

Criminal justice and you

An essential guide for victims and witnesses

Police victim care

By Sarah West

Hello, my name is Sarah West and I am the Victim Care manager for Devon and Cornwall Police.

Under Right 4 of the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime all victims have the right to be offered support to help you to cope and recover from the impact of the crime.

The police officer will talk to you initially and explain that you are entitled to support and they will complete a form called a victim needs assessment and can arrange for you to be contacted by the Victim Care Unit.

The Victim Care Unit is run by the police and consists of members of police staff who provide a personalised service tailored to your individual needs. This service is available regardless of whether the crime is being actively investigated.

A victim care officer will take the time to discuss your individual needs, how the crime has impacted you and explain the type of support available. Support might include practical advice, information, signposting, or referral to an appropriate support service.

The Victim Care Unit works with local, voluntary and community sector organisations who can provide emotional and practical support, counselling or therapy. With your consent, the Victim Care Unit can offer you the most appropriate service.

Some of the services we work closely with provide specialist support to victims of domestic abuse and sexual violence. Victims of these crimes are entitled to an advisor who is independent of statutory services and are able to provide victims with relevant information and advice tailored to their needs. This can even include accompanying victims to court hearings.

The Victim Care Unit also works closely with Victim Support and can refer adult victims of crime to an Independent Victim Advocate. The Independent Victim Advocate will be

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a single point of contact and support by telephone, video call or face to face. They will discuss how the crime has impacted you and work with you to create an individual support and safety plan in order to help you to move forward. They will also be able to support victims to receive any support they are entitled to from other agencies and advocate on your behalf when required.

We also have a children, young people and family service who are based throughout the force area and can offer support to children and young people impacted by crime. This includes youth work, family support and counselling.

Support is also available to victims who do not report the crime to the police. The Victim Care Unit can provide details of how you can self-refer to receive support.

There is no time limit to when support can be accessed. So if you don't feel initially you would like support, you can change your mind at any point and can make contact with the Victim Care Unit.

Thank you and I hope this was helpful.

Useful links

[Victims' Code of Practice](#)

[Victim Care Devon and Cornwall](#)

Email victimservices@dc.police.uk or call [01392 475900](tel:01392475900) (8am to 8pm Monday to Friday, and 9am to 5pm at the weekend and bank holidays).

Glossary

Victim Care Unit – If you have reported a crime to Devon and Cornwall Police, there is a Victim Care Unit (VCU) which is partly funded by the Police and Crime Commissioner. This unit helps victims to understand the impact of the crime and the support options available. Support might include practice advice information, signposting or a referral to an appropriate independent support service. They can also

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provide advice and information in relation to rights as a victim of crime. Support is free and confidential and there is no time limit when this support can be accessed. The unit is available to help even if you initially said you didn't want support or your case is already at court.

Victim Code of Practice (VCoP) – The Victims' Code focuses on the victims' rights and sets out the minimum standard that organisations must provide to victims of crime.

Victim Support - A national charity dedicated to helping anyone affected by crime to cope with and recover from their experience. It offers services not only to victims and witnesses, but also to their friends and family.