

Criminal justice and you

An essential guide for victims and witnesses

Victim personal statement

By Matt Sinker

Hi, I'm Matt Sinker, a Detective Sergeant in Devon and Cornwall Police. I'm currently the deputy force lead for tackling violence against women and girls. I've been a police officer for over 23 years and worked in a variety of roles and in this video I want to talk about victim personal statements.

You may discuss with the officer the possibility of providing what's known as a victim personal statement. That can be done at any time during the investigation and is separate to the evidential statement you may have given earlier on.

The purpose of this statement is to tell the court how you feel about what's happened. And it gives you the chance to explain how the crime's affected you physically, emotionally, financially, whether you feel vulnerable or intimidated, if you're worried about the defendant being given bail, that you're considering claiming compensation, anything you think might be helpful or relevant.

A victim personal statement would normally be taken in the same way as another statement, so it could be on video if you gave your evidence that way, or it might be written down by the officer as you're speaking to them and presented as a written document.

It will be viewed or read as part of the court documentation. And the main purpose is to allow a judge or magistrates to understand the impact on you to determine if there are factors present that might affect the type or length of any sentence that is given to the perpetrator.

The investigating officer or specialist support officer if you have one, can assist you to write a VPS and you don't have to read it out at court. That could be done for you. You can make more than one victim personal statement, particularly if the effects on you change or get worse as the investigation progresses. I'd always advise you to talk it through with the officers involved in your case.

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You can make a victim personal statement at any point, even if you declined to do so originally. You can change your mind at any time. Just speak to the officer involved.

Thanks for your time, I hope this was helpful.

Glossary

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

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.

Bail - When you're waiting for a court hearing or a trial, you might be given bail. This means you can be released from custody until the hearing or the trial.

Compensation – the Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority deal with claims from people who have been physically or mentally injured because they were the victim of a violent crime in England, Scotland or Wales