

Making a Victim Personal Statement

Your chance to explain
how the crime has
affected you

VPS. Every crime has a victim.
Every victim deserves a voice.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM



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About this leaflet

When you are a victim of a crime, you can be affected in many different ways – for example emotionally, financially or physically.

Making a Victim Personal Statement (VPS) is a way in which you can put your feelings on record. It will help criminal justice agencies involved in your case (like the police, the prosecutor or the courts) to understand the impact that the crime has had on you and your family. That way we can make sure you get the support you need.

What this leaflet does

This leaflet explains everything you need to know about the VPS – what it is, how it works and what we will do with the information you give us.

You will find answers to some commonly asked questions and guidance on how to make a VPS. At the back, there is contact information in case you have any questions or need any extra support.

Research shows that the majority of those who made a VPS felt that it had a positive effect on their experience of the Criminal Justice System.



About the VPS

What is a VPS?

The VPS is a statement that you can give to the police if you have been a victim of crime. It is different from the witness statement you may already have given about the crime, which is a written or video-recorded account of what happened. The VPS is a record of the personal impact that the crime has had on you and your family. It gives you a chance to explain, in your own words, how the crime has affected you – whether physically, emotionally, financially or in any other way.

Why is it important?

Your VPS is important because it will help everyone involved in the case – the police, the prosecutor and the court – to understand the impact that the crime has had on your life. This can help them to make important decisions about the case (see ‘Will it make a difference to the case?’ on page 5).

The VPS will form part of the case papers, so if your case goes to court, it will be sent to the defendant’s solicitor (see ‘How your VPS will be used’ on page 7).

What can I say in my VPS?

You can say whatever you like about how the crime has affected you. For example, you might want to mention:

- any physical or psychological injury you have suffered
- if you feel vulnerable or intimidated
- if you no longer feel safe
- the impact on your family
- how your quality of life has changed on a day-to-day basis
- if you are worried about the alleged offender being given bail
- if you feel that the crime was racially motivated or that your faith, sexuality or disability played a part in the crime
- if you need additional support, for example because you are appearing as a witness at the trial
- if you intend to claim compensation from the alleged offender for any injury, loss or damage you've suffered.

However, your VPS **should not** include your thoughts or opinion on how the alleged offender should be punished – this is for the magistrate or judge to decide.

Will it make a difference to the case?

Your VPS is important and could make a difference to the case. It will help the criminal justice agencies involved in your case (like the police, prosecutor or courts) to understand how the crime has affected you. This can, in turn, inform decisions on whether to charge an alleged offender, or grant a defendant bail.

Can my VPS influence the sentence?

Sentencing is for the court to decide. However, the judge or magistrate will consider how the crime has affected your life when passing the sentence – along with all the other evidence in the case and the relevant sentencing guidelines. Your (or your close relatives') opinion on what you think the sentence should be will not be taken into account.



How your VPS will be used

What happens to my VPS once I've made it?

After you have made your statement, it becomes part of the case papers. (However, certain information, like your contact details, will not be included.)

This means that your statement will be seen by everyone involved in the case, including the defendant and their lawyer(s), police, prosecution, and the judge or magistrate if the case goes to court.

However, your VPS will only be considered by the court if the defendant either pleads guilty at the hearing or is found guilty by the court.

Can I be questioned about my VPS?

Yes. The court or the defence could ask you questions about the content of your VPS to clarify or challenge certain points.

Making and updating a VPS

When do I make a VPS?

The police will ask you whether you want to make a VPS, usually after they have taken your witness statement. They can help you to make a VPS or give you the support that you need to help you make a statement.

Do I have to make a VPS?

You don't have to make a VPS if you don't want to – it is your choice. Crime can affect people in different ways, and you might want to express how you feel in a different way.

If you decide not to make a VPS, it will not affect the investigation of the case. No one will draw any conclusions or assume, for example, that you are unaffected by the crime.

However, research shows that the majority of those who made a VPS felt that it had a positive effect on their experience of the Criminal Justice System.

What happens if I change my mind?

If you choose not to make a VPS straightaway, don't worry. You can always ask to make one later on.

If you decide to make a VPS at a later date, contact the police officer in charge of your case (shown on page 11) and tell them that you would like to make a VPS. You can ask the officer to come back to see you and to help you make a VPS.

If your case is going to trial (which happens when the defendant pleads not guilty), the Witness Care Unit will ask if you have been offered the chance to make a VPS and give you the opportunity to make one or update it.

A VPS can be made, or updated, at any time before the alleged offender is sentenced by the court. So don't delay in making a VPS. If a defendant pleads guilty at the first hearing, they may be sentenced before you've had the chance to make a VPS.

How can I make my VPS?

If you make your initial VPS at the same time as you make your witness statement, the VPS will be taken in the same way – in writing, by video or through an interpreter. A police officer can help you to do this.

Can I withdraw or change my VPS?

No. Once you have made a VPS, you can't withdraw or change it. However, you can make an additional statement that clarifies or amends your original statement at any time before the trial.

The additional statement will be submitted along with your original VPS.

You can also make a second VPS if you want to describe the full impact of the crime that may not have been obvious beforehand – for example if the longer-term effects are only now becoming apparent, there is a greater (or lesser) financial loss, or you're worried about the alleged offender being granted bail.

A second VPS will usually be taken in writing.

Police contact

This is the police contact for anything related to your VPS. The officer dealing with your statement will fill this in. Please keep the details safe.

Initial contact with the police

Name of police officer: _____

Phone number of police station: _____

Police officer dealing with the case (if different from above)

Name of police officer: _____

Rank of police officer: _____

Phone number of police officer: _____

Crime case details

Crime case reference number: _____

Phone number of crime desk: _____

More information

If you have any further questions about the VPS, get in touch with the police contact shown on page 11 or talk to any member of your local police team. As a victim of crime, police officers will be more than willing to advise you and guide you to get the help and support you need.

You can also talk to Victim Support, whose volunteers are specially trained to provide practical help and emotional support to victims of crime and witnesses in court. Your local Victim Support Scheme is listed in the local phone book, or call the national Victim Supportline on **0845 30 30 900**.

You can find more information about the VPS on the Criminal Justice System website at www.cjsonline.gov.uk/victim/coming_forward/victim_personal_statement

This leaflet is also available in several different languages. Ask the police if you would like an alternative version.

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