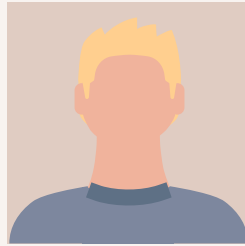
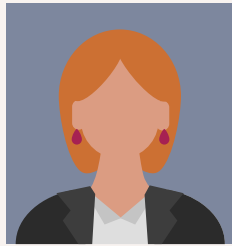


the
Parole
Board

working with others
to protect the public



Victims and survivors of crime – Parole explained

Information Leaflet



Published June 2026

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Introduction



The **Parole Board** understands the parole process can be difficult to navigate as a victim or survivor of crime. This leaflet aims to answer questions you may have about Parole and sets out your rights as a victim or survivor of crime.

This leaflet contains information about:

- How the parole process works
- Submitting and reading your Victim Personal Statement (VPS)
- Observing an oral hearing
- How the Parole Board makes decisions
- Licence conditions

✓ What are your rights in Parole?

You have the right to:

- Submit a Victim Personal Statement (VPS)
- Apply to read your VPS at an oral hearing, if one is directed, or have someone read it on your behalf
- Apply to observe an oral hearing
- Request licence conditions
- Request a summary of the parole decision
- Apply for a hearing to be held in public

There is support and guidance available to you via the **Victim Contact Scheme (VCS)** if you are eligible. The VCS is run by His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS).

For further details about the VCS, please visit:

<https://www.gov.uk/get-support-as-a-victim-of-crime>

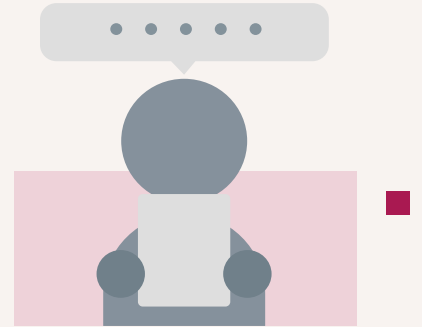




If you are not eligible or not signed up to the VCS, you can still engage in the parole process by contacting the Parole Board on:
victimenquiries@paroleboard.gov.uk

Our Commitment

The Parole Board is committed to ensuring that victims' rights are adhered to and will provide information and reasons for any applications and decisions. As a victim or survivor of crime, the Parole Board will treat you with the respect and dignity you deserve.



What is the Parole Board and what do we do?



The Parole Board is an independent body that sits as a court, and is separate from the government, Ministry of Justice and His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS).

The role of the Parole Board is to assess a prisoner's risk and make judicial decisions on whether the prisoner can be:

- Managed in the community on licence, or if they still need to remain in custody
- In some cases, consider whether they are suitable to be recommended for a move to an open prison.



Between one and four parole members will review the case and make a decision on the outcome, they are known as parole panels. Members are specially trained to make parole decisions and come from diverse backgrounds and professions.

The panel will consider a prisoner's progression based on a file of documents about the prisoner called a parole dossier. This is likely to include:



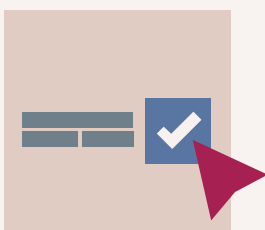
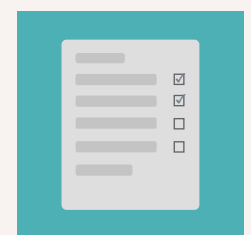
- Why they are in prison
- Previous offences
- What the Judge said when they were sentenced
- Behaviour in prison
- The Victim Personal Statement (VPS)
- Proposed risk management plan (if released into the community)
- Risk assessments about the danger to the public the offender may pose

How the Parole Board makes decisions



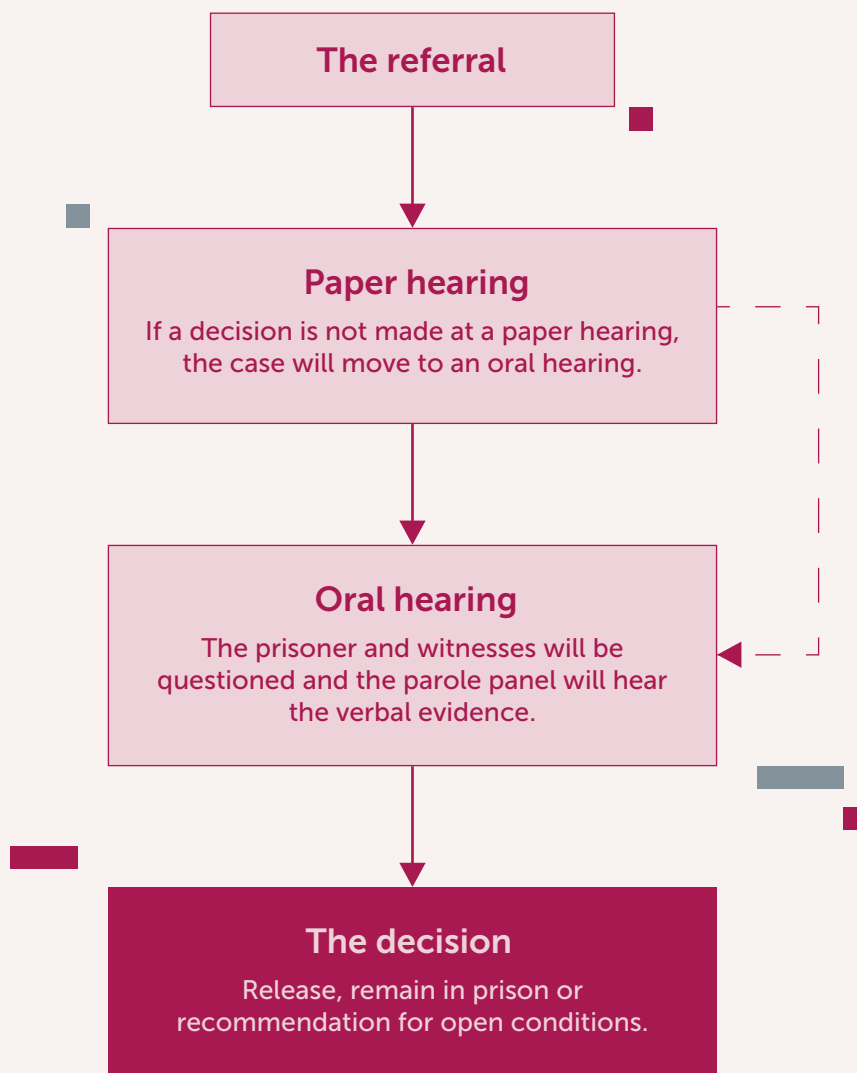
The **decision-making process** is complex, with many different factors to consider. Not all decisions made by parole panels will be popular, despite them being fair and objective.

When considering the release of a prisoner the parole panel must apply the codified **public protection test**. This test requires that "The Board must not give a direction for release unless it is satisfied that it is no longer necessary for the protection of the public that the prisoner should be confined **in prison**."



The parole panel will consider a wide range of information **before making a decision**, including details of the offence or other offences they have committed, sentencing remarks, evidence of changes in behaviour and attitude achieved through the prisoner completing programmes or undergoing other treatments whilst in custody.

✓ There are several stages of a parole review:



1 The Referral

Prisoners do not apply for parole.

A prisoner becomes eligible for parole when they have served the minimum part of their sentence which was set by the sentencing judge. At this point, they are referred to the Parole Board by the Secretary of State.

In some circumstances, an offender who has been released may be recalled to prison and may be referred to the Parole Board this way.

By law, prisoners serving a standard determinate sentence are automatically released part-way through their sentence, without Parole Board involvement.

2 Paper hearing

A parole panel will assess a prisoner's risk of causing further harm and will decide if they are safe to be released. They do this by assessing written evidence in the parole 'dossier':

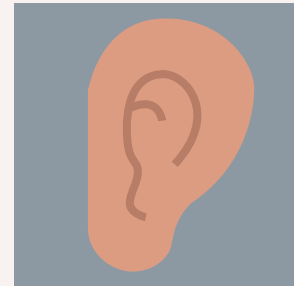


■ The **dossier** will also include a Victim Personal Statement, if submitted.

The case will be reviewed via a paper hearing where a parole panel can assess the evidence in the dossier and make a decision; this is known as a **Member Case Assessment (MCA)** or a paper hearing.

3 Oral hearing

If further evidence is needed before making a decision, the parole panel will direct that an oral hearing takes place where they will question the prisoner and witnesses, and hear verbal evidence.



If the Parole Board decide that the prisoner is safe to release there will be a robust risk management plan in place, which will include licence conditions.

Licence conditions may include conditions such as **exclusion zones or non-contact conditions**. These conditions are usually in place until the sentence end date or indefinitely for offenders serving a life sentence but may be removed earlier if they are no longer necessary and proportionate to manage risk. If the offender breaches any of their licence conditions, they can be recalled back to prison by the Probation Service, who monitor the offender in the community.

In eligible cases, a **parole panel can recommend a move to an 'open prison'** where, after a period of time and a thorough assessment of risk, they are permitted time in the community known as **Release on Temporary Licence (ROTL)**.



An offender can only be transferred to an open prison if the Parole Board's recommendation is accepted by the Secretary of State.

The Victim Contact Scheme

The Victim Contact Scheme (VCS) is run by the Probation Service to provide support and guidance to victims and survivors of crime. It is separate from the Parole Board.

The Parole Board does not have direct contact with victims unless there are exceptional circumstances where it may be necessary or where a victim is not eligible for the VCS.



If you are eligible for the VCS and wish to engage with parole processes, your Victim Liaison Officer (VLO) will support you and provide you with advice and guidance.



More information about the VCS can be found here:
<https://www.gov.uk/get-support-as-a-victim-of-crime>



How will I know if an offender is eligible for Parole?



If you are signed up to the VCS your VLO should inform you before a referral is made to the Parole Board, if you have asked to receive this information. They should provide you

with details about the parole process, your rights and what to expect. They can support you with deciding if you wish to be involved in the Parole process and understanding your rights.



If you are not signed up for the VCS, the Parole Board can provide you with information to support you through this process and explain what you can do.

What is a Victim Personal Statement (VPS) and how do I submit one?

A VPS is your opportunity to explain how the offence has impacted you physically, emotionally, psychologically, financially or in any other way. Your statement can also ask the Parole Board to consider adding certain licence conditions if the offender is released.



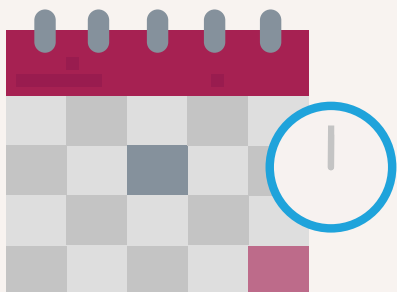
You do not have to make a statement if you do not wish to or don't feel able to.



If you choose not to submit a VPS, you can still ask your VLO to request victim-related licence conditions on your behalf, either by writing a report to the Parole Board themselves or by passing the information to the **Community Offender Manager (COM)** who would supervise the prisoner on release.

If you decide to submit a VPS, your VLO will support you in writing this, and will ensure it is submitted to the Parole Board within the relevant timeframes:

- 4 weeks before the referral for a paper hearing
- 8 weeks before the oral hearing date, if applicable



For your VPS to be considered you should attempt to submit it in good time. Unfortunately, if your VPS is late, it may not be possible to consider it after the deadline because the Parole Board decision may have already been made.

Remember, your VPS should not contain any threats to the prisoner, or the professionals managing them, or comments about the prisoner's risk. If such comments are included, the Parole Board may request that you remove them or may indicate that they will not consider them.

The offender may have a Parole review every year or two – you can keep the same statement throughout or decide to make a new one each time. The parole panel will take into account the content of your VPS, alongside all the other evidence which forms part of the dossier, as they make their decision.



If you have concerns about risk which you are unsure the Parole Board have been made aware of, ask your VLO to pass this information to the Community Offender Manager who can take account of this in their professional risk assessment.

Will the offender know if I submit a VPS?

In most cases, **yes**. The law says that the offender must know what information the Parole Board has so that they know what information the panel is considering about them.



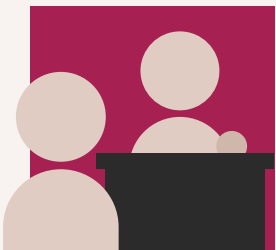


If you don't want the offender to see your VPS, you should let your VLO know so they can make a 'non-disclosure' application to the Parole Board. The parole panel will then consider your request.



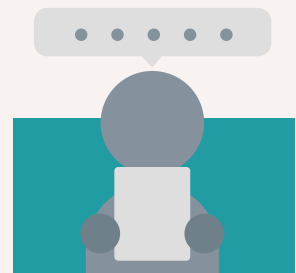
Your VLO may notify you in some instances that the Parole Board has requested a 'gist', or summary, of your VPS to be provided to the offender. This usually means that your personal feelings and circumstances will not be disclosed but the offender will know you made a statement about the impact the offence had on you.

Can I read my VPS to the parole panel?



✓ You can ask to read your VPS to the parole panel at the oral hearing. If approved by the parole panel, you will read your VPS before the start of the official hearing. Usually only the parole panel and the offender's representative (if there is one) will be present for the reading.

✓ You should advise the VLO whether you would like the offender to be present when reading your VPS. The Parole Board does not have the authority to direct that an offender must attend the VPS reading but will make your wishes known.



✓ You will join remotely via phone or video to read your VPS. Once you have read your VPS and the hearing starts, you will then leave, and the hearing will continue, unless prior permission has been given for you to observe the remaining proceedings.



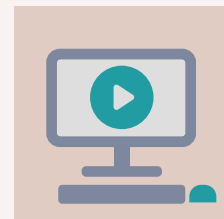
It is important to note that you will only be permitted to read the written VPS that you have submitted. You will not be able to add anything new or change your VPS on the day.



You can also request that someone else reads the statement on your behalf in advance of the hearing. If reading your VPS becomes difficult, a support person such as your friend or family can read it on your behalf.



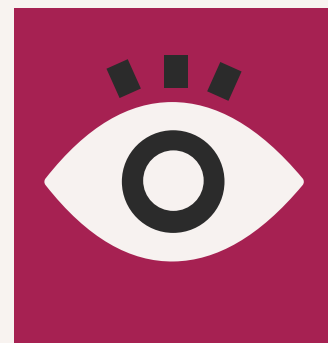
Alternatively, you can submit a pre-recorded VPS reading. The panel will always have a written copy of the VPS should you choose for your VPS not to be read.



Your VPS will be kept confidential from other victims, unless consent is given to share it.

What is 'observing' an oral hearing?

Observing a hearing means that you can stay for the **majority of the proceedings** and hear most of the information that the Parole panel will consider. However, there may be some parts of the proceedings which must be held in a closed session. For example, if a potential release address is being discussed, confidential information about another person is to be disclosed, or private medical information about the prisoner is mentioned, observers will not be allowed to watch these parts of the hearing.



Due to the legal nature of the hearing, you must not record or share information with others. You will be asked to sign a **Confidentiality Agreement**.

If you would like to take notes during the hearing, you must apply to the Chair in advance to consider the request. If approved, you may take your notes away with you after the hearing, but they must be stored securely, not shared with anyone, and destroyed by the date instructed by the Chair.

Applying to observe an oral hearing



To help you decide if you would like to apply to observe an oral hearing, your VLO will discuss this with you and provide an information sheet explaining what to expect.

You can apply to have someone to accompany you and provide support to observe the hearing with you. Remember to ask the VLO to add their details into your application. Your VLO will need to submit your application on time. ■

Your VLO will inform you of the outcome of your application to observe. Most applications for victims or survivors of crime to observe are likely to be accepted, unless exceptional reasons mean it is not possible. If your application to observe the oral hearing is accepted, a HMPPS Victims representative will be assigned to you and will be in contact before the hearing takes place.



You can apply to observe a hearing even if you are not signed up to the VCS. You will need to contact the Parole Board directly as soon as possible.

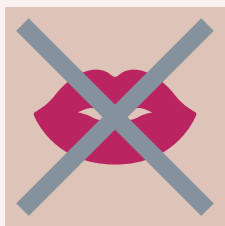
Please contact victimenquiries@paroleboard.gov.uk for advice.



Please note that even if your application to observe is accepted, there may be exceptional circumstances where it may be revoked at a later time.

This decision is not taken lightly and the Parole Board will explore all options to see whether the observation could still take place with some adjustments before reaching this decision.

The offender will be aware of your request to observe the hearing. It's important for you to think about whether you are comfortable with this.



You can ask your VLO to request that the offender is not told about your application to observe the hearing – this is known as a '**non-disclosure**' application. If your request is approved, the offender will be told that someone has applied to observe the hearing, but you will not be named.

The Parole Board is required to **give the offender a fair hearing** to ensure they are able to respond to evidence. You may find elements difficult to hear such as a panel asking the offender about their comfort during the hearing, this is to ensure their hearing is conducted fairly.

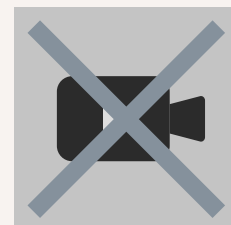
What should I expect when observing an oral hearing?



The Parole Board will provide you with a detailed information sheet explaining what will happen. Your Victim Representative will give this to you.

The panel chair will manage the oral hearing, they will introduce themselves and everyone in attendance and ensure the hearing runs smoothly.

The Parole Board expect oral hearing attendees and the offender to appear on camera during the hearing, unless they have provided exceptional reasons not to be.





On the day you will be supported by a **HM Prison & Probation Service (HMPPS)** Victim Representative.



You will join the hearing remotely **through a video link** from a laptop at a pre-agreed venue.

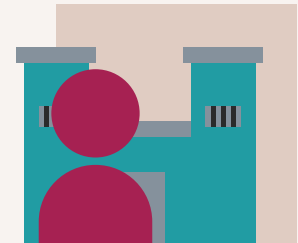
You won't be seen or heard by the panel, witnesses or offender at any point, after reading your VPS (**if you have chosen to read one**). The camera and microphone on your laptop will be switched off during the hearing. You can speak freely with the HMPPS Victim Representative who will be available to answer any questions.



Most hearings take place **over a few hours**. The HMPPS Victims Representative will be able to give you an approximate time of how long the hearing might take, but sometimes the evidence on the day means the length could be extended.

There will be short breaks during the hearing including a lunch break. If you need to take a moment outside of these official breaks, unfortunately the hearing will continue and you may miss part of the evidence. The HMPPS representative may be able to keep watching the evidence and summarise anything you may have missed.

During the questioning, the panel will ask questions about the offender's behaviour and history. The offender may have had multiple reviews, been sentenced for numerous different offences or may even have been recalled and committed further offences. This means that **the offence committed against you or a close relative or friend may not always be discussed in detail during the hearing**, and the panel may even focus most of their questions on a different offence. This does not mean that the panel are unaware or unconcerned about what happened but they may already have all the information they need about this which will be contained in the written parole dossier.





Whilst observing the hearing, you may become aware of new information including details of the offence against you or your relative or allegations of other offending.

Your VLO will be able to advise on support that is available to you after the hearing.

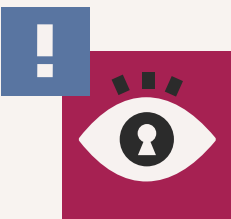
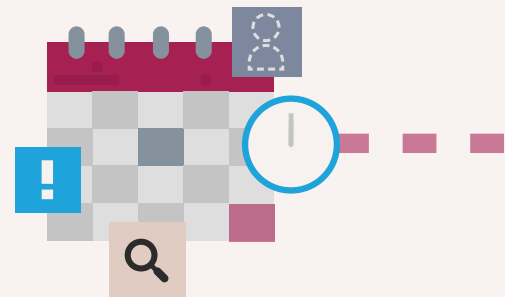
Will the offender be there?



It is likely that the offender will be present and on camera at their hearing, but there may be some occasions where they request to be off camera or decide not to engage with the proceedings. The panel chair can decide whether or not to continue with the oral hearing if this happens.

What if the hearing doesn't go ahead?

Whilst the panel will do everything to ensure the hearing goes ahead as planned, there may be unforeseen circumstances that arise at short notice which prevent this from happening and the panel will need to delay the hearing. This is called an **adjournment**.



Reasons for an adjournment can include new information being provided to the panel at short notice or a witness being unavailable.

If this happens before or on the day of the oral hearing, the panel will usually agree a new date for the hearing to take place. They can also decide to complete the review based on the written evidence which means an oral hearing is no longer required.

The VLO will keep you informed of developments prior to the oral hearing and the HMPPS Victim Representative will explain what it means if the hearing has to be adjourned.

You will not need to make a new application if you wish to observe on the new date.

If you are waiting to observe the hearing and it is adjourned on the day, the panel will usually explain this over the video-link. You will not be able to respond as the link does not provide the opportunity to do so.

Occasionally there may be issues with technology which affect the observation itself or the sound quality. The panel will make all possible efforts to overcome these issues.

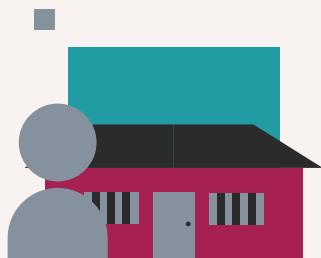


How will I be notified of the decision?

The panel will decide on the outcome after the hearing.



The decision will be issued within 14 days of the hearing and you will be notified shortly afterwards by your VLO.



The panel will make a decision for either:

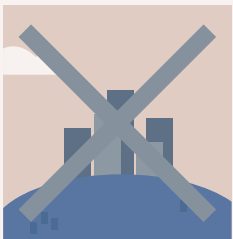
- Remain in custody
- Release
- A recommendation for open conditions (for eligible cases)

- ✓ If the decision is not challenged by 'reconsideration' within 21 days, it will become final (**further details on reconsideration can be found in the 'challenging a decision' section**).
- ✓ If release is granted, the offender will be managed by the probation service.
- ✓ If you would like further information about how the panel made their decision, your VLO can request a written summary of the decision known as a parole board decision summary.

Licence conditions

If the offender is released, they must abide by 'licence conditions' which are a set of rules they must follow.

You have the right to request licence conditions, such as:

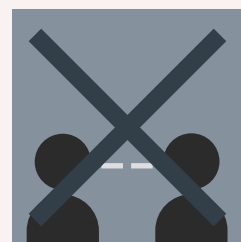


Exclusion zones – forbidding the offender from going into certain areas, for example where you live or work. The parole panel must consider these, and it is helpful if they have as much information as possible about why you want these exclusion zones.

Non-contact – forbidding the offender from contacting you or members of your family either directly or indirectly.

The parole panel considers requests for licence conditions very carefully. It must ensure that they are **lawful**, but at the same time provide **reassurance and protection** to you (both physically and mentally).

Licence conditions should support the offender in reducing their likelihood of re-offending and give them the opportunity to engage meaningfully back into the community.





If something you have requested has not been agreed to, the Parole Board decision will include an explanation of why. Your VLO will inform you of the reason.

In many cases, after a period of time in the community the Probation Service may make requests to the Parole Board to vary or remove a licence condition if it is no longer considered necessary and proportionate to manage risk. If the condition is victim-related you will be contacted by the VLO and can submit your views.

If an offender breaches their licence conditions, they could be **'recalled' back to prison**.

Offenders serving a sentence of **Imprisonment for Public Protection (IPP)** have the right to have their IPP licence considered for termination once they meet the qualifying period.

Your VLO should inform you of any significant changes throughout the sentence, including if a licence is changed or terminated.



Public Hearings

You can apply for the offender's hearing to take place in public.

This means that yourself and the public will be able to hear and view the proceedings as they take place, from a venue where you have access to a live link of the hearing.



Although all efforts are made to ensure a clear stream of the hearing, sometimes connection issues may occur.

We try our best to resolve these at the earliest opportunity.

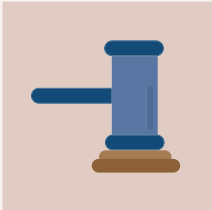
You may wish to apply for a public hearing, and at the same time apply to observe the private hearing as the public hearing may not be granted.

Challenging a decision

Reconsideration

In many cases the parole decision will be **provisional for 21 calendar days** as it will be eligible to be assessed for reconsideration.

The Secretary of State or offender may ask the Parole Board to reconsider a decision during this time, if there is an arguable case that:



- the correct process was not followed
- the decision was irrational
- there was an error of law

You may **submit a request** to the Secretary of State, via your **VLO**, asking that an application for reconsideration is made to the Parole Board if you feel one or more of the above criteria have been met. Reconsideration only applies to decision of release, remain in custody or IPP licence terminations. Reconsideration cannot be applied to a recommendation for open conditions or licence conditions.



Your request must be submitted as soon as possible within the 21-day provisional window. The Secretary of State will need the request within this timeframe.

Set aside

This gives parties to the case the right to ask for a final parole decision to be looked at again by the Parole Board where:



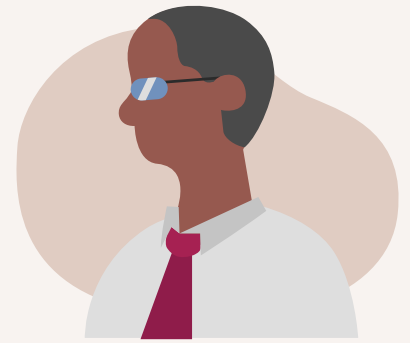
- New information has come to light that was available at the time but not shared with the panel
- or**
- There has been a change in circumstances after the decision was made

Only the parties to the proceedings (**Secretary of State and the prisoner**) can make an application to set aside a final decision.

You can ask the **Secretary of State** to make representations to set aside the Parole Board's decision in eligible cases.

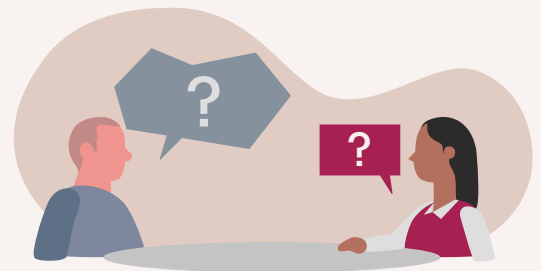
Set Aside only applies to a decision of release.

Set Aside cannot be applied to recommendation for open conditions, remain in custody, IPP licence terminations or licence conditions.



How to make a complaint

The Parole Board will do all it can to ensure that you are treated with **dignity and respect** throughout the parole process. If something goes wrong, you should discuss this with your VLO.



If you decide that you wish to complain, you can find information here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/parole-board/about/complaints-procedure>



The Parole Board cannot deal with complaints about decisions regarding whether or not to release an offender. Decisions can only be challenged by way of **Reconsideration** or **Judicial Review** through the High Court.

Checklist

Here are some things for you to consider and discuss with your VLO throughout the Parole process:

Checkbox

- 1** Consider if you want to request any victim related licence conditions that will make you and your family feel safer if the offender is released
- 2** Check with your VLO if the offender's case has been referred to the Parole Board
- 3** Consider if you want to submit a Victim Personal Statement (VPS)
- 4** If yes, start drafting your VPS – collecting your thoughts and feelings
- 5** Confirm the deadline for submitting your VPS with your VLO
- 6** Think about whether you're okay with the offender listening to your VPS
- 7** Decide whether you want to request that the VPS is kept from the prisoner – Remember the threshold is quite high for this
- 8** Decide whether you would like your VPS read to the panel if the case is directed to an oral hearing
- 9** Decide whether you would like to read the VPS yourself or prefer for someone to read it on your behalf
- 10** Would you like a summary of the decision? If yes, ask your VLO to request it for you.

Additional Support



The Parole Board recognises that the parole process may be unfamiliar and difficult to navigate for many victims and survivors. Your VLO will support you as much as possible but you may need to consider whether you may need additional support. An advice and support leaflet is available, so please ask your VLO for a copy.

There is further information published on the Parole Board's web pages, including a video and other supporting resources, which can be found here:



Our Commitment to Victims of Crime:
<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/the-parole-boards-commitment-to-victims-of-crime>



The Ministry of Justice has published information for victims which can be found here:



Guide to parole for victims of crime:
<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/guide-to-parole-for-victims-of-crime>



Information about the Victim Contact Scheme:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/get-support-as-a-victim-of-crime/information-about-the-victim-contact-scheme>



There is a support page for victims of crime on GOV.uk:



Get Support as a Victim of Crime:
<https://www.gov.uk/get-support-as-a-victim-of-crime>



To find local victim services in England and Wales, you can contact Victim Support. Their website offers a local area page to find support near you:



Victim Support:
<https://www.victimsupport.org.uk/>



Alternatively, you can call their Support line on **08 08 16 89 111** for **free, 24/7**. Victim Support can also direct you to the nearest office or provide support over the phone. Additionally, you can use their live chat service or access the free and secure **My Support Space** online resource.

