

## How is a Victim Personal Statement used

Victims often ask what difference a Victim Personal Statement (VPS) makes? This requires careful explanation to accurately convey the important, but subtle way the VPS is used by the Parole Board panel, and to manage expectation and understanding.

The VPS provides a victim with an opportunity to explain in their own words how a crime has affected *them personally*. It can provide useful context and information for the panel about:

- the original impact of the offence when it was committed;
- the lasting impact of the offence since it was committed; and
- the impact that the prisoner's release would have on them, their family, their community, or those with close ties to them or their family.

The VPS does not directly link to the panel's decision whether to direct the prisoner's release on licence or whether to recommend a transfer to an open prison. This is because the panel's focus is on assessment of the prisoner's risk of serious harm to the public, which is not the focus of the VPS. The panel ultimately makes decisions based on the prisoner's current risk.

The VPS may provide the panel with information relevant to questions it may explore with the prisoner for example, the impact of their behaviour, their insight into their behaviour, their remorse, their empathy; and appropriate licence conditions if they are to be released. It will also give the panel further insight into the relevant offending including its impact on the victim and/or their family.

Similarly, a VPS can assist the panel in understanding the potential nature and level of impact on a victim if the prisoner commits a similar offence(s) again.

The VPS can provide valuable information about any requested licence conditions. The VPS can illustrate the level of anxiety and vulnerability of the victim, which in turn can allow reasonable and proportionate licence conditions to be set. The VPS can provide detail on the victim's routine, location and potential impact of coming into contact with the offender, and can set out licence conditions that will make them feel safer.



The VPS should, as far as possible, describe only the impact of the offence on the victim. This may be physical, psychological, emotional, financial or any other kind of impact.

There will be occasions where victims do have information that may relate to current risk (for example unwanted contact or communication from the prisoner) and this information needs to be provided to those managing the prisoner so that an assessment of its importance or impact on the level of risk can be fully considered. In these instances, the information could be shared with the police, or, more usually, by providing the Offender Manager with the information, so that it can be verified and referred to in their report. All relevant information will be provided to the Parole Board panel.

More information about the parole process and how you can be involved can be found on the [Parole Board commitment to victims of crime page](#).