Being a victim of crime can be distressing. The impact of crime will vary, but many people benefit from receiving some support and information to help them cope and recover. The Victims’ Code is a statutory Government document which explains what support and information victims of crime – both people and businesses – can expect. Some victims in special circumstances, for example children or victims of the most serious crimes, are entitled to extra support. This is also explained in the Code.

**Support and information**

**Reporting the crime**
You can report a crime to the police by visiting a police station, by phone or online. The police will give you information about what to expect from the criminal justice system after reporting the crime. If you agree, they will pass your details on to victim services organisations who will get in touch and help you.

**Victim services organisations, such as charities, are not covered by the Victims’ Code which focuses on making sure criminal justice agencies – such as the police and the courts – give victims the service they are entitled to. However, victim services can offer valuable help for people who’ve experienced crime, including practical and emotional support.**

You may be asked to make a witness statement to explain what happened to you. If you want, you can also make a Victim Personal Statement (VPS) explaining how the crime has affected you.

**Keeping you informed**
The police will update you on progress with the investigation, letting you know of any arrests or suspects being charged. You can agree with the police how often you would like to hear from them about the investigation.

**Going to court**
If your case goes to court, you may well be a witness in the trial. If your case does not go to court, you should be told the reason for this decision. If the case goes to trial, you will be assigned a Witness Care Officer or other point of contact. You can ask them any questions you have and they will keep you up to date about what’s happening. This includes information about the dates and locations of court hearings and updates on whether the suspect has been released on bail or is being held in prison. They will support you until the case is finished.

**Being a witness**
If you are a witness in the trial you can ask to use Special Measures which can help you to give your best evidence. Special Measures might mean having a screen around the witness box or giving evidence by live video-link, so that you don’t have to face the suspect or their friends and family. You can also ask court staff if you can wait in an area away from the suspect and their friends and family.

**The verdict**
If the suspect is found guilty, you can ask to read out your Victim Personal Statement in court, or for somebody to read it for you if you prefer. The judge will take this into account when deciding on the sentence. Your Witness Care Officer or other point of contact will explain to you what the sentence means. If the offender is allowed to appeal against the sentence or conviction, your contact should tell you where and when the appeal hearing will take place.

**Restorative Justice**
As a victim of crime you may be able to take part in Restorative Justice. This is when those harmed by a crime have contact with the offender so that both can find a positive way forward. Both the victim and offender need to agree for the contact to take place.

**The Victims’ Code**
Victims of crime: Understanding the support you can expect

**The Victim Contact Scheme** is a special service for victims of sexual and/or violent crimes where the offender is sentenced to twelve months or more in prison. If you use this scheme, you will be kept up to date about what happens to the offender after they are found guilty and until they have completed their sentence.

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