

Complaints

If you have a complaint about the service you receive please talk to your victim liaison officer or their manager, who will try to help. If this does not work or you do not wish to speak with the manager, you may complain in writing to the Chief Executive of your local Probation Trust. If you remain dissatisfied you may complain to the local probation board who will investigate your concerns. If a complaint can't be resolved by the Probation Trust, the final stage of appeal will be through your local MP, who can raise a complaint on your behalf with the Parliamentary Ombudsman.

Questions and further information

If you have any questions about the information in this leaflet, or would like to discuss any immediate concerns with a victim liaison officer, you can contact your local Probation Trust.

Please ask if you would like this leaflet in a different language, large print or braille.

www.probation.homeoffice.gov.uk

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Cover Pictures: Offenders working on a Community Payback Project in County Durham; The Brick Train in Darlington; A Programme Tutor; Middlesbrough Transporter Bridge; A Pre-Sentence Report (PSR); Durham City Cathedral
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Victim Contact Scheme

An introduction to
Durham Tees Valley
Probation Trust Victim
Contact Scheme

About the Victim Contact Scheme

The Probation Trust, Police or Witness Care Unit have given you this leaflet to tell you about the probation Victim Contact Scheme. The probation Victim Contact Scheme has a legal duty to contact you because you are, or someone close to you has been, a victim of a sexual or violent offence and the offender has been imprisoned for 12 months or more, or detained in hospital with restrictions on his or her discharge.

What will happen next?

The police will pass your details to the Victim Contact Scheme unless you have said that you do not want them to. A Victim Liaison Officer will contact you by telephone or letter to offer you an appointment at your home, or some other convenient place. The officer will check whether you have any particular needs that you would like to be taken into account. For example, you may wish to use an interpreter. If you meet the officer you may also be accompanied by a friend or a volunteer from Victim Support.

You should hear from your officer within eight weeks of the offender being sentenced at court. If you want to make contact before then you could telephone your local probation office (their number will be in your local telephone directory) and ask them to put you in touch with their Victim Contact Unit.

Your involvement with this service is entirely voluntary, and you may change your mind about having contact with a victim liaison officer at any point during the offender's sentence.

What should I expect if I meet the victim liaison officer?

The officer will:

- Check if you have immediate concerns about the offender's behaviour towards you;
- Explain what happens to the information you give to the Victim Contact Scheme;
- Provide information about the criminal justice process and the way prisons and secure hospitals operate;
- Explain what the offender's sentence means and how decisions are made about how long the offender stays in prison or hospital;
- Ask if you would like to be kept informed of key developments during the offender's sentence (for example, when a prisoner is moved to a different category prison or hospital);
- Provide information about other services you may find useful in your local area.

What if I decide to stay in touch with a victim liaison officer throughout the offender's sentence?

If you want to keep in contact with an officer, he or she can:

- Explain how you may put forward your views about the conditions you think should be placed on the offender when eventually released from prison or hospital. This may include a condition not to contact you or your family;
- Tell you when the offender is being released and any conditions that relate to you;
- Keep in touch with you while the offender is supervised in the community and inform you when the offender's supervision is coming to an end.

Other useful numbers

Prison Service Victim Helpline 0845 7585 112.

You can ring this helpline if you are worried about unwanted contact from a prisoner. Helpline staff will pass on details of your call to the prison governor, who will then investigate and decide what action to take. This may involve monitoring a prisoner's correspondence and phone calls. Helpline staff cannot give you information about individual prisoners but they will tell you how your concerns have been dealt with.

Victim Support 0845 3030 900.

Victim Support is the national charity for people affected by crime. It is an independent organisation and offers a free and confidential service to all sections of the community. Volunteers can offer emotional or practical help.