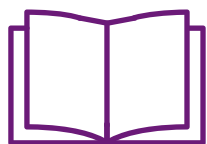




**Reporting rape and serious  
sexual offences to the police**  
Useful information for victims



This guide explains the police investigation for sexual offences and what you can expect from the process.

**You don't need to read this guide all at once. Keep it and come back to the guide as the investigation moves forward.**

It takes courage to talk to the police, and taking part in a police investigation can be difficult and demanding. This guide contains basic details of the police investigation process and signposts you to more detailed information that you may find useful. It also tells you about some of the support that you can get to help you go through the police investigation process.

You may find some of the links are to websites that have 'women and girls' in their title, but the information is helpful for victims of all genders. There are also some links to specialist services at the end of the guide (see page 22).

Ask your police officer if you have any questions about the investigation. You can also get information from a support worker called an Independent Sexual Violence Adviser/ Advocate (ISVA). Find out more about ISVAs and other support services on page 5.

The CPS have produced an easy read version which can be found at - [What you need to know if you are the victim of a rape or serious sexual assault \(cps.gov.uk\)](https://www.cps.gov.uk/what-you-need-to-know-if-you-are-the-victim-of-a-rape-or-serious-sexual-assault)

## Useful things to write down

The police officer in charge of updating you should note their contact details below. You can find other useful contacts on page 8.

Name of your police officer:	
Email address:	
Phone number:	

The police will give your case a 'crime reference number' (CRN). This unique number helps officers search for your case in their files, so it's useful to have if you call the police about your case.

Ask for your Crime Reference Number and write it here:

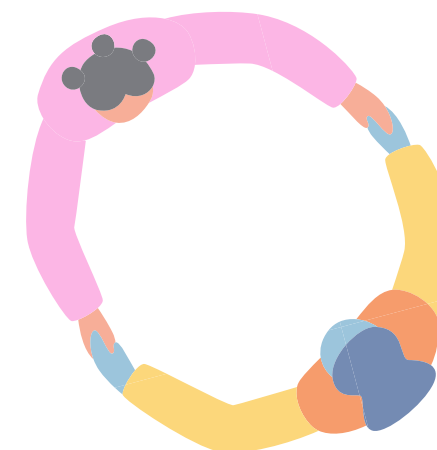
Crime Reference Number (CRN):	
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You may not want an ISVA or you may need to wait before you can get one. But if you do have an ISVA, you can write their contact details in the box below.

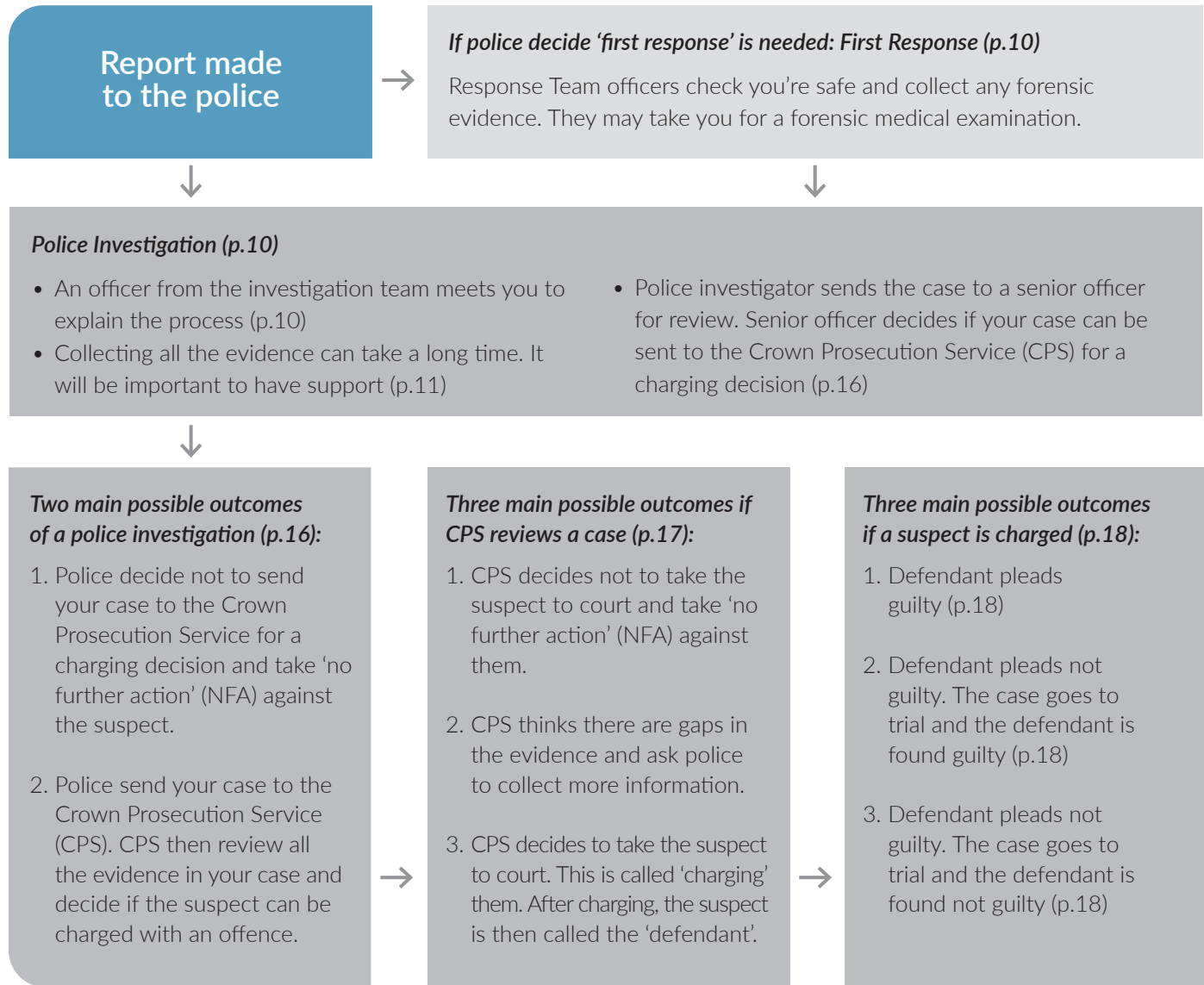
Name of ISVA:	
Email address:	
Phone number:	

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# Map of the investigation process



## You have rights throughout the investigation process

You are entitled to certain support and treatment during the police investigation. These are set out in the **Code of Practice for Victims of Crime in England and Wales** (the Victims' Code, sometimes called VCOP), which you can read by searching: [bit.ly/victims-code](https://bit.ly/victims-code)

There is also a useful booklet called **From Report to Court**. The booklet explains your rights in detail and gives examples that can help you to understand them. Search: [bit.ly/report-to-court](https://bit.ly/report-to-court)

If you need information about the court processes take a look at the **Crown Prosecution Service (CPS)** website <https://bit.ly/42wnNeJ> or talk to your police officer or ISVA. If you do not have access to the internet, ask your police officer for a printed copy.



### Independent Sexual Violence Advisers/Advocates (ISVAs)

**An ISVA is a specialist adviser for people who have experienced sexual violence.**

#### **ISVAs can support you in lots of ways.**

- Explain the impact of sexual violence on your health and wellbeing.
- Help you understand the criminal justice process and your rights within it.
- Support you to access other services, such as housing or drug and alcohol services. For example, an ISVA can help book appointments or send referral forms.
- Contact the police and other services for you, so that you don't have to speak to lots of different people (this is called being a 'single point of contact').
- Help you to process your feelings about the police investigation.
- Make sure you access any support needed in the criminal justice system: for example, 'special measures' (search: [bit.ly/special-measures](https://bit.ly/special-measures) for more).

- Support you to raise any concerns you have about the police investigation.

#### **There are some limits on what ISVAs can do.**

For example:

- ISVA services are not the same as counselling or therapy (though they can refer you to these services, and often have counsellors in their organisation).
- ISVAs are not lawyers. They can give you information about the criminal justice system, but they should not give you legal advice.
- There are rules about what the ISVA who is supporting you can talk to you about. If they find out details about the evidence in your case (for example, because they sit with you when you tell the police what happened), they will not be able to continue to be your ISVA after this point. In these circumstances, another ISVA would then be assigned to support you through the criminal justice process.

- You can talk to your ISVA if you have any questions about what they can and cannot know. You can also talk to an ISVA and/or your police officer about your options if you want someone else with you when you tell the police what has happened: for example, if you want a friend or other support worker to be with you.

## Get support and advice



### How to get support

Your police officer should tell you about ISVAs and ask if you want to be referred for ISVA support. If they have not done this, ask to discuss ISVAs. You can change your mind about getting ISVA support at any time. If you say no to ISVA support at first, you can still ask the police to refer you later.

You do not need to report to the police or help them with their investigation to get ISVA support. You can ask for ISVA support without police assistance. Not all ISVA services offer the same support. You can talk to your local ISVA service providers about what support they can offer you.

You may also be interested in support from an **Independent Domestic Violence Adviser/Advocate** (IDVA). To find out more search: [bit.ly/IDVAs](https://bit.ly/IDVAs).

Organisations that provide specialist ISVA support are also available (see page 8). The availability of an ISVA or IDVA depends on where you live and the details of your case, but you can tell the police if you have a preference about which type of support worker you'd prefer.

### Help with talking to the police

It can be difficult to talk about sexual violence (this could be something that happened to you when you were an adult or a child). It can be especially difficult to talk to the police about sexual violence. You may want someone that you trust to stay with you while you tell the police about what happened.

You have the right to be supported by a person of your choice when reporting to the police and during the interview, unless the police do not think it is in your best interests or the person is a witness in the investigation.

Your **supporter** cannot speak for you or get involved in the questioning, but they can be a friendly face and ask for a break or other practical help, e.g. get you a drink.



### Intermediaries

An **intermediary** is a communication specialist who can help victims understand the questions they are being asked.

The intermediary can tell the police and the court about the best way to talk to you. They can sit with you in the police interview and in court, to help you communicate.

Ask your police officer for an intermediary if:

- You are under the age of 18.
- You struggle to communicate with people, e.g. because you have a physical or mental disability or condition that could impact on how you communicate or understand questions that you are being asked.

### Interpreters

An **interpreter** can help people who do not feel comfortable speaking English. The interpreter will translate between English and your chosen language (including sign language) when speaking to the police.

You have the right to get important documents about the interview or court translated into your chosen language.

Examples of documents that should be translated include:

- Written acknowledgement of the reported crime.
- Any documents that you will be asked about in the interview or at court.
- Letters about the time, date, and location of the trial.
- Letters about the outcome of your case, and the reasons for the decision.
- Responses to any complaints or requests for your case to be reviewed.

Ask your police officer for an interpreter and translated documents if you find it difficult to understand or speak English.

## Get support and advice



### Independent national support services



#### Rape Crisis National Helpline

**Helpline:** 0808 500 2222  
Open 24/7 every day of the year

**Webchat:** [rapecrisis.org.uk](https://www.rapecrisis.org.uk)  
Available Mon – Thurs: 1pm-5pm,  
6pm-9pm Friday: 2pm-5pm

**Services available:**  
National helpline for anybody aged 16 or over who has been affected by any type of sexual violence. Helplines are for emotional support. Website links to other services, e.g. ISVAs.



#### The Survivors Trust Helpline

**Helpline:** 0808 801 0818, open daily  
(check website for times)

**Webchat:** [thesurvivorstrust.org](https://www.thesurvivorstrust.org)  
Available Mon – Thurs:  
1:30pm-3pm, 6pm-8pm  
Saturday: 10am-1pm  
Sunday: 5pm-8pm

**Services available:**  
National helpline for anybody aged 16 or over who has been affected by any type of sexual violence. Invites trans & non-binary survivors. Helplines are for emotional support. Website links to other services, e.g. ISVAs.



#### Live Fear Free Helpline (Welsh)

**Helpline:** 0808 80 10 800,  
**Text:** 0808 80 10 800,

**Email:** [info@livefearfreehelpline.wales](mailto:info@livefearfreehelpline.wales)  
**Webchat:** [www.gov.wales/live-fear-free](https://www.gov.wales/live-fear-free)  
**Services available (all 24/7):**

Croesawir galwadau yn Gymraeg. Provides Welsh-language and English help and advice to:

- anyone experiencing domestic abuse or sexual violence
- anyone who knows someone who needs help. For example, a friend, family member, or colleague
- practitioners seeking professional advice.



## Get support and advice



### Find specialist support

#### **Black, Asian Minoritised & Migrant survivors**

[imkaan.org.uk/get-help](https://imkaan.org.uk/get-help)

#### **Disabled and neurodiverse survivors**

[Respond.org.uk](https://Respond.org.uk)

#### **Women & children experiencing domestic abuse**

[Refuge.org.uk](https://Refuge.org.uk)

#### **Women and child survivors**

[Womensaid.org.uk](https://Womensaid.org.uk)

#### **LGBT+ people experiencing any type of abuse**

[galop.org.uk/get-help/](https://galop.org.uk/get-help/)

#### **Male and non-binary survivors aged 13**

[Survivorsuk.org](https://Survivorsuk.org)

#### **Male survivors and their supporters**

[malesurvivor.co.uk/](https://malesurvivor.co.uk/)

### Independent local support services

There may also be local support services in your area. Ask your police officer or ISVA if you would like help to find the best service for you. Tell them if you would prefer a service that specializes in supporting certain groups (for example male victims or disabled victims) and they will find out if there is a local specialist service.

# What happens after you report to the police



## First contact with the police

Cases reported to the police by phone will start with a Police Call Handler or the Police Emergency Control Room (the Call Handler Team).

The role of the Call Handler Team is to check if you or other members of the public are in immediate danger, or if the police need to collect some evidence quickly. The Call Handler Team will not investigate the crime.

You may be contacted by either a specialist investigation officer or a uniformed officer, depending on how long it is since the sexual violence happened and the structure of your local police force.

### *It's important that you feel comfortable with the police.*

Tell the police if there's something that would make you feel more comfortable (e.g., some people prefer speaking to non-uniformed officers, or officers of a particular gender). The police can't guarantee anything because it depends who is available, but they'll follow your choices if they can.

If you are formally interviewed about what has happened to you (See page 12) then you can request the gender of your interviewing officer if it will help you with providing your evidence.

If the Call Handler Team think you need an urgent visit from the police, they'll send a uniformed officer from a Response Team. The role of a Response Team is to make sure you are safe and to collect any forensic evidence.

The response officer may record what you say in a booklet and/or using a camera on their chest (called Body Worn Video, or BWV). You can ask to be recorded or not recorded with BWV. Any BWV recording that is taken of you can be used as evidence in court.

You do not need to talk about the sexual violence in detail to the Response Team. However, an officer will ask some broad questions about what happened to help guide the investigation. The questions might feel very direct, embarrassing, or silly. This is because they need to check which specific law they think has been broken.

# What happens after you report to the police



## Forensics and medical examination

If the sexual violence happened less than a week ago, the police may collect items to help prove what happened.

The officers should explain what they take and why they are taking it. For personal items, such as clothing, you have a right to get the items back, but it can take a long time.

The police may also take you to a Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC), where a doctor can do a forensic medical examination (FME). You can visit a SARC and have a forensic medical examination before reporting to the police, even if you are unsure whether you want to report to the police or not. Find out about SARC's, forensic medical examination and their nearest location by following:

[Find my nearest SARC](#)

## Starting the police investigation

A police officer from the investigation team will contact you as soon as possible after you reported, often by phone call. This should be within 1-2 days of you reporting to the police, but it can also take a bit longer if the police force is very busy and depending on the details of your case. The police officer should ask if you want to meet them in person at your home, or in a safe and private place to talk more.

This may be your first contact with the police about this case. However, you may have had a visit from the Response Team, which is described on page 10.

Your police officer will introduce themselves and talk you through the next steps. They might ask some 'risk assessment' questions to check you are safe. You can tell them about things you are worried about, or if you feel that you or other people might be unsafe in any way.

**The officer should tell you how to access support services** and ask if you want them to refer you for ISVA support. If this does not happen, see page 5.

### **Your police officer will then agree a communication plan with you.**

This plan tells the police how and when you'd like to be contacted. If you already have an ISVA at this point, the communication plan should be made with their input as well. The police should check that you're still happy with the communication plan each time you speak with them. You can update your preferences at any time. The communication plan also gives you an opportunity to discuss and write down your safety concerns. Safety concerns can be mentioned to your police officer or ISVA at any point and be discussed every time the communication plan is updated.

**If you have not made a communication plan, please ask about it next time you speak with any police officer or your ISVA.** You can quote this guide to state that police should make a plan with you.

At this first visit/meeting with the investigation team officer, they may ask you a little about what happened in the sexual violence, especially if you didn't have a visit from the Response Team. They might ask some questions that seem very direct, embarrassing, or silly. This is because the police have to follow certain rules when they ask what happened, and they need to be clear about some details that might not feel important to you. You can ask officers to explain why they are asking you certain questions if you want to.

## Your interview



**The police will invite you to an interview, where they will ask you to talk in detail about the sexual violence that happened.**

This interview is usually filmed, and the video can be played in court if the case goes to trial. This type of interview is called an **Achieving Best Evidence (ABE)** interview. Some police forces also call it a **Video Recorded Interview (VRI)**, but it's the same thing.

Often, the interview takes place in a specially designed room (called a VRI suite). It might be in a SARC (see page 11), a police station, or another building.

The interview can be a difficult process, because the police will ask you to talk about the sexual violence in a lot of detail. Beforehand, the police should explain the interview process and ask if they can do anything to make this process easier for you.

During the interview, you can ask for breaks if you want them. It might also be helpful to have someone available to support you afterwards, and for you to not do much for the rest of the day.

Some people also find it useful to look at 'grounding exercises', which can help with dealing with intense feelings, being overwhelmed, or having panic attacks. For more information about grounding exercises, search: [bit.ly/grounding-exercises](https://bit.ly/grounding-exercises)

Speaking about the sexual violence can bring up some new memories. If you remember more things after the interview, just write them down and contact your police officer.

**Can I take someone with me to the interview?**

You have the right to ask for a friend or family member to sit in the interview with you, as long as they are not a witness in the case. Your supporter cannot get involved with the interview questions, but they can ask for breaks and comfort you in ways that the police interviewer cannot.

If you have an ISVA, they can sit outside the interview room to support you. You can also request that your ISVA sits inside the interview room with you as a supporter. However, because ISVAs aren't allowed to know the evidence in your case, if your ISVA sits in the interview then they will not be able to continue to be your ISVA after this point. In these circumstances, another ISVA would then be assigned to support you through the criminal justice process. You can talk to your ISVA if you have any questions about this.

To help you feel as comfortable as possible in the interview, you have the right to ask that the police officer is a gender of your choice. Under a document called the **Victims' Code (VCOP)**, the police must meet your request unless they think it would make the investigation unfair. You can read more about the Victims' Code by searching: [bit.ly/victims-code](https://bit.ly/victims-code)

# What happens to the suspect?



## Will the suspect be arrested?

This will often depend upon when and what has happened. You can tell the police what you would like to happen and they may consider your wishes.

If the police have 'reasonable grounds for believing that the person's arrest is necessary' (for example if they are worried about your safety or the safety of others) then the suspect is likely to be arrested.

Your officer will keep you updated if the suspect is arrested. See the Victims Code for more details: [bit.ly/victims-code](https://bit.ly/victims-code)

Sometimes the suspect may not be arrested but will be contacted, often by telephone, and asked to come into the police station for an interview on a 'voluntary' basis.

## Will the suspect(s) be in prison during the police investigation?

After a suspect is 'charged' (see p.17), they may be held in custody before the trial (called 'remand'). This is not possible before this point in the police investigation.

Before a suspect is charged, the police can release them on 'bail', meaning the suspect is legally required to report to the police at a specified date and time. A suspect can also be 'released under investigation', where the suspect does not have a requirement to report at a specific date and time.

If a suspect is released on 'bail', this can be with or without 'conditions'. These conditions can limit, for example, where a suspect can go or who they can contact. Your police officer may talk to you about your concerns before releasing the suspect on bail. These concerns should be written down and considered by the police. It is likely that the suspect will be subject to bail conditions. Ask your police officer or ISVA if you're not sure what this means for you.

You have rights under the Victims' Code to be told about key decisions in the investigation, such as if the suspect is to be released on bail and any bail conditions they have been given.

If the suspect contacts you or other witnesses in the case, it's important that you tell the police. The suspect may be breaching their bail or committing a further offence by contacting you. The police may consider other measures such as obtaining a civil order to help keep you safe (see page 19). Talk to your police officer and ISVA if you feel unsafe at any point, or you are worried about your safety.

## The rest of the investigation (after your interview)

### Evidence from your phone and other personal records

Sometimes, the police will ask for your phone or other digital evidence, such as your social media accounts. The police can ask different agencies for records they have about you: for example, your doctor or social services. This is called 'third-party material'.

Asking for this type of evidence can feel intrusive. **You have rights if the police ask you about digital evidence or third-party material.**

**Before a police officer asks for your phone or seeks access to third-party material, they should be sure that it's important for the case.**

The rules about how and when police can get private information about you are very complicated and differ. If digital material or third-party material are requested, you should receive separate forms explaining what they want and why. You might want to talk to your police officer, ISVA, or a lawyer about your rights.

If you give your police officer an electronic device so they can extract digital data (e.g., your phone or computer), they should give it back as soon as possible. However, it can sometimes take longer, so ask your police officer about timeframes. You can also ask about borrowing a phone while you wait for yours to be returned. The police should tell you how long they want to have your device, although they might not be able to tell you an exact timeframe.

**You can find more information about this part of the police investigation by following this link:** <https://www.cps.gov.uk/rasso-guide/how-we-work-police-they-build-their-case>

To give you confidence about when the police ask for sensitive evidence, there should be local safeguards to your rights. Ask your police officer to tell you about their latest transparency and accountability mechanisms on digital evidence and third-party material.

### The ongoing police investigation

After a flurry of activity, it might feel like the police investigation suddenly goes quiet. The police officer investigating your case will be gathering the evidence: for example, interviewing the suspect and other witnesses. Gathering the evidence can take a long time – a year or more in some cases.

Your police officer will update you in line with your communication plan, so you can decide if you'd like to hear from the police regularly or only when something changes in your case. You can change your communication plan at any time. Just ask your police officer.

This part of the investigation can feel frustrating and slow. It can be helpful to have support from an ISVA or other specialist support worker to help you cope. See pages 5-9 for more information about support services and talk to your police officer if you want help to access support. You are entitled to support, even if you want to stop the police investigation.

## The rest of the investigation (after your interview)

### Stalking and harassment

It is important to tell your police officer if the suspect's behaviour is worrying or frightening you, including if you think they are stalking or harassing you (for example, constantly contacting or following you).

If you are threatened or harassed in any way by the suspect, their family or friends, you should tell your police officer. It is good to make notes about what happened. This will help you to clearly remember later what was said and done.

Please tell the Investigators about these notes and retain them.

**If you feel you, or any of your family are in danger, call 999.**

For more information about harassment see [bit.ly/report-to-court](https://bit.ly/report-to-court)

### Victim Personal Statement

If you want to, you can write a Victim Personal Statement (VPS). A VPS is like a letter to the court saying how the sexual violence made you feel and how it has affected you, your life, and your family. It will be taken into account by all criminal justice agencies involved in the case and judges will refer to it when deciding on sentencing the defendant. Once you have completed a VPS you cannot change it, but you can update it. You can talk to your police officer about this. A VPS can also be discussed before a video interview.

You should know that anything you write in the VPS could feature in news reports about your case (although you won't be named).

For more information see: [bit.ly/Victim-Personal-Statement](https://bit.ly/Victim-Personal-Statement)

# Police decisions & case outcomes



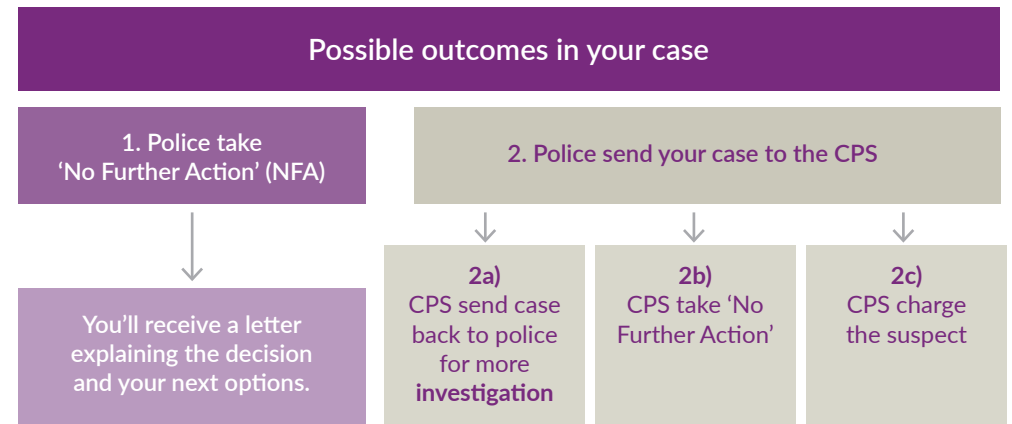
## How the police decide what to do with your case

Once the police have finished collecting the evidence, they will decide if your case can be sent to the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS). The CPS are lawyers who decide if a suspect should be taken to court. This is called 'charging'.

There are strict rules about when the police can send a case to the CPS. You can read about the CPS rules by searching: [bit.ly/CPS-decisions](https://bit.ly/CPS-decisions)

The police can only ask the CPS to take someone to court if it's more likely that a jury will find the suspect guilty than not guilty. The jury is made up of 12 members of the public. In court, the jury are asked to look at evidence and decide if they are sure that the suspect is guilty. Even if a jury think the suspect is probably guilty but they are not sure (beyond all reasonable doubt), they cannot find the suspect guilty.

Some of the information collected during an investigation cannot be used in court and so will not count as 'evidence' in legal terms. For example, the police cannot usually use information that you've been told by other people.



If either the police or the CPS decide to take 'no further action' against the suspect, this means they will not be taken to court or 'charged'. You may have a right to challenge the decision under something called the **Victim Right to Review (VRR)**.

VRRs are not available in certain situations: for example, where the suspect cannot be identified or if you do not want to continue with the report (see [bit.ly/report-to-court](https://bit.ly/report-to-court))

If you are eligible for a VRR, the police or CPS must tell you about the scheme in a letter. The letter will also explain why they have decided not to take further action.

An ISVA or other supporter can help you challenge decisions with VRR. Please read page 5 if you do not currently have ISVA support but would like to know more.



# Police decisions & case outcomes



## What happens if the CPS 'charge' a suspect

If a suspect is 'charged' (formally told they're being taken to court), **the suspect is now called the 'defendant'**. The police sometimes ask a court to put them in prison until the trial (this is called 'remand'). They can only do this if they think the defendant:

- a. won't turn up to court.
- b. is going to commit another crime before the trial.
- c. will hurt either themselves or someone else.

In most cases, the defendant will be put 'on bail', which means they wait for the trial at home. They can be put on bail with 'conditions', which limit, for example, where they can go and who they can talk to. For example, a defendant is usually told not to contact you or your friends. Please tell the police if there is anything else they should ask the defendant not to do. If the defendant contacts you or other witnesses in the case, it's important that you tell the police. They will look at whether it means the suspect should be put on remand.

**You will not be in court for any hearings to decide if the defendant is on bail or remand.** The police must tell you if the defendant will be on bail or remand.



Around the same time, the defendant will go to court and tell a judge if they say they are guilty or not guilty. This is called a **'plea hearing'**. There may also be several other hearings (meetings in court) about the case. They will be about technical issues or deciding dates for the next steps. **You will not be in court for any of these hearings.** These hearings usually only take a few minutes.

**If the defendant says they are not guilty:** It might take months between the defendant pleading not guilty and the trial where the case is decided by a jury. You'll be offered support from a special police team, usually called the **'Witness Care Unit'** (or WCU).

## Police decisions & case outcomes



### Going to court (trial)

#### **If the defendant says they are not guilty:**

While you wait for the trial, the Witness Care Unit will update you if there are any changes and they'll tell you what date to go to court. You can ask for the police to share your communication plan with the Witness Care Unit, for example if you want updates via your ISVA rather than directly.

It's common for the trial date to change a few times, and sometimes cases even get delayed on the day when everyone arrives at court for the trial. The defendant might also plead guilty on the morning the trial is meant to start.

The Witness Care Unit can arrange for you to visit the court building before the trial so that you know what to expect.

You are entitled to support at trial called 'special measures'. Search [bit.ly/Special-measures](https://bit.ly/Special-measures) for more information, or watch videos at: [youtu.be/DmZHeSFnhfc](https://youtu.be/DmZHeSFnhfc)

The Witness Care Unit, your ISVA (if you have one), and your police officer should all talk to you about special measures. If they have not done this before the trial, please ask any of them to tell you about this support.

#### **You will not be in court for most of the trial.**

You'll wait in a separate room away from the rest of the court. You will be able to look at your police statement or interview so that it's fresh in your memory before you answer questions in court. One of the 'special measures' you can choose is to have your video interview played in court instead of starting your evidence from scratch.

Next, the defendant's lawyer will ask you questions and challenge you about what you've said. The jury and other people might be in the courtroom, or this might be a recorded session before the main trial.

Being asked questions by the defendant's lawyer is a difficult experience. It is important to have someone to support you afterwards, and it can be helpful not to do much for the rest of the day.

#### **If the defendant pleads guilty OR the jury say the defendant is guilty:**

The defendant will now be sentenced. This hearing may happen straight away, or it might be done later because the court needs more information.

#### **Will your name be in any media reports of the court case?**

If you are a victim of a sexual offence, it is illegal to name you or describe you so that you can be identified in any newspaper or other media coverage of the court case, such as social media.

See [bit.ly/report-to-court](https://bit.ly/report-to-court)

## Other possible outcomes



### Use a 'civil order' to stop the suspect contacting you

If the suspect/defendant tries to contact or harass you, then you and the police may be able to apply for a 'civil order'.

There are lots of different types of civil order, but most try to stop the suspect/defendant from contacting you. You can find out more on the CPS website. Search: [bit.ly/CPS-guidance](https://bit.ly/CPS-guidance)

Your police officer (whose details are on the first page of this guide) can talk to you about the options. Your ISVA or support worker may also be able to help.

It is the police's job to put some civil orders in place (e.g., a Domestic Violence Protection Notice, or DVPN). The police can use certain orders if they decide not to charge the suspect. The CPS can also request a civil order (e.g., a Restraining Order) is put in place even if the defendant is found not guilty. You can also get a lawyer to help you apply for some other civil orders without the police.

Information about getting a free or affordable lawyer is on the Citizens Advice website. Search: [bit.ly/affordable-legal-help](https://bit.ly/affordable-legal-help)

### Apply for compensation

When you report rape or sexual violence to the police, you may be able to get compensation from the Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme (or CICS).

This money comes from the Government and not the suspect/defendant. It does not cost anything to apply.

The suspect/defendant does not need to be charged or convicted for you to get compensation, but there are some rules and timeframes (in most cases you must apply within two years of the crime happening, but there are some exceptions). These rules are explained on the Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority (CICA) website by searching: [bit.ly/CICA-compensation](https://bit.ly/CICA-compensation) or you can discuss this with your ISVA.

There are some useful videos about getting compensation on the Victim Support website at: [bit.ly/CICA-videos](https://bit.ly/CICA-videos)

You can choose a friend or family member to make an application for you. You may also be able to get advice and support from your ISVA or support worker.

## Useful contacts and links

### How to give feedback or raise concerns

Let your police officer know if you have any concerns about your case or how the police are investigating – you can email or phone using the contact details given to you (at the start of this guide). An ISVA or other supporter can help you do this. Please read page 5 if you do not currently have ISVA support but would like to know more.

If you want to raise concerns about your police officer, you can contact their supervisor. Ask your police officer for their supervisor's contact details and make a note of them here:

Supervisor's name:	
Email address:	
Phone number:	

Information about making a formal complaint is also found on the next page.

Under the Victims' Code, you have the right to complain if you don't think the police are treating you correctly. The Code states that you are entitled to:

- be treated with respect, dignity, sensitivity, and compassion
- be protected from re-victimisation, intimidation, and retaliation
- have your privacy respected
- help to understand and engage with the criminal justice process without discrimination
- be updated about your case regularly.

Find the full list of your rights by searching: [bit.ly/victims-code](https://bit.ly/victims-code).

An ISVA or other supporter can help you make a complaint. Please look at page 5 if you do not currently have ISVA support but would like to know more.

### **There are also informal ways to share both good and bad experiences through victim surveys.**

Ask your ISVA or police officer about whether the police force currently has a victim feedback or victim experience survey. The results of these surveys are usually combined and discussed with support services each year. This helps the police to improve and to build on what they do well.

# Useful contacts and links

## Making a formal complaint

You can make a formal complaint using the contact details below. An ISVA or other supporter can help you make a complaint.

Force complaints webpage:	<input type="text"/>
Email address:	<input type="text"/>

### Your Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC)

The PCC is elected by the public to decide police budgets and hold police to account in your local area.

PCC website:	<input type="text"/>
Email address:	<input type="text"/>

If you are unhappy with the police response to your complaint, you may be able to request a review from an independent organisation:

### Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC)

The IOPC is an independent organisation that oversees complaints about the police.

[Website](#)

Post: PO Box 473, Sale, M33 0BW

Phone: 0300 020 0096

Email: [enquiries@policeconduct.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@policeconduct.gov.uk)

## More links for extra information

Victims' Code

Victim Support information portal

CPS: guide to their processes

From Report to Court: a handbook

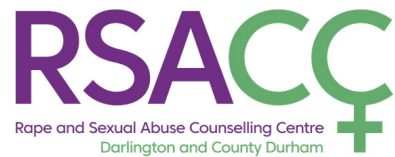
National support: Domestic violence

The Survivor's Handbook (Women's Aid)

Get support and advice



### Useful Help and Local Support



**Rape and Sexual Abuse Counselling Centre (RSACC)**  
**(Co. Durham and Darlington)**  
0300 222 5730 or via their website  
[www.rsacc-thecentre.org.uk](http://www.rsacc-thecentre.org.uk)



**Victim Care and Advice Service (VCAS)**  
**(Co. Durham and Darlington)**  
0800 138 2020 or by email  
[victimcare@durham-pcc.gov.uk](mailto:victimcare@durham-pcc.gov.uk)



**Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC)**  
**(Co. Durham and Darlington)**  
0330 223 0099 or by email  
[info@mountainhealthcare.co.uk](mailto:info@mountainhealthcare.co.uk)



**The National Rape Crisis Helpline**  
0808 802 9999  
The helpline is open every day of the year  
(including bank holidays) between 8am and midnight

# Get support and advice



## Useful Help and Local Support



**How to protect yourself against stalking and harassment.**



**Durham County Council**  
Tel 03000 260000



**Harbour Domestic Abuse**  
Tel 03000 20 25 25



**Darlington Council**  
Tel 01325 405000



**Halo - Honour Based abuse**  
Tel 01642 683045



**Victims Code**



**Durham Police**  
Tel 101 or 999 (Emergency)

### For further help and support then please contact:

Investigating Officer: .....

Email: ..... @durham.police.uk

Tel: .....



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This guide was produced as part of  
the National Operating Model for  
Rape and Serious Sexual Offences.

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