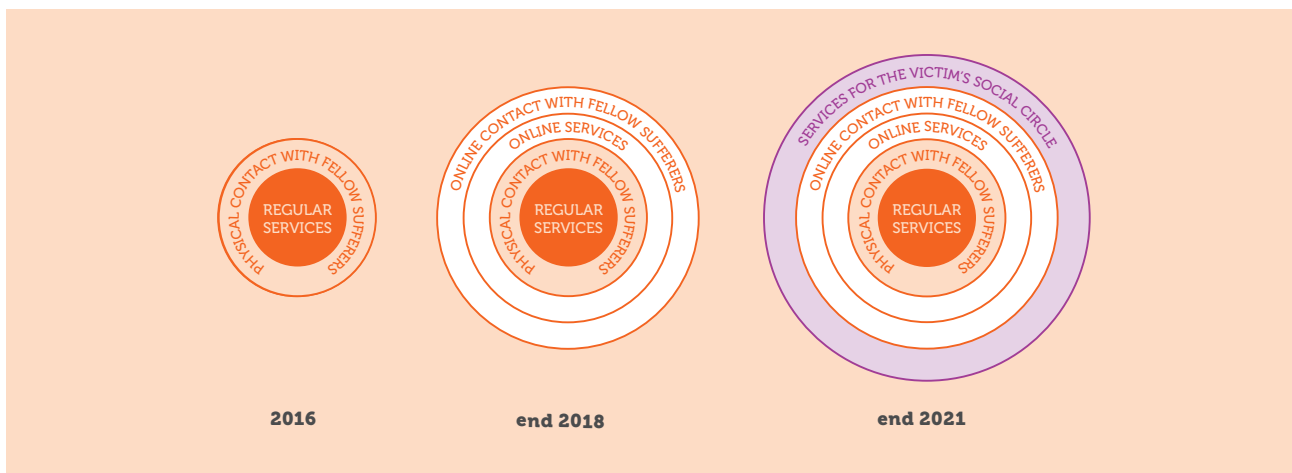


# The Way of Innovation

How innovation served  
Victim Support Netherlands

# Management summary

Victim Support Netherlands has focused on innovation since 2016. From 2016–2018, the Reiken en Raken SHN2.0 innovation programme shaped a whole new range of online services and the use of peer contact. Two years after implementation (2021), these new services have been used to support victims 471,264 times. The Mens als Maat innovation programme (2019–2021) provides new services for the victim's inner circle, enabling them to help their loved ones or client better. These services had been provided 55,900 times by the end of 2021. For a comprehensive overview of services provided as part of the programme, see page 5.



The Mens als Maat programme has produced several sets of new propositions: new forms of service to reach new groups of victims and help them recover. Each proposition comprises knowledge transfer, content, tools and technology. Based on numerous experiments and real-world experience, we estimate that these new propositions have the same potential as the online services from the previous programme and will result in around 375,000 new services being provided by the end of 2023.

---

**'New services for people in the victim's social circle, enabling them to help the victim better.'**

---

## The innovation programmes have laid a good foundation for the future, because:

- nearly the entire range of services is available offline and online, allowing customised and—in future—blended services to be offered;
- a form of service is available through non-self-reliant victims' inner circles, enabling us to reach more victims;
- there is more direct service to victims, reducing reliance on the EDP and EDOM;
- there is less pressure on the volunteer model because more people around victims can help.

## New services

The new range of services includes:

**1. Online support services provided to victims directly through Mijn slachtofferhulp,**

including: The Online Intake, the Online Log, Help With My Criminal Case, and the Recovery Meter, and by providing support through MijnSlachtofferzaak.

**2. Online Community Platform**

Online peer contact with open and closed groups, where peers can read and respond to others' stories and share their own.

**3. For the Helpers**

An online platform with a set of services that enables helpers (friends, family and acquaintances) to help a loved one in case of victimisation, including checklists, practical tips & tricks, sample scenarios, a referral tool, experiences of other helpers, an Advice Line and an online course.

**4. Platform for Professionals**

An online platform with a portfolio of services to help those who deal with victims professionally learn how to respond. The platform includes per-event support, tailored advice, step-by-step plans for specific events, what to do in case of suspicions, a signal guide, a referral tool, training modules, the Advice Line, policy scan and tools to use with the client, such as the stress test.

Work was also done to develop a service specifically for young helpers: #StepUp. However, this service was discontinued at the concept stage to ensure more focus on the above propositions. We also determined that establishing a special service for young helpers does not make sense if there is no similar service specifically for young victims. All knowledge gained during development has been documented in a knowledge base.

---

**'We are using the initial user experiences to develop robust new services.'**

---

## Securing innovative capacity

Within the programme, we worked with our own methodology in agile, short development loops. We gleaned insights from clients through interviews, experimenting with prototypes and conducting co-creation sessions. We converted these insights into propositions at the MVP (Minimum Viable Product) level, allowing us to develop initial user experiences into robust new services.

To structurally embed this innovative capacity and way of working in the organisation, an Innovation Department was established in January 2022 to manage and further develop the new services from the two innovation programmes.

## Success factors

Victim Support Netherlands aims to be future-proof and continuously look at how it can help currently unreached victims in other ways. Based on our experience with innovation in recent years, we have identified several factors that determine success:

**1. Client-centered: frequently visit the target group externally.**

Engage with the target group in various ways. We used a wide range of methods to that end, from interviews, surveys, street interviews, co-creation sessions, attending conferences, hosting seminars, etc., but especially by quickly going public with functionalities in so-called minimum viable products (MVPs). This avoided long studies and discussions and allowed us to learn from real situations involving real victims.

**2. Common higher goal**

When the existing organisation and the innovation team work toward a common higher goal, differences in the way of working, culture and focus points can often be bridged without difficulty.

**3. Facilitation by existing organisation**

Both innovation programmes were separate from the existing organisation. The rationale behind this was that you can easily make today or tomorrow's changes within the existing organisation, but changes further into the future affect the core of

service delivery and, therefore, your organisation. It is essential to be able to work on and research that kind of change without the burden of existing responsibilities, processes and structures. However, the fact that SHN has professional ICT, HRM, Finance and Communications departments greatly helped the programme.

#### 4. Support by the board and management

The board and management of Victim Support Netherlands were on the steering group, which kept them informed on a regular basis.

'Joint decision-making and discussing challenges.'

#### 5. Engage organisation regularly and share successes

It is important to involve everyone in the organisation in new developments regularly. We did this in the form of presentations around the country, regional panels, participation in various projects and pilots by members of the existing organisation, white papers, seminars and sections on the intranet.

#### 6. Manage conditions properly

An innovation team is especially eager to develop and innovate. What conditions are needed to make that possible? It may not be the most fun or easiest to arrange, but it is often the defining success factor. New services and digitalisation involve a mortgage on IT, Procurement and HRM organisation.

#### 7. Making mistakes = good & to measure = to know

It is good to make mistakes and learn from them. Proper measurement kept us in control and prevented errors from becoming problems. Measuring provides direction and room for improvement. We worked agile, taking small steps, trying things, asking questions, learning from that and iterating further from there.

#### 8. Freelancers vs permanent employees

A key success factor was working with many freelancers first. That gave a lot of flexibility and highly specialised knowledge. As more became clear and the contours of the new services emerged, efforts were made to increase permanent capacity.

#### 9. Structural funding for three years

The fact that the Ministry of Justice and Security has twice made funding available for a longer period means that we were able to properly invest in good infrastructure and develop a well-thought-out way of working, that the new services can be properly substantiated, that the offerings are complete, and that, in addition to development, work has also been done on bringing these services to the target group at the time and place that the target group needs them.

#### 10. Collaboration. Reporting

We reported to the Ministry regularly during the programme periods. This also provided an opportunity to make joint decisions and discuss challenges. The result was shared confidence in spending the funding correctly.

Services provided	2020	2021
<b>Platform for the Helpers</b>		
Range	34.433	145.621
Services	3.635	48.188
<b>Platform for Professionals</b>		
Range	4.105	15.243
Services	498	7.712
<b>MSH</b>		
Accounts	7.740	16.682
Services	1.696	33.276
<b>Community</b>		
Accounts	1.413	2.940
Services	42.400	65.741
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>48.229</b>	<b>154.917</b>



## Two points of attention

A programme focused on new services begins as a startup alongside regular operations. When the programme ends, the following points are important:

1. A programme is recommended to get from A to B. After 6 years, two worlds have emerged within the organisation. The dynamic between programme (fast) and line (thorough) requires continuous managerial attention. Development is easy; implementation is hard. The integration process requires at least six months, making multi-year funding even more important.
2. New services must also be managed. The idea that digitalisation would pay for itself was a fallacy. We see that digital services are more likely to supplement personal contact for an organisation like SHN where personal contact remains a very important USP. If the programme is cancelled, you are left with much higher IT and management organisation costs.

## New perspective: hybrid services

Online opportunities and public acceptance thereof accelerated during the programme, in part due to coronavirus. Examples include video calling or signing in with DigiD. The programmes focused on establishing digital alternatives to personal services. We assumed that some clients wanted to be helped online and others offline. We are increasingly noticing that clients want hybrid services.

We will have to review our services and make logical connections between the two forms. We will also have to see what can be done better online (overview, background information, accessible) and what can be done offline (personal contact, analysis & advice). For example, we see that the community plays a key role in getting victims to take the first step by reading others' stories, after which they need physical peer groups to continue working on recovery. In short, we will have to continue to develop to improve our services and help more clients.

**'We have improved our efficiency, cooperation and focus on victim support.'**



# Interview

**Victim Support Netherlands started innovation programmes six years ago. These are now ending, but the new Innovation Department at Victim Support will take their place. This will ensure our innovative strength and keep us innovating. Programme Director Anatal Perlin and Chair of the Board Rosa Jansen revisit a historic period at Victim Support Netherlands.**

## Why did you start an innovation programme?

**Anatal:** "In 2016, our ambition was to make a lot of progress in one step. That was a very important starting point. That ambition is still there, but now the organisation will do it."

**Rosa:** "Around two million people in the Netherlands are victimised every year, and we are still far from being able to reach and help all victims, whether it concerns sexual violence or a traffic accident. Our ambition is to be able to reach them all, however, which is part of why we started the programme."

Victim Support Netherlands started innovating in 2016 with the Reiken en Raken SHN 2.0 programme, in which online services were developed. The Mens als Maat innovation programme started in 2019, and has primarily provided new services for people close to the victim—family, friends and professionals—to put them in a position to better help their loved one or client.

**Rosa:** Victim Support Netherlands started innovating in 2016 with the Reiken en Raken SHN 2.0 programme, in which online services were developed. The Mens als Maat innovation programme started in 2019, and has primarily provided new services for people close to the victim—family, friends and professionals—to put them in a position to better help their loved one or client.

Victim Support Netherlands is known for supporting victims, but the service has now expanded: In addition to direct assistance to victims, Victim Support Netherlands now also supports people in the victims' social and professional environment who want to help."

## Would you say it's a small revolution?

**Anatal:** "It was born from the need to reach victims better. Sometimes, that is better achieved by also focusing on the people around them; not everyone knows how to reach us or reports a crime, so they are not automatically on our radar. Victims also indicate that they like to be supported by the people around them. Friends and family members want to be there for someone but don't always know how. There is often a lot to figure out: what agencies are available for different situations, what is someone going through, what a recovery process looks like, what is the best way to start a conversation, and what can you expect from the criminal proceedings? Many people may ask themselves: am I doing it right?"

## The number of services offered by Victim Support Netherlands per year has grown significantly in recent times. How do you explain that?

**Anatal:** "Initially, we only had physical services— face-to-face. Thanks to the programmes, we have complemented our offering with online services. A good example is peer-to-peer contact. Victim Support Netherlands has long facilitated peer support groups. We started looking at what channels can be used to reach victims better. For example, we have continued to expand the range of peer contact and now offer four forms of contact, from live groups to a fully digital variant and two hybrid variants. We also looked at whether we could develop an online form of all the services we

provide through employees. In other words, what do we offer offline, and how can we make online versions based on the core of the service and fully exploit the opportunities offered by that channel.”

**Rosa:** “The system we use to register all our client contacts (cris) is also included. That is where the CSL—Central Service Line—came from. That’s the phone number or chat victims can use to reach us.”

## **You also conducted a lot of research. Why?**

**Anatal:** “Every new service needed to add value. We utilised the experiences of victims, staff and helpers, and gathered our insights from the target group in various ways. We also conducted numerous interviews and surveys with different groups of professionals. The services on the Voor de Helpers platform are sometimes very practical and basic, such as checklists for each type of crime, appropriate responses, tips for helpers on setting their limits, and videos with experiential accounts. We also offer more elaborate support structures, such as an online course for helpers and a referral tool. We have other services tailored to professionals and their relationship with the victim. This could be helping administrators fill out judicial forms, a suicide prevention roadmap schools, or more global services like a quick scan on transgressive behaviour within your organisation.”

**Rosa:** “We know a lot about victims from experience. There has also been a lot of research conducted through the programme, which shows. It wasn’t done overnight—we built the programme step by step.”

**Anatal:** “We know a lot about victims from experience. There has also been a lot of research conducted through the programme, which shows. It wasn’t done overnight—we built the programme step by step.”

## **Isn’t in-person service inherently better than online? How do you view that?**

**Anatal:** “No, one is not better than the other. It is important to look at what the client needs. For example,

if a client wants to tell their story anonymously for the first time, the threshold is much lower for some to do so through the community of peers. Others may prefer to do that in a personal conversation with a staff member. I believe we shouldn’t necessarily look at which is better but what the client prefers while continuing to look closely at when the service adds value.”

**Rosa:** “The programme helped us put clients first. We were already doing that out of “neighbourliness”—the core principle of Victim Support—but the programme has enabled us to focus even more explicitly on clients. That’s not a buzzword for us anymore.”

## **In addition to our online services for victims, helpers and professionals, we also have the “old, familiar” offerings: personal contact, by phone or in person; will that remain?**

**Anatal:** “I think the community is an excellent example of that. We previously had peer contact in the form of in-person group meetings. This was essential for recognition and acknowledgement for clients. We then examined the essence of what happens there and why it is valuable to victims in the recovery process. That’s how we know that feeling safe was very important. To that end, we also have several private groups in the community, such as for victims of sexual abuse.”

## **What needs to be improved?**

**Anatal:** “We developed the services this way, assuming that if a client starts online, they will stay online, or if a client starts offline, they will stay offline, whereas, in practice, we see services taking on a hybrid form these days. The links between the two haven’t been properly developed yet. Ideally, after meeting with a staff member, you would be able to view a meeting report online, and you could schedule an offline meeting online. That’s what we need to work on now.”



## Where do the greatest opportunities for Victim Support currently lie?

**Anatal:** "We can start improving our services for young people, both directly to young victims and those close to them. We stopped doing that prematurely because we realised we couldn't continue to develop everything. There are certainly many opportunities to start helping more victims."

**Rosa:** "I see a clearer role for us in crisis response. We are already available 24/7 for emergencies, but we could expand our role further, to include the reception of refugees, for example. I see numerous possibilities. There is plenty for us to focus on. The online platform, MijnSlachtofferzaak, which contains information from the Public Prosecutor's Office and the police, in addition to information from Victim Support, has already been developed, but we need to continue to develop it because it will play an important role in the future."

**Anatal:** "There were also a number of prerequisites that proved crucial to success. We are grateful for the structural financial contribution from the Ministry of Justice and Security, which gave us the freedom to innovate. The board and management created the prerequisites for that. It would also not have succeeded without all the staff who fed the programme with information. They played a crucial role."

**Rosa:** "The board got on board early on. We emphatically embraced the programme, As we knew it was necessary for our future."

## Are you proud?

**Rosa:** "The programme helped us look at our services differently as well. It may sound crazy, but we have suddenly realised that our service is comparable to Coolblue. If we had said that eight years ago, everyone would have declared us fools. We followed through at the right times."

**Anatal:** "Launching the first programme was a historic moment. This is another historic moment, as we will now integrate it into the existing organisation. It took guts to do this, but we also adopted a thorough approach. That is an extraordinary combination."

This white paper provides insight into the journey we embarked on in early 2019 with the Mens als Maat innovation programme and everything it has done for us. We believe our experiences could be of interest to other stakeholders and partners.

Enjoy the read!

### Anatal Perlin

Programme Director  
Victim Support Netherlands -  
Mens als Maat



### Rosa Jansen

Chair of the Board  
Victim Support Netherlands

