

Witness Service.

# Making a Victim Personal Statement



[witnessservice.org.uk](http://witnessservice.org.uk)

## What is a Victim Personal Statement?

Experiencing crime can affect you in many different ways.

A Victim Personal Statement (VPS) gives you the opportunity to explain in your own words the impact the crime has had on you and your family.

Sometimes called a Victim Impact Statement, it's your chance to have your voice heard if someone is found guilty of, or pleads guilty to, a crime against you.

It will be considered by all criminal justice agencies involved in the case and helps people to understand how the crime has affected you and what additional support you may need.

## Who can make a VPS?

Victims of crime have the right to make a Victim Personal Statement, as set out in the [Victims' Code](#).

Parents or carers of vulnerable adults or victims under the age of 18 also have the right to make a statement (unless the court decides it's not in the best interest of the vulnerable adult or child). Young people under 18 can make their own statement if they are able.

Close family members of a victim who died because of a crime are also eligible to make a VPS.

The police should offer every victim who reports a crime the opportunity to make a VPS when they give their witness statement.

You can make a VPS any time before the sentencing of the offender but, as it will be included in the court papers, there will be a deadline for completing it. You can speak to your Witness Care Unit officer for more information.

## How your statement might be used

### VPS for court proceedings

Once you've made your VPS it will be shared with the Crown Prosecution Service. It's important to know that, if the case reaches court, it will become part of the case papers and can be seen by everyone involved in the case.

It will be seen by the defence, and you may be asked questions about your VPS during the trial.

If the VPS is read out in court, it could be reported on in the media. For more information:

- Visit the Witness Service website:  
[witnessservice.org.uk/support/going-to-court-as-a-witness/the-media-in-court](https://witnessservice.org.uk/support/going-to-court-as-a-witness/the-media-in-court).

- Scan the QR code on the right to view the page on the media in court on the Witness Service website.



### VPS for the Parole Board

In some cases, for some offenders, the Parole Board may consider whether they should be released or moved to open prison conditions near the end of their minimum sentence.

If you've been contacted under the Victim Contact Scheme, you'll have the chance to write a VPS for the Parole Board.

This is an opportunity to explain how the crime you experienced has affected you, and how you may be impacted by the offender's potential release or change of custodial conditions.

The statement will not directly change the Parole Board's decision, but it does allow you to put forward your views on the licence conditions imposed.

## **Reading your VPS in court**

Under the Victims' Code, you have the right to read your VPS aloud, or have someone else read it for you, if the court agrees to this.

When you make your VPS, you'll be asked whether you'd like to read it out in court, or if you'd like someone else to read it aloud on your behalf.

The judge or magistrates will decide if you're able to read out your statement, have it played (if it's recorded) or read aloud for you. They will decide what sections will be heard and who will read it, but they will take your preference into account.

If you choose not to read it, or have it read or played, your VPS will still be considered by the court in the same way.

## **The VPS and sentencing**

If a defendant is found guilty or pleads guilty, the court will take your VPS into account, along with all the other evidence, when deciding an appropriate sentence.

At the sentencing hearing, the VPS may be read to the court in full or in part.

The VPS will not affect the nature of the sentence on its own, but it will help the judge or magistrates to make an informed decision on sentencing by considering the overall effect the crime has had on you. Therefore, the VPS plays an important role in the court proceedings.

## What should you include in your VPS?

These are some things you can consider including in your statement:

- Any financial, emotional or psychological impact you've experienced.
- Any physical injury or impact.
- Any treatment you've received because of the crime.
- If you feel vulnerable, or if you no longer feel safe.
- Any impact on your family.
- If you need additional support.
- The ongoing impact of the crime on your life.

Scan the QR code on the right to watch an animation by Victim Support on what to include in your VPS.



### Changing your VPS

Once you've made a VPS you cannot change it or withdraw it. However, you can make an additional VPS to clarify any points you made in your first one or – if a period of time has passed – to note any further impact the crime has had on you or your family.

## The Witness Service

The Witness Service helps people feel **informed**, **supported** and **more confident** when giving evidence in court.

We provide **free, independent** support for both prosecution and defence witnesses in every criminal court in England and Wales.

We also support bereaved family members and friends, and family members of witnesses who are attending court.

The Witness Service does not support professional or expert witnesses.

### For information and support, contact us by:

- calling the Referral and Information Centre:  
0300 332 1000 (English)  
0300 330 1180 (Cymraeg/Welsh)
- using BSL: 020 3830 2112 (New Divert)  
or 0300 330 2123
- online: [witnessservice.org.uk](https://witnessservice.org.uk)

To find out how you can volunteer with the Witness Service, visit

[witnessservice.org.uk/about/volunteer](https://witnessservice.org.uk/about/volunteer)

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