

# VSE Standards and Accreditation Process for Full Members

2018

This Paper provides relevant information and documentation for the compliance with VSE standards for full members and participation in the accreditation process

## Contents

<b>1. Purpose of VSE Standards for accreditation.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>2. Process for accreditation .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>3. Overview of Standards.....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Standard 1: Make services accessible to victims of all crimes .....</b>	<b>23</b>
1.1.1 Support to all victims of crime .....	23
1.1.2 Equality and non-discrimination principles .....	24
1.1.3 Basic support will be free of charge .....	24
1.2.1 Being accessible .....	25
1.2.2 Information and awareness .....	25
1.3.1 Vulnerable groups of victims .....	26
2.1.1 Communication .....	27
2.1.2 Respectful.....	27
2.1.3 Complaints strategy .....	28
2.2.1 Respond to victims.....	29
2.2.2 Premises are pleasant .....	29
2.2.3 Privacy provided for the victim.....	30
<b>3.1 Assess victims' safety, requirements, identifying risks and providing advice to victims.</b> .....	<b>31</b>
3.1.1 Risk assessment .....	31
3.1.2 Build a network .....	31
3.1.3 Risk assessment in training/intake .....	32
3.2.1 Safe and secure.....	33
3.2.2 Inform victims of safe and secure .....	33
3.3.1 Clear and transparent .....	34
3.3.2 Recording and sharing information .....	34
3.3.3 Data protection.....	35
4.1.1 Basic needs .....	36
4.1.2 Specific needs of certain groups .....	37
4.1.3 Individual needs.....	37
4.1.4 Needs assessment and training .....	38
4.1.5 Basis of Assessment (BoA).....	38
4.1.6 BoA, Stepped Care and Watchful Waiting.....	39
4.1.7 BoA, Outreach, Psychological and Victim-centered .....	40

<b>4.1.8 Policies .....</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>4.2.1 Support vulnerable victims.....</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>4.2.2 Support vulnerable victims, cross-border and minority groups .....</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>4.2.3 Support victims with different abilities.....</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>5.1.1 Request services .....</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>5.1.2 Offer services through a range of means .....</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>5.1.3 Train personnel.....</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>5.1.4 Provide victims with information .....</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>5.2.1 Diverse range of services.....</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>5.2.2 Provide tools to staff and volunteers.....</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>6.1.1 Services and service providers.....</b>	<b>47</b>
<b>6.1.2 Services and service providers (first element).....</b>	<b>47</b>
<b>6.1.3 Services and service providers (second element) .....</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>6.1.4 Services and service providers (third element) .....</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>6.2.1 Develop networks.....</b>	<b>49</b>
<b>6.2.2 Work together with other organisations (part 1) .....</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>6.2.3 Work together with other organisations (part 2) .....</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>6.2.4 Work together with other organisations (part 3) .....</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>6.2.5 Work together to facilitate the referrals to your organisation.....</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>7.1.1 Governance rules and policies .....</b>	<b>52</b>
<b>7.1.2 Governance and financial control.....</b>	<b>52</b>
<b>8.1.1 Basic training .....</b>	<b>53</b>
<b>8.1.2 Ongoing training .....</b>	<b>53</b>
<b>8.1.3 Victim sensitive courses .....</b>	<b>54</b>
<b>8.2.1 Training covers all required topics .....</b>	<b>55</b>
<b>8.2.2 Training will be renewed.....</b>	<b>56</b>
<b>8.2.3 Qualified trainer .....</b>	<b>56</b>
<b>8.2.4 Organisations provide sufficient resources .....</b>	<b>57</b>
<b>9.1.1 Evaluate our services .....</b>	<b>58</b>
<b>9.1.2 Victims' opinions are heard .....</b>	<b>59</b>
<b>9.2.1 Complaint system .....</b>	<b>60</b>
<b>9.2.2 Provide victims with information .....</b>	<b>60</b>

## 1. Purpose of VSE Standards for accreditation

Standards for accreditation were developed through the collaborative work of VSE and its members throughout 2016 and 2017. At the Annual General Assembly in May 2018, the standards and accreditation process was formally adopted.

The standards themselves are based on the following premises:

- These are minimum standards, to be complied with by all full members which deliver services for victims of crime;
- Standards are adopted with the presumption that all full members will be accredited as soon as possible: until accreditation is achieved, their status as full members will not be affected whatsoever;
- Standards are set to help members develop their systems and services and are not established as an obstacle to membership.

The Standards themselves were developed by VSE, specifically because VSE members expressed a need to:

- Ensure that victims across a country get the same quality of support
  - Ensure that victims throughout Europe get the same quality of support
  - Demonstrate to funders and governments that members have the necessary standards in place, and as such are worthy partners
  - Establish mechanisms to ensure that members' best practices and experiences are credible and trustworthy
  - Find a balance between limited resources and high-quality of services – it was felt this could be achieved more easily if quality standards are put into place
- Facilitate cross-border referral

It is widely recognised that minimum standards can be an extremely useful tool in guiding victim support organisations to develop high-quality, effective, efficient and consistent services as well as reducing the risk of providing deleterious services and wasting scarce resources. Standards also give VSE confidence in its members and help protect VSE's reputation. This confidence is likely to be reflected in the attitudes of national institutions and victims towards support services.

The overall aim of standards is to ensure that services meet the needs and expectations of their stakeholders i.e. end users and funders. Standards can help organisations improve and structure their activities and make it easier to foster collaboration between organisations in sharing good practices and policies.

# VSE Standards

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## STANDARD 1

Make services accessible to all victims of all types of crime

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## STANDARD 2

Respecting victims and treating them with courtesy and dignity

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## STANDARD 3

Working to ensure victims are safe

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## STANDARD 4

Responding to individual victims' needs

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## STANDARD 5

Support victims through different services

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## STANDARD 6

Delivering for victims through referrals and co-ordination

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## STANDARD 7

Ensuring good governance structures

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## STANDARD 8

Achieving quality through training

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## STANDARD 9

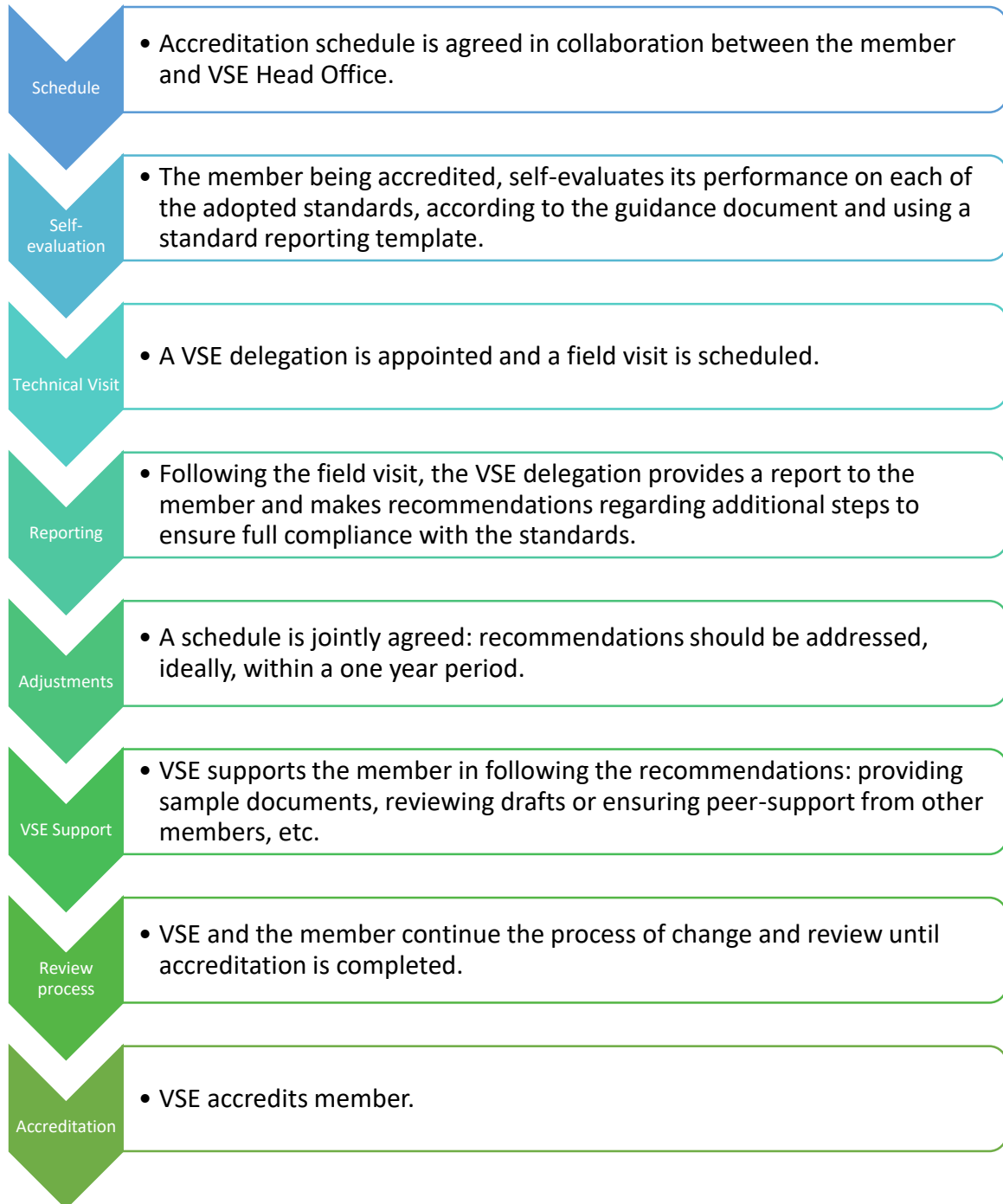
Improving our services through monitoring and evaluation

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These standards are set out in detail in this guidance document, which will be updated as the accreditation process moves forward. The guidance document prepared by the VSE Management Team, with the support from the Brussels Office, is expected to be a living instrument, which responds to the changing environment in which VSE and its members operate. Members will be informed of changes to the guidance document and the updated document will be made available on the intranet.

## 2. Process for accreditation

VSE has been working closely with the Croatian Bijeli Krug in piloting the accreditation process and we are proud to announce that Bijeli Krug has successfully completed the accreditation procedure. Based on this experience, the accreditation process operates as follows:



### 3. Overview of Standards

All standards and compliance requirements are listed below. For details and further guidance on those standards please refer to [Chapter 4](#).



#### STANDARD 1

#### Make services accessible to victims of all type of crime

Engagement	Compliance with this standard						More Information
<b>1.1 Services are offered to all victims.</b>	1.1.1	Victim Support organisations offer support to all victims of crime, regardless of the type of crime or whether the crime has been reported or not and regardless of their age, cultural background, language etc.					<a href="#">Support to all victims of crime</a>
	1.1.2	Victim Support organisations respect equality and non-discrimination principles.					<a href="#">Equality and non-discrimination principles</a>
	1.1.3	Basic support offered by Victims support organisations is free of charge.					<a href="#">Support will be free of charge</a>
Evidence to provide to show the standard has been put into place	<i>Constitution</i>	<i>Mission statement</i>	<i>Equality policy</i>	<i>Training</i>	<i>Publicity</i>	<i>Website</i>	
<b>1.2 Services are accessible, visible and well publicized.</b>	1.2.1	Victim organisations make the services as accessible as possible to all victims.					<a href="#">Being accessible</a>
	1.2.2	Victims Support organisations provide information about their organisation.					<a href="#">Information and awareness</a>



	1.2.3	Victims Support organisations raise awareness about victims' rights and the services provided.					
Evidence to provide to show the standard has been put into place		<i>Publicity</i>	<i>Leaflets</i>	<i>Posters</i>	<i>Website</i>	<i>Annual report with information about organisation</i>	
<b>1.3 Services take specific measures to reach out to vulnerable groups of victims.</b>	1.3.1	To ensure Victim Support services are accessible to all victims, Victim Support organisations engage in activities that focus on specific groups of victims.				<a href="#">Vulnerable groups of victims</a>	
Evidence to provide to show the standard has been put into place		<i>Publicity</i>	<i>Training</i>	<i>Service procedures</i>	<i>Website</i>	<i>Report activities</i>	<i>Specific policies or strategies for different groups</i>


**STANDARD 2**
**Respecting victims and treating them with courtesy and dignity**

Engagement	Compliance with this standard					More Information
<b>2.1 Ensure our staff and volunteers treat victims with respect and dignity.</b>	2.1.1	Victim Support workers communicate with victims using a victim-sensitive approach.				<a href="#">Communication</a>
	2.1.2	Victim Support workers treat victims respectfully, kindly and politely.				<a href="#">Respectful</a> <a href="#">Complaints strategy</a>
Evidence to provide to show the standard has been put into place	<i>Policy</i>	<i>Training</i>	<i>Complaint strategy</i>	<i>Service procedures</i>	<i>Welcome pack new staff</i>	
<b>2.2 Ensure that infrastructure and organisation of services are geared to victims' needs.</b>	2.2.1	Respond to victims within a reasonable time and in a clear precise manner.				<a href="#">Respond to victims</a>
	2.2.2	Ensure that premises are pleasant, clean and comfortable. (cleaner, toys)				<a href="#">Premises are pleasant</a>
	2.2.3	Ensure there is private space available when talking to a victim and discussing cases.				<a href="#">Privacy provided for the victim</a>
Evidence to provide to show the standard has been put into place	<i>Pictures of infrastructure</i>		<i>Having a cleaner</i>		<i>Services procedures</i>	


**STANDARD 3**
**Working to ensure victims are safe**

Engagement	Compliance with this standard	More Information
<b>3.1 Assess victims' safety, requirements, identify risks and provide advice to victims.</b>	3.1.1 Put a risk assessment procedure in place to identify risks to victims.	<a href="#">Risk assessment</a>  <a href="#">Build a network</a>  <a href="#">Risk assessment in training/intake</a>
	3.1.2 Have in place clear procedures for when risks are identified.	
	3.1.3 Include risk assessment in training and intake procedures.	
Evidence to provide to show the standard has been put into place	<i>Risk assessment</i> <i>Training on risk assessment</i> <i>Network agreements</i>	
<b>3.2 Work to provide a safe and secure environment where victims are supported</b>	3.2.1 Take measures to control premises to make them safe and secure.	<a href="#">Safe and secure</a>  <a href="#">Inform victims of safe and secure</a>
	3.2.2 Inform victims about the steps taken to make the premises safe and secure	
	3.2.3 Put into place safety and security measures, including basic standards of safety for victims within the premises.	

Evidence to provide to show the standard has been put into place	<i>Pictures of premises</i>	<i>Safety plan</i>	<i>Escape plan</i>
<b>3.3 Protect victims' data and ensure confidentiality while respecting the requirements of national legislation.</b>	3.3.1 Establish data protection protocols which conform with national and international law.	<a href="#">Clear and transparent</a> <a href="#">Recording and sharing information</a> <a href="#">Data protection</a>	
	3.3.2 Ensure information on client victims is recorded and can be shared in an easy and safe way within the organization and with partner organisations.		
	3.3.3 Be transparent about how services are confidential and to what extent.		
Evidence to provide to show the standard has been put into place	<i>Service procedures</i>		<i>Policy</i>


**STANDARD 4**
**Responding to individual victims' needs**

Engagement	Compliance with this standard	More Information
<b>4.1 Tailor services to respond to the individual needs of victims.</b>	4.1.1 Needs assessment in place to identify victims' needs.	<a href="#">Basic needs</a> <a href="#">Specific needs of certain groups</a> <a href="#">Individual needs</a>
	4.1.2 Support offered on basis of assessment.	<a href="#">Needs assessment and training</a> <a href="#">Basis of Assessment (BoA)</a> <a href="#">BoA, Stepped Care and Watchful Waiting</a> <a href="#">BoA, Outreach, Psychological and Victim-centered</a>
	4.1.3 Establish policies to ensure maximum flexibility to support victims based on their needs.	<a href="#">Policies</a>
<b>4.2 Provide services which can respond to victim's different abilities and vulnerabilities</b>	4.2.1 Seek and provide solutions to support vulnerable victims according to their needs.	<a href="#">Support vulnerable victims</a>

	<p>4.2.2 Seek and provide solutions to support victims with different abilities and disabilities according to their needs.</p>	<p><a href="#">Support vulnerable victims, cross-border and minority groups</a></p> <p><a href="#">Support victims with different abilities</a></p>		
<p>Evidence to provide to show the standard has been put into place</p>	<p><i>Needs' assessment</i></p>	<p><i>Training</i></p>	<p><i>Service procedures</i></p>	<p><i>Specific strategies for vulnerable victims</i></p>



**STANDARD 5**  
**Support victims through different services**

Engagement	Compliance with this standard	More Information
<p><b>5.1 Provide victims with the opportunity to request help electronically, by telephone and face-to-face, etc.</b></p>	<p>5.1.1 Offer services through a range of means such as office-based support, helplines, mobile service, online services.</p>	<p><a href="#">Request services</a></p> <p><a href="#">Offer services through a range of means</a></p>
	<p>5.1.2 Get people trained to offer these services.</p>	<p><a href="#">Train personnel</a></p>
	<p>5.1.3 Provide victims with information about the different services offered by the Victim Support organisation.</p>	<p><a href="#">Provide victims with information</a></p>

<b>5.2 Offer a diverse range of services.</b>	<b>5.2.1 Offer at least the following services</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emotional support;</li> <li>• Information;</li> <li>• Advice and/or support to access compensation;</li> <li>• Referral;</li> <li>• Psychological support or referral to psychological support</li> <li>• Advice relating to financial and practical issues;</li> <li>• Advice relating to the risk and prevention</li> </ul>				<a href="#">Diverse range of services</a>  <a href="#">Provide tools to staff and volunteers</a>
	<b>5.2.2 Victim Support organization to provide tools for staff and volunteers to offer these services.</b>				
Evidence to provide to show the standard has been put into place	<i>Service procedure</i>	<i>Policy</i>	<i>Website</i>	<i>Leaflet</i>	<i>Training</i>




**STANDARD 6**
**Delivering for victims through referrals and co-ordination**

Engagement	Compliance with this standard	More Information
<b>6.1 Inform victims about other services and service providers</b>	6.1.1 Victims receive information about services and service providers	<a href="#">Services and service providers</a> <a href="#">Services and service providers (first element)</a> <a href="#">Services and service providers (second element)</a> <a href="#">Services and service providers (third element)</a>
Evidence to provide to show the standard has been put into place	<i>Leaflet</i>	<i>Service procedures</i>
<b>6.2 Refer victims for support to known, trusted, quality partner organizations.</b>	6.2.1 Develop networks with other organisations. 6.2.2 Work with other organisations to refer victims onward in an appropriate fashion whilst confirming the case has been taken on 6.2.3 Work together with other victim support organisations to facilitate the appropriate inward referral of victims.	6.2.1 <a href="#">Develop networks</a> <a href="#">Work together with other organisations (part 1)</a> <a href="#">Work together with other organisations (part 2)</a> <a href="#">Work together with other organisations (part 3)</a> <a href="#">Work together to facilitate the referrals to your organisation</a>

Evidence to provide to show the standard has been put into place	Summary of network meetings	Network protocols	Service procedures	Follow up system social map


**STANDARD 7**
**Ensuring good governance structures**

Engagement	Compliance with this standard				More Information	
<b>7.1 Comply with national laws and regulations on the establishment of NGO's and charities.</b>	7.1.1	Governance rules, policies in place accordance to national law.	<a href="#">Governance rules and policies</a>  <a href="#">Governance and financial control</a>			
Evidence to provide to show the standard has been put into place	<i>Constitution</i>	<i>Statutes</i>	<i>National requirements and evaluation</i>	<i>National recognition</i>	<i>Annual Report</i>	<i>Website</i>


**STANDARD 8**
**Achieving quality through training**

Engagement	Compliance with this standard	More Information
<b>8.1 Ensure that all staff and volunteers receive an agreed level of training according to the nature of their contact with victims.</b>	8.1.1 Ensure basic training is provided for new recruits.	<a href="#">Basic training</a>  <a href="#">Ongoing training</a>  <a href="#">Victim sensitive courses</a>
	8.1.2 Ensure ongoing training is offered to existing personnel in accordance with their contact with victims and the nature and the type of crime involved.	
	8.1.3 Ensure that victim-sensitive courses are provided for staff who do not work directly with victims.	
<b>8.2 Training will, as a minimum aim, ensure that victims are treated with dignity and respect, that the support provided responds to the victim's needs and that no further harm is caused.</b>	8.1.4 Training covers all required topics.	<a href="#">Training covers all required topics</a>  <a href="#">Training will be renewed</a>  <a href="#">Qualified trainer</a>  <a href="#">Organisations provide sufficient resources</a>
	8.2.1 Training will be renewed and updated at regular intervals.	
	8.2.2 Training is provided by a qualified trainer	
	8.2.3 Organisations provide sufficient resources, time and tools to support the delivery of training.	
Evidence to provide to show the standard has been put into place	<i>Training package</i>	<i>Training procedure</i>


**STANDARD 9**
**Improving our services through monitoring and evaluation**

Engagement	Compliance with this standard	More Information
<b>9.1 Evaluate services at least once every two years.</b>	9.1.1 Work out a range of tools to evaluate services.	<a href="#">Evaluate our services</a>
	9.1.2 Ensure that victims’ opinions are heard and taken into account.	<a href="#">Victims’ opinions are heard</a>
Evidence to provide to show the standard has been put into practice.	<i>Evaluation tools</i>	<i>Update and summary of the evaluation</i>
<b>9.2 Have in place a complaint system, which enables victims to give feedback and seek redress.</b>	9.2.1 Work out a complaint system for victims.	<a href="#">Complaint system</a>
	9.2.2 Provide victims with information about the complaint system.	<a href="#">Provide victims with information</a>
Evidence to provide to show the standard has been put into practice.	<i>Complaints strategy and procedures</i>	<i>Information tools for victims to learn about complaints procedures</i>

## Standard 1: Make services accessible to victims of all crimes

### 1.1.1 Support to all victims of crime

**Victim Support organisations offer support to all victims of crime, regardless of the type of crime or whether the crime has been reported or not and regardless of their age, cultural background, language etc.**

Victim Support organisations must ensure that victims of all crime have access to the organisation. As a starting point, your organisation must be open to supporting all victims of crime from a legal perspective i.e. your Constitution or other constitutive documents shouldn't place restrictions on your activities which would limit your support to only some groups of victims. Where there may be national legal limitations on who may be supported, this situation can be further discussed with VSE but a referral system is usually a sufficient alternative.

Secondly, in practice, the organisation should make it clear and evident in all relevant documentation and communications that it serves all victims. For example, if your website were to advertise on the main page that you work for victims of domestic violence, and only on sub-pages do you indicate that you also serve other victims, this will reduce access by other groups and not be wholly in line with this principle.

This does not mean that you can't specialise in certain victim groups and this, of course, should also be very clear for victims. Equally, you may have in place policies whereby you refer certain victims to other organisations better placed to help those victims. This too is acceptable providing that you may support that victim (in accordance with your own capacity and capability) where this is their preference or the other organisation cannot support the victim. In effect, a victim turning to your organisation should not find themselves without any support due to referral arrangements.

## 1.1.2 Equality and non-discrimination principles

### **Victim Support organisations will respect equality and non-discrimination principles.**

Non-discrimination principles mean the equal treatment of an individual or group irrespective of their particular characteristics. Victim support organisations must not restrict the scope of their activities by declining to assist victims on the basis of age, gender, sexual orientation, race, religious belief, political opinions, culture, disability, the nature of his/her complaint or for any other reason unless they can demonstrate that another organisation already exists providing an effective service for the group of victims which has been excluded.

Equality means victims are treated free from prejudice and discrimination. Victim Support organisations should have in place a policy to ensure equality and non-discrimination principles. All staff as well as volunteers, should be aware of this policy and agree with it.

## 1.1.3 Basic support will be free of charge

### **Basic support offered by Victim Support organisations will be free of charge.**

As a general rule, the services provided by your organisation should be free of charge. However, it is understood that some services may be of a specialist nature or delivered by external providers e.g. psychologists or lawyers. In such limited circumstances, fees may be charged but victims should be fully aware of this from the outset. Charged services should nevertheless be the exception with the majority of services being free.

## 1.2 Services are accessible, visible and well publicised

### 1.2.1 Being accessible

**Victim organisations make the services as easy to access as possible to all victims.** Given the difficulty that victims may face in coming forward and seeking help, it is important for a Victim Support organisation to make access for a victim as easy as possible. It is also important to be aware of some of the challenges victims face when coming forward e.g. victims who don't want to report the crime are unlikely to come to an office located in a police station. Alternative locations or ways of being supported should be considered for such persons. Awareness of the challenges for victims to reach victim support should inspire special measures to make victim support easily accessible.

This can be done by having flexible opening hours that go beyond regular office hours, by being located in a place easy to reach by car, foot, and public transport, by offering home visits etc. The greater the visibility of the organisation and the more forms of getting support, the more accessible the service will be.

### 1.2.2 Information and awareness

**Victims Support organisations provide information about their organisation**

To reach a Victim Support Organisation, it is very important for victims to know about the organisation. It will be important to make practical information about the organisation available in a range of formats and through different media e.g. leaflets, posters, business cards, adverts on TV, radio, local papers, in police stations, hospitals, prosecutors' offices and courts, doctors waiting areas, social welfare centres etc. You should have an up to date website with full details of how to access support. You should also consider social media such as Facebook and Twitter.



## 1.3 Services take specific measures to reach out to vulnerable groups of victims

### 1.3.1 Vulnerable groups of victims

**To ensure Victim Support services are accessible to all victims, Victim Support organisations engage in activities to focus on specific groups of victims.**

Certain groups of victims don't reach or hardly reach Victims Support Services e.g. children, elderly people, people with a disability, cross border victims. To reach those groups of victims, certain measures, procedures and methodologies will have to be put in place and staff may need specialised training to deal with those specific groups of victims.

Such measures could include advertising in a form easily accessed by the vulnerable groups – child-friendly, disability friendly, in different languages. You should consider joining up with organisations which work regularly with those groups to help inform them about your work e.g. disability organisations, care homes, cultural centres, refuges.

## 2.1 Ensure our staff and volunteers treat victims with respect and dignity.

### 2.1.1 Communication

#### **Communicating with victims in a proper way.**

From the very first contact – whether by email, phone, social media or face-to-face, we have to ensure that victims are treated with courtesy, politeness, and kindness. The language used in any materials and when speaking to victims should be easy to understand and clear. Communications should be non-judgmental, take into account gender, cultural, religious and other sensitivities as well as the sensitivities of different types of victims (based on the crime).

Giving clear information about service procedures, making clear to victims what they can expect, informing them when an appointment has to be cancelled or delayed, listening to victims requests and responding to them, are all methods of ensuring you treat victims with respect.

Whilst these are the expected outcomes, it will be helpful to establish protocols or rules around communication approaches as well as providing training on communication methods.

### 2.1.2 Respectful

#### **Treat victims in a respectful, kind and polite way.**

There are many ways to treat victims in a respectful and courteous way, and equally ways of leaving victims feeling dissatisfied or further harmed as a result of their contacts.

When implementing measures, it should be recalled that people may treat victims without respect but equally the way we set up our procedures, administration and infrastructure can also result in poor treatment of victims.

### 2.1.3 Complaints strategy

#### **Put a complaints strategy in place.**

An important aspect of treating victims with respect is listening to them, giving them an opportunity to voice concerns or complaints, and then acting on those complaints. A complaint procedure should be in place within the organisation to allow for this process and victims should be informed about it. The process for submitting a complaint and acting on that completing should be transparent and clear for both victims and the organisation's personnel.

## 2.2 Ensure that infrastructure and organisation of services are respectful towards victims

### 2.2.1 Respond to victims

#### **Respond to victims within a reasonable time and in a clear and precise way.**

Victims should be reached as soon as possible after they contact or are referred to the Victim Support organisation. A clear procedure should be in place and this procedure has to communicate with victims directly and network partners. When the waiting time would be longer than normal, it will be very important to communicate this. If victims can't be reached when first contacted it will be very important to contact them again or let them know an attempt has been made.

### 2.2.2 Premises are pleasant

#### **Ensure that premises are pleasant, clean and comfortable.**

When visiting the organisation, victims should feel welcome from the outset. This means ensuring that premises are easy to find, properly signposted (e.g. being clear which bell to ring or where to go once they have entered the building). If there are security concerns about advertising the office, clear information on how to get to the premises should be provided directly.

If visitors have to wait at all, a seated area is essential, with different approaches taken to make the wait comfortable e.g. magazines, toys for children, availability of a toilet, water etc. When offenders also access the same building, special arrangements should exist to prevent victims and offenders coming into contact. These measures will vary for each building but could include e.g. separate entrances and waiting rooms.

There should be careful consideration of how persons with disabilities would be able to access the premises. If premises are not adapted or cannot be adapted, separate measures should be put in place to ensure such victims can access support.

### 2.2.3 Privacy provided for the victim

#### **Ensure there is privacy provided when talking to a case-worker**

The story of every victim is a private story. It is important that victims can give their story in a private way.

This means in face to face meetings with a case worker, no one should be able to hear them. The same should be true for phone calls. Having clearly separated rooms for this purpose, which are well insulated and with a sign indicated if there is a meeting taking place, are good methods to achieve this objective.

In addition, there should be a quiet environment without noisy distractions. For example, for a victim, to hear people laugh and talk in the background can be very disturbing.

## 3.1 Assess victims' safety, requirements, identifying risks and providing advice to victims.

### 3.1.1 Risk assessment

**Work out a risk assessment for victims to identify risks.**

In the first contact with a victim, it is important to identify any ongoing risks for the victim. This can be done within the intake process by asking a few questions e.g. is there still a threat? is there ongoing victimisation? Is the victim fearful of anything? A risk assessment can be put in place to identify the nature of the risk, the extent of the risk and the likelihood of the risk to happen.

If a victim is still at risk it will be very important to work out an action plan to stop the ongoing victimisation. Referral can be part of this action plan including contacting the police.

### 3.1.2 Build a network

**Build a network to refer victims to, if necessary.**

Depending on the nature of the risk, your organisation may not be equipped to deal with it. In these circumstances, it may be necessary to refer the victim to another organisation. It is therefore very important to build in advance a network with different organisations and to develop relations with those organisations for example by meeting on a regular basis. Experience shows that it's much easier to refer victims to a certain organisation if you know the people working there.

### 3.1.3 Risk assessment in training/intake

**Include risk assessment in training and intake process.**

To make this risk assessment part of the basic service procedure it is advised to include this into the intake procedure and victim's needs assessment. It will be important to train staff on risks and dangers and the assessment process. The risk assessment process should be included in internal procedures when taking on new clients.

## 3.2 Put into place safety and security measures, including basic standards of safety for victims within the premises.

### 3.2.1 Safe and secure

#### **Take certain measures to make your premises safe and secure.**

It is advisable to begin with a security assessment by reviewing the security of your premises and procedures.

- Is there a locked door?
- Can only those people come in who has an appointment?
- Could those people, their acquaintances or the offender pose a risk?
- Does the organisation operate an open office/ walk-in facility and what are the implications of this?
- What measures are in place to deal with a dangerous situation?
- Have staff trained for or practiced such situations?
- Where do you keep confidential information?
- Do you have an escape plan e.g. by fire?

### 3.2.2 Inform victims of safe and secure

#### **Inform victims about the steps taken to make the premises safe and secure.**

Give victims clear and transparent information about safety and security at your premises, whilst being careful not to reveal confidential information which could be helpful to a criminal.



## 3.3 Protect victims' data and ensure confidentiality while respecting the requirements of national legislation.

### 3.3.1 Clear and transparent

#### **Be clear and transparent about the fact that services are confidential.**

Confidentiality of services is always very important. With victims still at risk, it is very important to make clear what the confidentiality principles of the service are, and what victims can expect. There is a difference between confidentiality and keeping a secret to yourself, for victims this is not always clear. Be clear how information is kept confidential and any circumstances where information would need to be passed on. Victims should know this from the outset, not after they have given the information.

### 3.3.2 Recording and sharing information

#### **Ensure information on client victims is recorded and can be shared in an easy and safe way within the organization and with partner organisations.**

For every victim, there needs to be a case file with their information. The file is confidential, the victim has the right to see the file if wanted, and it should be possible to share necessary information with other organisations in the case of a referral. This sharing of information has to happen in a safe and confidential way and according to national and international law. The way of working has to be worked out in the service procedures and victims have to be informed about it. This means in particular that information is only shared for the purposes for which it was provided and that consent has been obtained in line with national laws.

### 3.3.3 Data protection

**Work out data protection protocols conform to national and international law.**

Have a look at data protection protocols in your own country and make them part of your own service procedure. Make this clear to victims and partner organisations.

## 4.1 Tailor our services to respond to individual needs of victims

### 4.1.1 Basic needs

#### **Basic needs of all victims:**

The first and most fundamental need for the victim is respect and recognition. It is widely agreed that victims need to be recognised as victims and the suffering to be acknowledged. Victims need to be treated with dignity and respect (see also Standard 2)

Victims have a range of protection needs e.g. the victim needs to be protected from further harm and from secondary victimisation. The victims need to be protected throughout criminal procedures and other court proceedings.

Victims also need support, which includes in particular information, but also other forms of emotional, psychological and practical support, as well as referral to adequate services.

Victims need access to justice, which can require that they are involved in the proceedings against the perpetrator. International and EU legislation and guidelines are clear that victims of violent crime should receive financial compensation.

## 4.1.2 Specific needs of certain groups

### **Specific needs of certain groups of victims.**

Apart from the basic needs of victims we will see that certain groups of victims will have specific needs and will need more specific support based on those needs. These specific needs can be based on the type of crime e.g. victims of domestic violence will need a safety plan; relatives of someone who died will need support to cope with the death of a loved one; rape victims will have a higher risk of a long-term trauma; victims of a terrorist attack will need protection from the media; etc. Victims' specific needs can also be based on the vulnerability of the victim e.g. children and adolescents, persons with disabilities, women, migrants, minorities, cross-border victims, etc.

## 4.1.3 Individual needs

### **Individual needs of victims**

Apart from the general needs of all victims and specific needs of certain groups, every individual victim will have their own individual needs. Those needs will have to be assessed in the first contact with every victim and in further contacts with them. Based on these needs it will be decided which support will be appropriate. When assessing a victim's individual needs it will be important to focus on:

- Context and circumstances of the crime: does the victim know the offender, did someone die or get hurt, did the crime take place in the victim's home, was the victim a direct victim, or a family member of the direct victim etc.
- Physical needs: was the person hurt by the attack, are there any psycho-somatic complaints.
- Emotional needs: how is the victim coping emotionally and psychologically with the event.
- Social needs: did the victim tell anyone what happened, do they receive support in their own social network, etc.
- Judicial needs: often the whole judicial process is very complicated for a victim. Which information does this victim need? Is a lawyer needed? Which steps will need to be taken in the judicial procedure?
- Practical and financial needs: does the crime have financial implications? Can the victim leave the house? Can the victim still go to work or look after their children? Can they do the housework?

#### 4.1.4 Needs assessment and training

##### **Needs assessment in place to identify victims' needs.**

To identify the individual needs of a victim in a proper way, a needs assessment needs to be put in place:

- This assessment needs to be timely and focused on the individual victim
- This assessment needs to focus on the specific needs of every individual victim.
- This assessment needs to be broad and take into consideration three main aspects: victim's personal circumstances, the type and nature of the crime and the circumstances of the crime.
- The extent of the individual assessment may be varied, depending on the victim's particular circumstances;
- The needs assessment should be revised throughout the proceedings to respond to a victim's changing needs.

There is a big difference between a need of a victim and a question of a victim. To conduct a needs assessment in a proper way it will be very important for Victim Support workers to have the knowledge to do so. Victim Support workers need proper training about the needs of victims and how to assess them (see also Standard 8).

#### 4.1.5 Basis of Assessment (BoA)

##### **Support offered on basis of assessment.**

It is very important to assess the needs of a victim as soon as possible after the victimisation or at the first contact with a victim, and this is all cases, whether the first contact is face-to-face, over the phone or online. To support victims in the best possible way, support has to be carried out on the basis of different principles.

## 4.1.6 BoA, Stepped Care and Watchful Waiting

### **Support offered on basis of assessment.**

#### **Stepped Care Model:**

Stepped Care is a model/principle often used in mental health services. It is a system offered to people in adequacy with their needs. Stepped care means the effective, yet least resource intensive treatment is delivered first. Quality assessment of the needs of victims allows professionals to identify the step of care the victim needs at that moment in time.

#### **Watchful Waiting:**

The principle of Watchful Waiting fits perfectly within the Stepped Care Principle. Watchful Waiting means being alert to possible risks and problems. It means carrying out a needs and risk assessment shortly after the attack happened. It also needs to follow up the victim in every stage of the recovery.

## 4.1.7 BoA, Outreach, Psychological and Victim-centered

### **Support offered on basis of assessment.**

#### **Outreaching:**

To understand the needs of victims and to identify those in need, it is very important to work in an outreaching manner. Victims often do not know which help exists or may be reluctant to seek help when they do. In each case, it is very important for organisations to do everything they can to reach as many victims as possible.

#### **Assessment of psychological needs:**

Victims, but also their social network and sometimes even Victim Support workers, are not aware of the impact of a crime and may not recognise the psychological symptoms and PTSD risk symptoms that the aftermath of victimisation can carry. It is therefore very important to train anyone who might be confronted with a victim.

#### **Victim-centered approach:**

To better understand the needs of victims for support and information the main source of information is the victim itself. Victims are often very well aware of their own priorities and needs. Providing them with clear information about support available and the impact of crime will help them guide the victim support worker in developing a support plan.

## 4.1.8 Policies

### **Establish policies to ensure maximum flexibility to support victims based on their needs.**

For a victim support organisation it will not be possible to establish policies based on the individual needs of every victim. But it must be possible to establish flexibility within the policies e.g. to do a home visit, to accompany a victim to court, to contact a victim several times, to follow up a victim for a long-term, to revise the needs of a victim throughout the support, etc.

As a victim support organisation you must not be able to give an answer to every need of a victim. It will be important to be able to assess and identify the needs of every victim and to refer them if needed. (see also Standard 6)

## 4.2 Provide services which can respond to victim's different abilities and vulnerabilities

### 4.2.1 Support vulnerable victims

#### **Some groups of victims will have very specific needs:**

- Children and adolescents are particularly vulnerable to the far-reaching impact of victimisation. They are often an overlooked group. Children and young people's reaction to victimisation have some peculiarities. Children will react in different ways according to their age. They will need information in a language based on their age. Children in the school age groups are at increased risks of developing a psychological sequel. Also, the reaction of the child's parents or carers shortly after the event and the extent to which the parents can support their child is very important.
- Persons with psycho-social disabilities will be at an increased risk of further trauma and mental health problems if exposed to victimisation.
- Women suffer differ from men and may be exposed to different forms of victimisation e.g. sexual violence.
- Elderly people can become victims of elderly abuse and can become very dependent on people in their own environment in their reach and search for help.



## 4.2.2 Support vulnerable victims, cross-border and minority groups

### **Some groups of victims will have very specific needs:**

- Recently, Victim Support Europe published a study on cross-border victimisation, which explores the specific situation of persons who become victims of crimes outside of the border of their own country. Cross-border victims may just be visiting the country for tourism or business, or they may reside in the country but be of foreign origin and be integrated to a lesser or a greater extent. Cross-border issues may add a layer of complexity e.g. towards the measures required to protect victims' access to justice and/or compensation, or to certain information and certain support.
- Migrant and minority groups are particularly vulnerable to victimisation of especially discrimination and hate crime. It's very important that the cultural and religious needs of different groups of victims are taken into account. This might mean being aware of sensitivities and knowing how to speak with persons of different ages or genders, different spiritual needs of victims, or it may mean needing to ensure that the religious custom is respected in the case of death caused by a crime.

## 4.2.3 Support victims with different abilities

### **Seek and provide solutions to support victims with different abilities according to their needs.**

In order to support victims with different abilities according to their needs, it is important to be aware of the different needs of victims with disabilities. This will require flexibility, but it will also benefit from building networks with other organisation (see Standard 5), to respond to the needs of different victims. This will require ensuring accessibility, but also reasonable accommodations, e.g. we need to ensure access for persons with reduced mobility, sign language interpretation, flexibility to go to home visits, or providing information in easy to understand language, or with the use of pictograms.

## 5a. Provide victims the possibility to access services through a range of means

### 5.1.1 Request services

**Provide victims the possibility to request services at least electronically, by telephone and face-to-face.**

In today's society, we are able to maximise the accessibility of our services through traditional means as well as using new technologies. Equally, with a diverse client group, it is important to facilitate requests for help by providing different contact options. As a minimum, it should be possible for victims to request a meeting or support via telephone, face-to-face (where the possibility exists for members of the public to come to the office) or electronically e.g. email or chat line. Linked to Standard 4, it should be ensured that the contact methods used are regularly monitored to ensure victims are not missed or do not have to wait too long for a reply.

### 5.1.2 Offer services through a range of means

**Offer services through a range of means such as office-based support, helplines, mobile service, online services.**

Not only is it essential that victims are able to request support through a range of ways, it is also important to provide support through a variety of approaches. This takes into account the different ways that victims wish to receive support and therefore increase the number of victims who access services.

Each organisation will need to decide which ways of offering support they want to focus on. However, a combination of a face-to-face service and a remote service can help to spread the organisation's coverage whilst enabling many victims to receive quick, simple information without having to come to an office.

### 5.1.3 Train personnel

#### **Train personnel to offer those services**

To support the delivery of those services and help ensure their quality, staff should be trained in the different approaches to use e.g. where there may be differences for telephone support compared to face-to-face.

### 5.1.4 Provide victims with information

#### **Provide victims with information about the different services offered by the Victim Support organisation**

Support organisations should know what services exist in their local area, in particular, those which are most commonly needed by victims. They should ensure they have sufficient information to be able to advise victims on what services exist, what types of help they offer and how to access the services. Ideally, this advice will be supported through collaborative efforts with the different service providers.

## 5b. Offer a diverse range of services

### 5.2.1 Diverse range of services

A fundamental aspect of the work of victim support providers is the ability to offer a range of services and therefore to meet the specific needs of victims. This follows a one-stop approach which helps minimize the number of people or organisations victims have to meet to receive the help they need. Based on the known priorities of victims' organisation should offer at least the following services:

- Information (on rights, services, impact of crime, etc.);
- Advice and support to access compensation (this may entail guidance on what compensation is; how to fill out the forms, gather evidence or to support contacts with the authorities);
- Referral (where other organisations are better placed to support the victim; the organisation should have referral arrangements in places);
- Emotional support;
- Psychological support or referral to psychological support (this is essential for some victims. However, this service may be provided by others rather than through in-house psychologists);
- Advice relating to financial and practical issues (this differs from purely factual information and moves into the field of guiding victim, helping them find solutions and empowering them);
- Advice relating to risk and ways to prevent crime/ future crime (whilst sometimes overlooked, knowledge on prevention is an important aspect of support especially for certain forms of crimes such as domestic violence, gang-related violence, cybercrime, fraud etc. Organisations should help victims to avoid re-victimisation).

### 5.2.2 Provide tools to staff and volunteers

**Victim Support organisations provide tools to staff and volunteers to offer those services.**

When delivering these services, staff should not only receive appropriate training, but organisations should also develop tools which will facilitate staff work. This might include factsheets, scripts, contact number and details of organisations, protocols for referrals, operating proceedings for different types of service. This will help ensure consistent standards across your organisation, the accuracy of information and that protocols are adhered to.

## 6.1 Inform victims about other services and service providers

### 6.1.1 Services and service providers

#### **Victims receive the information they need about services and service providers**

An important element of providing support to victims of crime is informing victims about other services and services providers. Victims of crime often find themselves facing different institutions, procedures, and services that are foreign to them. Victim Support organisations play a key role in informing victims about which services exist, what these services offer and what the services can mean to this particular victim.

### 6.1.2 Services and service providers (first element)

#### **Victims receive the information they need about services and service providers**

Firstly victim support services must inform victims about which services exist. To be able to do so victim support services need to stay informed about the existence of a variety of services for victims in their region. This includes a wide array of services that might respond to the variety of needs that victims have and the services they might have to deal with in the aftermath of a crime.

As the needs of victims range from emotional, judicial, educational, social, practical, financial to psychological, victim support services must be informed about the social map of their own environment. This includes being aware of where to find vocational support in case the victim has to change profession because of the crime; medical services for rape victims; a specialised trauma psychologist when a victim has post-traumatic stress disorder; a social service that can help the victim cope with his or her financial difficulties. The list of relevant services for victims is long and ever-changing. Therefore, victim support services should set up a social database of relevant services for victims they are dealing with. In order to do so in a good way, victim support organisation need to make sure their information is up to date on the services offered and contact details. Close collaboration and

information-sharing between organisations is a facilitating factor in ensuring the information offered to victims is correct and in that sense, the victim support organisation can become a navigator for victims they are supporting.

### 6.1.3 Services and service providers (second element)

#### **Victims receive the information they need about services and service providers**

Secondly, victim support services must have basic knowledge on what other services can do for victims of crime. That way they can provide information to victims about other services or institutions they come across or need in the aftermath of crime. Concretely, victim support providers can offer oral or written information on other existing services in a simple, accessible and victim-friendly way through different means of communication like leaflets or websites.

### 6.1.4 Services and service providers (third element)

#### **Victims receive the information they need about services and service providers**

Thirdly, victim support organisations must be able to provide tailored advice on existing services to victims based on their needs and vulnerabilities. This tailor-made victim-friendly information should be guided by practical comprehensions and knowledge of the services offered by a certain organisation or institutions. Sometimes there is a discrepancy between what organisations or institutions offer on paper and what they can do in practice. There victim support organisations can play an important role in offering additional information to victims on this particular service like what is offered, procedures, challenges, and opportunities as well as their rights as a victim.

## 6.2 Refer victims for support to partner organisations we know and are confident they will provide a quality service

### 6.2.1 Develop networks

#### **Develop networks with other organisations.**

Each victim support organisation offers certain services and carries out a range of activities. In most cases however victim support organisations cannot offer all the different services to fully respond to all the needs of the victim. Often other institutions and organisations are involved to support victims in other ways like through medical care or legal representation.

As a victim support organisation collaboration is crucial as it is the only way to ensure both the physical, emotional, practical, financial, judicial needs are met. The foundation of information provision on and referral to other services is the collaboration with others. Through the development of networks, either formally or informally, information and referrals are facilitated and fostered. For many organisations, a strong collaboration with other NGOs and specialised services facilitates information provision and referral in the best interest of each individual victim.

Formal networks can be formed through memoranda of understanding, written agreements or other official documents describing the areas of collaboration. Informal networks can also be formed through regular contact, building relationships and informing each other about the work.



## 6.2.2 Work together with other organisations (part 1)

**Work together with other organisations to refer victims to the most appropriate organisation whilst confirming the case has been taken on.**

Working together with other organisations to build a framework for referral of victims of crime is key. Referral of victims of crime to other institutions or organisations builds on trust, information about the service and previous contact between the individuals working there. In order to refer a victim to another organization a victim support organization should be informed and ensured that the victim will be supported and that the quality of the services offered is good. To build this trust victim support organisations can organize meetings or joint work to learn about each other's services. In most countries good referral starts with collaboration on certain victims of crime or cases and elaborates from there.

## 6.2.3 Work together with other organisations (part 2)

**Work together with other organisations to refer victims to the most appropriate organisation whilst confirming the case has been taken on.**

Ensuring a victim that is referred is also taken on by the organisation or institution can be facilitated by 'warm referral' or by putting in place procedures for follow-up. A warm referral procedure is a referral where the victim support organisations contact the institution or organisations the victim is referred to proactively to organise a first meeting with the victim or to ensure the victim is invited to a first meeting. Some organisations even chose to accompany the victim to the referred to organisation if that is helpful.

## 6.2.4 Work together with other organisations (part 3)

**Work together with other organisations to refer victims to the most appropriate organisation whilst confirming the case has been taken on.**

Also agreed procedures for follow-up can facilitate confirmation that victims are taken up by the referred to organisation or institution after a referral. This can imply that the victim support organisation request confirmation that the victim was contacted or contacts the institution or organisation after a limited time to ensure the case was taken on. Each victim support organisation can decide on their strategies to ensure referral of victims to partner institutions or organisation is successful and benefits the victim as intended.

A range of measures can show compliance with this standard from having a very basic follow-up procedure, having regular meetings or doing warm referrals where the victim support worker goes with the victim to the first meeting.

## 6.2.5 Work together to facilitate the referrals to your organisation

Referral builds on trust and collaboration, therefore, it is important that victim support organisations work with organisations, institutions, and professionals to ensure their services are known and referred to. A proactive approach in working with different partners lies at the basis of forming this trust and start collaborations.

When targeting potential referrers and partners the idea is to follow the paths potential victims can take in the aftermath of a crime. Key factors are law enforcement and judicial that many victims come in contact quickly after their victimisation. Victim Support should aim to build strong relationships with these factors to ensure victims of crime are referred to victim support organisations. Countries where a strong relationship is built out and supported by legislation between law enforcement and judiciary with victim support also have a high rate of referrals.

Besides these factors, other potential partners come into contact with victims and carry the potential to become a source of referrals. Thinking from the point of view of the victim helps identify partners like hospitals, schools, insurance companies, embassies. Victim support organisations should build on those partnerships – taking into account their own capacity – to facilitate referrals of victims.

## 7.1 Comply with national laws and regulations on the establishment of NGO's and charities

### 7.1.1 Governance rules and policies

#### **Governance rules and policies in place accordance to national law.**

Victim Support organisations should comply with national laws and regulations by putting in place the required governance rules and policies.

### 7.1.2 Governance and financial control

#### **Governance and financial control mechanisms must be clear and transparent.**

Whilst this standard refers back to the national legislation and rules on governance it does require the victim support organisation to be able to show clear and transparent governance and financial control mechanisms. Even in cases where governments do not strictly require a victim support organisation to provide proof of this, strong engagement to develop and maintain governance and financial control mechanisms are expected from the victim support organisation to ensure the quality of services.

## 8.1 Ensure that all staff and volunteers receive an appropriate level of training in accordance to the nature of their contact with the victim

### 8.1.1 Basic training

#### **Ensure basic training provided for new recruits.**

All new recruits, volunteers and paid staff, need basic training before they start to work victims directly. This training can be in groups but also individual, in both cases, the new recruit will be informed and taught about all the knowledge needed to support victims in the best way. After this training, the new recruit must have the possibility to work as 'a trainee' for a certain amount of time with an experienced Victim Support Worker.

### 8.1.2 Ongoing training

#### **Ensure ongoing training is offered to existing personnel in accordance with their contact with victims and the nature of the and the type of crime involved.**

To support victims, based on their needs, victim support staff, as well as volunteers and paid staff, will need specialised training to work with specific groups of victims. This ongoing or more specialised training can be offered to those Victim Support workers who work for a certain time for the Victim Support organisation and have the appropriate skills to work in the general Victim Support service.

### 8.1.3 Victim sensitive courses

**Ensure that victim sensitive courses are provided for staff who do not work directly with victims.**

Awareness is the basis for respect and recognition towards a victim. All staff members working in a Victim Support organisation, also those staff members not working with victims directly e.g. financial staff, coordinators, managers, and board members need an awareness of a sensitive course to understand victimisation.

**8.2 Training will as a minimum aim ensure that victims are treated with dignity and respect, that the support provided responds to the victim's needs and that no further harm is caused**

### 8.2.1 Training covers all required topics

**Required topics in a training are:**

- What are the Rights of a victim?
- How to treat victims with dignity and respect?
- What is and how to prevent a victim from secondary traumatization?
- Who are vulnerable groups of victims.
- What are a victim's needs? As well general needs, individual needs and specific needs of certain groups of victims
- What is the legal procedure in your country?
- How to communicate with victims?
- How to assess victim needs?
- How to work out a support plan?
- What do you offer as a Victim Support organisation and where do you refer too?
- What skills do you need to work as a Victims Support worker? What are your boundaries?
- Tools to support victims.

It is very important that every training exists out of a theoretical and practical part.

## 8.2.2 Training will be renewed

### **Training will be renewed and kept up to date at regular times.**

A lot of new research comes up every year regarding victimisation and how to support victims. Countries can have changes in certain laws. So, it will be important to evaluate the training, keep the training up-to-date and to renew the training on a regular base.

## 8.2.3 Qualified trainer

### **Training is provided by a qualified trainer**

Training is very important and is part of the basis of the organisation. So every trainer will have a very important role and has to be qualified to give the training. With this we mean that every person who gives the training, as well someone from within the organisation as from outside the organisation needs to have:

- Knowledge to give the training
- Tools to give the training
- Time to prepare, give and evaluate the training

## 8.2.4 Organisations provide sufficient resources

Training must be seen as an important way to provide staff with the tools they need to support victims in the best way. It will be very important Victim Support workers will be provided with the training they need to do their job in a proper way.

For this, an organisation will have to provide:

- Sufficient resources to deliver training e.g. training package, qualified trainer, money for external training, etc.
- Sufficient time to deliver training: as well time for staff to follow training and time for the qualified trainer to prepare, give and evaluate the training. When working with volunteers it can be important to organise the same training once during the day, once in the evening, etc.
- Sufficient tools to deliver training: computer, room, etc.



## 9.1 Evaluate our services at least once every two years

### 9.1.1 Evaluate our services

#### **Work out a range of tools to evaluate our services**

Ensuring quality of victim support services requires regular evaluation. Compliance with this engagement requires victim support organisations to carry out an evaluation of their services every two years. This does not imply that all services need to be evaluated at the same time, yet each part of the offered service to victims should go a regular biannual evaluation. Evaluation can be internal or external.

Internal evaluation can be carried out by assessment on the quality and satisfaction with services of employees, partners, public, victims. This evaluation can be carried out through quantitative assessment like questionnaires or analysis of data or qualitative assessment like interviews or focus groups.

External evaluation refers to evaluation by an external evaluator who will develop a comprehensive methodology to look at the positive impact of an intervention and identify the areas of improvement.

Evaluation is a cornerstone of quality services and should thus be part of the regular activities of a victim support organisation.

## 9.1.2 Victims' opinions are heard

### **Ensure that victims' opinions are heard and taken into account**

An essential part of evaluating a service, activity or campaign is gauging the perspective of the target group. As the primary beneficiary of any victim support service is the victim, a good evaluation should include victims' perspectives. Strong ethical and deontological guidelines should be followed when including victims' opinions in evaluation procedures since responses guided by social desirability, secondary victimisation or re-traumatisation should be avoided at all times.

Integrating victims' voices in the evaluation and development of services can be done in different ways. The first aspect of including voices in assessment and evaluation of offered services can be done through quantitative and qualitative measures. Quantitative measures can be in the form of questionnaires. Qualitative measures to include voices of victims in the evaluation of victim support services can be focus groups, interviews, and participatory action research.

The second aspect of a truly participatory approach to victims is taking their views into account when developing services and projects.

## 9.2 Have in place a complaint system, which enables victims to give feedback and seek redress

### 9.2.1 Complaint system

#### **Work out a complaint system for victims**

High-quality services for victims of crime include a complaint system as an integral part of their structure. Victims are coming to victim support services to receive high-quality care and should have the opportunity to place a complaint about the support they were provided with. A low threshold and qualitative complaint procedure built on the following principles: victim-oriented, visibility, accessibility, responsiveness, objectivity and fairness, confidentiality, remedy, review, accountability, and continuous improvement. The first principle of victim-oriented complaint procedure is key to protect the victim from secondary victimisation and further harm. Accessibility of the process of making a complaint can be facilitated by making the complaints procedure easy to access and understand. Following, the responsiveness of complaint procedures should be making sure a victim's complaint is acknowledged quickly, addressed with the least possible delay and that the victim is informed throughout the procedure. Furthermore, victims' complaints should be shown to be treated in an objective, equitable, unbiased. Personal information related to complaints is kept confidential i.e. a system that is separate from the data kept and shared within the organisation. The outcome of the complaint procedure should allow for potential remedy to the victim and should inform a constant improvement of the services.

### 9.2.2 Provide victims with information

#### **Provide victims with information about the complaint system**

In order to make a complaint system functional and fair, the principle of visibility is fundamental. Concretely victim support organisations should raise awareness and provide information about how and where to complain. This means that both staff, volunteers and victims receive simple and accessible information on the complaint procedures.