

Victims of Crime – support and advice in Avon and Somerset

The police will pass information about you to Victim Support so that they can offer you help and support, unless you ask the police not to.

The police will update you about your case on at least a monthly basis, and tell you if someone is arrested, bailed or cautioned in connection with your case, unless you ask them not to.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM



Victims of Crime – support and advice

First of all, thank you for reporting the crime to the police. Reporting crime is an essential first step in bringing offenders to justice.

This leaflet explains what will happen now.

The Criminal Justice System website at www.cjsonline.gov.uk contains more information for victims of crime, such as specific sections on 'Help and Support' and 'Going to Court'.

The police

Now you have reported a crime to the police, they will decide what to do next. For example, they may begin an investigation to try to solve the crime.

Wherever possible, you should:

- > give them as much information as you can about the offence, including what happened and what you saw and heard;
- > tell them if you are worried about your own or your family's safety or your privacy – there is support available if you are feeling intimidated (see below);
- > tell them if the crime was made worse by abuse or hate related to race, sexuality, religion or disability; and
- > let them know of any specific needs you have that would help the police provide the best service they can – for example, religious requirements or a health problem.

The police will give you contact details so that, if you need to contact them again after making your statement, or if you feel your rights under the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime have not been met (see below), you can talk to someone who is already familiar with your situation. These contact details will include:

Name of the police station	
Main telephone number of the police station	
Name of the officer dealing with your case	
Rank and number of the officer dealing with your case	
Crime reference number	
Telephone number of the crime desk (if there is one)	

Keep these details handy. You should contact the police again if, for example: you remember more details about the incident; you find that there was more loss or damage than you first thought resulting from the incident; or you were hurt during the crime and the injuries now seem more serious than they did at the time.

You should also tell the police if you change your address or telephone number so that they can let you know if someone has been arrested, bailed or cautioned in connection with the offence.

What happens next?

The police will decide whether there is sufficient information to investigate the crime. This may involve taking statements and speaking to witnesses or doing forensic tests. Whatever happens, you will be told whether or not the crime is being investigated further or if the investigation is closed and the reason why. You will be told if a suspect is arrested, charged, bailed or the subject of an out-of-court resolution such as a caution or reprimand. If the offender is identified and is under 18 years of age, you may be contacted by the Youth Offending Team about participating in a restorative process.

Going to court

If your case goes to court the following will happen:

- > you will be contacted by a Witness Care Unit. They will be your single point of contact throughout the criminal justice process, provide you with practical support and give you the information you need; and
- > if you are required to give evidence, you will be offered support from Victim Support's Witness Service, which is confidential and free.

The Code of Practice for Victims of Crime

Victims of crime are entitled to minimum standards of service from the Criminal Justice System under the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime.

These standards include:

- > the right to be referred to Victim Support (see below) or given information about the types of support available in your area;
- > the right to be kept informed of the progress of your case on a minimum of a monthly basis and to be told when there has been a major development in your case, such as an arrest or a charge;

- > the right to be told if a charge is withdrawn or there is a major change to the charge;
- > the right to be told the dates of court hearings and to be told if you will be needed as a witness; and
- > the right to be informed about the outcome of the case including, if the offender is found guilty, information about the sentence given and any appeals.

If you do not receive the level of service set out in the Code of Practice, you can make a complaint. For more information about the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime, and for information on how to make a complaint or provide feedback on the service you receive, ask the police for a copy of the leaflet 'Code of Practice: Guide for Victims', or have a look at the website www.cjsonline.gov.uk

Compensation

Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme

If you have been injured in a violent crime, you can apply for a payment under the Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme. For more information on the scheme, ask for the leaflet 'Victims of Crimes of Violence – A Guide to the Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme'. You can get this from the police, from Victim Support, from your nearest Citizens Advice Bureau, or from the Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority (telephone: **0800 358 3601**; website: www.cica.gov.uk).

Motor Insurers' Bureau

If you suffer injury, loss, or damage to property as a result of a road traffic incident involving a motor vehicle, you will normally be eligible for a payment made by the vehicle owner's insurance company. If the vehicle is uninsured, you may be able to claim compensation from the Motor Insurers' Bureau. If the police have not traced the offender, only personal injury compensation may be available. To claim, or to find out more, contact the Motor Insurers' Bureau (telephone: **01908 830001**; website: www.mib.org.uk).

Protection against crime and harassment

The police can offer free crime prevention advice. You may also find helpful information in the Home Office crime prevention guide 'Your Practical Guide to Crime Prevention'. Ask the police for a copy.

It is a criminal offence to make another person fear that violence will be used against them. It is also an offence to make someone afraid by, for example, 'stalking'. If you have suffered harassment or fear of violence and the offender has been caught and convicted, the criminal court can make a restraining order to stop them coming near you to threaten you or make you afraid. You can also ask a civil court for an injunction to stop someone's threatening behaviour.

Support and advice in Avon and Somerset

The Avon and Somerset Area is well served by a wide variety of services offering support and assistance to victims of crime. The groups listed below are some of those able to assist victims of crime.

Your local Victim Support Service holds a more comprehensive listing and will ensure that you are able to access appropriate support groups. Please contact them as they specialise in supporting victims of crime and will be able to assist you.

Victim Support Service – Somerset: 01460 55535

Victim Support Service – Avonvale: 0117 963 1114

National Victim Support Line Service (Victim Support services outside office hours): 0845 30 30 900

NSPCC (National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children): 0808 800 5000

SARI (Support against Racist Incidents): 0117 942 0060

SREC (Somerset Racial Equality Council): 01935 414 911

EACH (Educational Action Challenging Homophobia): 0808 100 0143

Terrence Higgins Trust: 0117 955 1000

Survive Women's Aid: 0117 961 2999

Womankind: 0845 458 2914

Please do not hesitate to contact your local police if you require further assistance or information regarding the investigation of your crime. Avon and Somerset Constabulary can be contacted on 0845 456 7000.

Help from Victim Support

You may be affected by crime emotionally or physically and in many different or unpredictable ways. These feelings are common. Victim Support is the national independent charity for people affected by crime. It provides a free and confidential service. Trained staff and volunteers offer information, support and practical help.

You can contact the Victim Supportline on **0845 30 30 900**.

Or, if you prefer, you can write to the Victim Supportline at:
PO Box 11431, London SW9 6ZH

Further information about the help available to you as a victim of crime can also be found at **www.cjsonline.gov.uk**

If you are not sure about anything in this leaflet, or how to get the help and support that is available to you, ask your local police for advice.

The national version of this leaflet is available in large print and Braille versions, as well as in a number of different languages. Ask the police if you would like an alternative version.



Criminal Justice System: working together for the public