

# Criminal justice and you

An essential guide for victims and witnesses

## Providing a statement

**By Detective Sergeant Matt Sinker**

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Hi, I'm Matt Sinker, a Detective Sergeant in Devon and Cornwall Police and currently the Deputy Force lead for tackling violence against women and girls. I've been a police officer for 23 years and work in a variety of roles.

In this video, I want to talk about giving a statement to the police as a victim and also as a witness as part of a crime investigation. It can seem really daunting when you contact the police and a crime has been recorded, particularly as a victim of crime.

Giving a statement to police is an important part of building a case. Before we even discuss the statement, the officer or officers who attend should be thinking about what the consequences are for you when you decide to support a prosecution or not. They should provide you with information to help you in your circumstances. To do that, they may need to go over some of the things you've already said to ensure they fully understand what the situation is before a statement is considered.

The job of the police is to gather evidence that's suitable to be used at court, and there are specific ways this has to be done. I know that having to tell your story time and again can be upsetting and frustrating and we try to keep this to a minimum. You should only be asked to give one initial recorded statement, be that typed by an officer with you or potentially recorded on video. There can be circumstances where we may need to ask for a further statement, but this should be explained to you if it's necessary.

It's not the role of the police to judge you or be critical about your account. We may ask questions that sometimes feel uncomfortable because we need to make sure we've covered the points of law we need to in order to determine if the law has been broken. We call this our "points to prove". Be honest with the officer and say what happened. You should never be made to feel as if you're being talked into or out of making a statement. It's always your choice. Your statement is your account of what's happened, and you be asked to sign it as true. This means that the story is being prepared a

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suitable evidence for court. It doesn't matter if you can't remember every detail of every part of the story. That's completely understandable.

By talking it through with the officer taking the statement. You should say what you consider to be the situation as you see it, and the officer will record it. It's best not to guess or embellish anything. And if you don't know something, say so. You don't have to give your statement at home. There are many reasons why you might want to go elsewhere, and you should explain these to the officer. Ideally we're looking to get the best set of circumstances for you to feel able to tell your story in full.

If we agree that video recording is the best option, then we have specific locations called suites where we'll arrange for this to take place. We'll try to take your wishes into consideration. So if, for example, you'd rather we didn't turn up at home in a marked police car, it's best to say so. It isn't always possible but if we know what you want we can try to work with you. We're all human after all.

You might hear officers using the phrase "voice of the victim". Your voice is incredibly important. We're recording something that's happened to you. And while the statement is the story of events, it may not capture what you feel or what you want to happen next. Again, by discussing these factors with the officer, we can take those thoughts into account. This may help us to understand things like whether a caution could be offered as an alternative to going to court, for example.

You can hear more about giving a victim personal statement, which is different to an evidential statement in the "victim personal statement" video.

### Useful links

[Report a crime to Devon & Cornwall Police](#)

[Relay UK](#)

[Find your nearest police station](#)

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In an emergency, call **999**. For non-emergencies, call **101**. You can also report a crime at any police station front desk. Click the link above to find your nearest station.

### Glossary

**Statement** - A statement is a written or in certain circumstances a video-recorded account of what happened. A statement can be used as evidence in court.

**Witness** – a person who saw or was a victim of a crime.

**Investigation** – where the police gather evidence.

**Points to prove** - Use a system such as Police National Legal Database (PNLD) to obtain the points to prove for the offence. It is essential to cover all of these details in the interview so when obtaining a charging decision, you can outline these points to a sergeant or the Crown Prosecution Service.

**Victim personal statement (VPS)** – the opportunity for a victim to explain in their own words the impact the crime has had on them.