.

✔ The 116 006 helpline has seen a rise in the number of contacts.

✔ Support services presented new campaigns on social isolation. In times when social restraint and isolation are imperative, they warned about the possibility of an increase in domestic violence, cybercrime and property crimes.

4. Get creative with hiring during the pandemic.

The hiring of new staff and volunteers has also taken on new forms during the pandemic. Interviews with prospective candidates have taken place via online video calls, following the guides produced by organisations on how to conduct effective online job interviews.

Read on to get inspired!

HOW ARE VICTIM SUPPORT SERVICES RESPONDING TO THE PANDEMIC?

➔ Austria

Weisser Ring Austria learnt one thing from the pandemic: they can weather a crisis well!

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➔ Croatia

White Circle Croatia during the COVID-19 crisis: "Our usual ways of working have changed at the core."

[READ MORE →](#)

➔ Denmark

Victim Support Denmark during the pandemic: "Being Together Apart"

[READ MORE →](#)

➔ England and Wales

Victim Support England and Wales: new online resource now available to all victims of crime

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 **Finland**

Victim Support Finland: 116 006 helpline is seeing a clear rise in the number of contacts

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 **France**

Nearly 28 000 victims were able to be helped by the France Victims Network during the pandemic

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 **Israel**

NATAL: Israel Trauma and Resiliency Center has remained flexible to adapt to meet the unprecedented demand for its services

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 **New Zealand**

Victim Support New Zealand: "The biggest challenge was for our Contact Service."

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 **Northern Ireland**

How has Victim Support Northern Ireland adapted to remote working?

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 **Portugal**

The Portuguese Association for Victim Support (APAV) adapts frontline victim support services to the Covid-19 crisis

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 **Romania**

ACTEDO's team has decided to temporarily extend the area of activity for Pro Bono Network for Human Rights

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 **South Africa**

Inter Trauma Nexus: Support during the COVID-19 lockdown in South Africa

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 **Scotland**

Care, communication and collaboration: Victim Support Scotland's innovative response to the COVID-19 pandemic

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 **Switzerland/ EU/ Italy**

EMDR Europe: Psychological support for the different populations exposed to covid-19 pandemic

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 **UK (London)**

Mayor invests further £1.5m in safe accommodation for victims of domestic abuse during coronavirus lockdown

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About Victim Support Europe

Victim Support Europe is an umbrella organisation which currently consists of 60 national and regional victim support organisations in 30 countries.

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