

Rùnaire a' Chaibneit airson Ceartais
Cabinet Secretary for Justice
Micheal Matheson BPA
Michael Matheson MSP



Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba
gov.scot

F/T: 0300 244 4000
E: scottish.ministers@gov.scot

Margaret Mitchell MSP
Convener, Justice Committee
The Scottish Parliament
justice.committee@scottish.parliament.uk

John January 2017

Dear Margaret,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide evidence to the Committee on Tuesday 10 January on the Inquiry into the role and purpose of the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service. I agreed during the session to consider and respond to matters raised in a letter to the Committee from Beatrice Jones, Chair of the Moira Fund, which relate to the support available in Scotland to those bereaved by murder and in particular to the current status of the Victim Fund operated by Victim Support Scotland ("VSS").

This Government has a positive record in strengthening the rights of victims and witnesses and the support available to them and their families. Through the Victims and Witnesses (Scotland) Act 2014, for example, we have introduced various measures to improve the information and support available, including new rights for victims and witnesses to access information about their case, a new duty on criminal justice organisations to publish standards of service, and wider access to supportive measures to help witnesses give evidence. We have also published the Victims' Code for Scotland to clearly and simply set out the rights of victims, including family members, in one place.



The Scottish Government supports the vital work carried out by third sector victim support organisations across Scotland and provides grant funding totalling over £5m per year to organisations including VSS and PETAL (People Experiencing Trauma and Loss), with the latter providing a specialist service to those suffering bereavement due to murder or suicide. In addition, support is often available from criminal justice organisations – for example, the police will appoint a Family Liaison Officer in more serious cases and those where there has been a death.

We welcome comments around further potential improvements to the support available, however, and I have asked my officials to meet with representatives from the Moira Fund to discuss its work and the provision of support to bereaved families in Scotland.

The Victim Fund mentioned in the letter is a small fund established and operated by VSS, designed to provide immediate assistance to victims and persons affected by crime. Since its inception in 2009, the Scottish Government has contributed £70,000 to this fund.

In December 2016, VSS informed the Scottish Government that the Fund was depleted and it was agreed that this would be discussed at the next regular meeting in January 2017. I am pleased to advise the Committee that following discussion between officials and VSS, I have approved a further £10,000 contribution to the Fund. This will ensure that assistance from the Fund remains available to victims of crime, in addition to the more routine assistance provided by VSS and other victim support organisations.

I hope this is helpful.

Best wishes
Michael Matheson

MICHAEL MATHESON