



South Yorkshire

POLICE

Supporting victims of crime

This leaflet provides important information about what happens when we are dealing with a crime, the support you are entitled to and how you can prevent becoming a victim of crime in the future.

To be completed by the officer:

Officer's name:

Collar number:

Crime reference number:

Date of crime:

What happens next?

- An officer will normally contact you every 28 days to update you on the progress of your case, until the investigation is completed.
- If a suspect is arrested, you will be informed within five days.
- If we are unable to take the investigation further, you will be notified within five working days.
- If the crime you report is filed, but information then comes to light leading to a suspect being charged, you will be contacted.

If someone is arrested and goes to court:

- Our Witness Care Unit will notify you of the outcome of the court hearing and explain the sentence to you.
- If the offender pleads 'not guilty', and you need to attend court to give evidence, our Witness Care Unit will talk to you about what to expect. They will also discuss any requirements you have, to enable you to attend. You will be given the name of a Witness Care Officer to contact if you have any questions or concerns. They can introduce you to the Witness Service (a charity that is independent of the police and courts) that can offer support, and arrange for you to visit the court and look around before you attend on the day.

For further information or advice visit:

www.homeoffice.gov.uk/documents/victims-code-of-practice.html

Victim Personal Statement

When you are a victim of a crime, you can be affected in many different ways – emotionally, financially or physically. Making a Victim Personal Statement (VPS) is a way to put your feelings on record.

It will help criminal justice agencies involved in your case (e.g police, the prosecutor and the courts) to understand the impact that the crime has had on you and your family. That way we can make sure you get the support you need.

What is a VPS?

The VPS is a statement that you can give to the police if you have been a victim of crime. It is different from the witness statement you may already have given about the crime, which is a written or video-recorded account of what happened. The VPS is a record of the personal impact that the crime has had on you and your family. It gives you a chance to explain, in your own words, how the crime has affected you – whether physically, emotionally, financially or in any other way.

Why is it important?

Your VPS can help everyone involved make important decisions about the case by having an understanding of how the crime has impacted on your life.

You can say whatever you like about how the crime has affected you. For example, you might want to mention:

- any physical or psychological injury you have suffered
- if you feel vulnerable or intimidated
- if you no longer feel safe
- how your quality of life has changed on a day-to-day basis
- if you are worried about the alleged offender being given bail
- if you feel that the crime was racially motivated or that your faith, sexuality or disability played a part in the crime

- if you need additional support, for example because you are appearing as a witness at the trial
- if you intend to claim compensation from the alleged offender for any injury, loss or damage you've suffered.

However, your VPS should not include your thoughts or opinion on how the alleged offender should be punished – this is for the magistrate or judge to decide.

Will it make a difference to the case?

Your VPS is important and could make a difference to the case. It will help the criminal justice agencies involved in your case (like the police, prosecutor and the courts) to understand how the crime has affected you.

This can, in turn, inform decisions on whether to charge an alleged offender, or grant a defendant bail.

Can my VPS influence the sentence?

Sentencing is for the court to decide. However, the judge or magistrate will consider how the crime has affected your life when passing the sentence – along with all the other evidence in the case and the relevant sentencing guidelines.

Solving the crime

South Yorkshire Police is **dedicated** to supporting law-abiding citizens. We will pursue criminals relentlessly to bring them to justice, and keep you and your neighbourhood safe from harm.

Even if our efforts do not lead us to a suspect straight away, we will not forget you. Police officers often link current suspects to old investigations. If this happens, your case will be reviewed and the suspect interviewed. You will be kept informed of any developments and the final outcome of the investigation.

Recovering your vehicle if it has been stolen

If you have reported your vehicle as stolen and it is then found by the police, they will arrange for a local recovery agent to collect and store the vehicle. This helps to protect your vehicle and reduce the risk to road users if the vehicle has become dangerous to drive.

A forensic examination of your vehicle may also take place, in an effort to identify offenders.

You will be advised of your vehicle's location. It is then your responsibility to make arrangements to collect it.

The agent will charge a recovery fee. This fee does not go to South Yorkshire Police. It covers the agent's costs for recovering and storing the vehicle safely.

We appreciate that this process can be frustrating for victims of car crime, but it is important for everyone's protection. The use of a recovery agent is a nationally agreed process, followed by all police forces in the country. If the police did not arrange recovery of the vehicle, they could be liable for anything that happened to it, or other road users, while awaiting collection.

You can make your own arrangements for payment of the agent's fee, but your insurers may deal with this on your behalf, so you may wish to inform them. If you do not collect your vehicle when advised to do so, you will be liable for any storage fees that accrue on a daily basis for each day the vehicle remains in the agent's yard.

If you locate your vehicle and decide to move it yourself, without involving South Yorkshire Police, please remember:

- you do so at your own risk
- South Yorkshire Police accepts no responsibility if your vehicle is damaged or stolen whilst you are arranging recovery
- you must inform us (by calling 101) that you have recovered your vehicle, so that the vehicle is no longer registered as stolen on the Police National Computer
- you are advised to have your vehicle checked by a mechanic once recovered, to ensure that it is roadworthy.

Help us to help you

Here are some simple steps you can take to avoid becoming a victim of crime in the future:

1. Ensure your house is as secure as possible. Install good quality locks on doors and windows and make sure you use them, even if you are only in the garden. For further advice on lock standards, please refer to www.securedbydesign.com
2. Use a burglar alarm installed by an approved contractor. More information can be provided by your insurance company.
3. Be aware of unknown callers at your door. Always ask for identification. If unsure, close your door politely and call the company involved to check the person is genuine or, if necessary, call the police.
4. Replace exposed door hinge screws on sheds and garages with security screws and a coach bolt.
5. Lock away ladders, garden tools and other items that burglars could use to enter your home.
6. Don't leave garage and shed doors open when not inside.
7. Install good quality exterior lighting, above external doors and in secluded areas. Use timers on interior lamps and radios when out so it looks like somebody is at home.
8. Fit a good quality safe. Use this to store expensive items such as jewellery and important documents.
9. Keep your doors and windows locked at all times, even when you are at home. Never leave valuables, such as your car keys or wallet, on view or in reach of doors and windows.

Car crime:

1. Never leave anything on display when you leave your vehicle. This includes sat navs, sunglasses and even loose change. If you do, thieves may view your vehicle as an easy target. Also, when you remove your sat nav, do not forget to wipe away any marks it leaves behind on your windscreen.

2. Electronic engine immobilisers prevent your vehicle from starting and are the best way to stop thieves. You should only buy security devices or services that are approved by either Thatcham (the Motor Insurance Repair Research Centre 0870 550 2006) or by Sold Secure (01327 264 687). They should be professionally fitted - either by your car dealer or by an installer approved by the Vehicle Systems Installation Board.
3. Always lock your vehicle. Double check your vehicle is locked before you go to bed.
4. Consider using a steering wheel lock every time you leave your vehicle, even if it is only for five minutes.
5. An alarm can deter thieves, not only from stealing your vehicle, but also from taking items from it. You can get more information about alarms, immobilisers and other security devices by phoning the Vehicle Security National Helpline on 0870 550 2006 or the Sold Secure Helpline on 01327 264 687.
6. Locking wheel nuts are cheap, easy to fit and stop thieves from taking your wheels.
7. Have your vehicle registration number or the last seven digits of your Vehicle Identification Number (VIN) etched onto all windows, both windscreens, wing mirrors and your headlamps. Making parts identifiable makes them easier to trace back to you.
8. Mark all your equipment, like your car stereo, with your vehicle registration number.
9. Make a note of all serial numbers for sat navs and stereos. If they are then found on another person we can quickly identify them as stolen.

Personal belongings:

1. If you love it, log it. Register the serial numbers of your valuables FREE OF CHARGE with the national property database: www.immobilise.com. Registration means that if your belongings are lost or stolen, the police will be able to return them to you if they are recovered.
2. Alternatively, mark all your valuable property and electrical items with your postcode and house number using an ultra violet (UV) marker or a unique liquid called property marking solution.

If your property is then lost or stolen and found, the police can identify it as yours and return it to you. This can also deter thieves.

3. Consider using a permanent marker pen to put your postcode and house number on items such as hedge trimmers, lawn mowers and other garage/shed equipment.
4. Keep a list of serial numbers for electrical items. This should be kept somewhere safe and passed to the police if the goods have been stolen.
5. Photograph your jewellery, ornaments, paintings or any other items that cannot be security marked. For a modest charge, you can register photographs of your valuables on the national property database: www.immobilise.com.

False reporting

It is important for members of the public to remember that falsely reporting any property as stolen to the police, is an offence.

Unfortunately, we have discovered that a small proportion of people are intent on making such false claims. Most non-genuine claims are linked to valuables such as mobile phones, iPods and sat navs.

Burglaries and robberies are sometimes falsely reported by people in order to claim money back on insurance for these items, and criminal damage is falsely reported so people can claim to have improvements made to their property.

These are serious offences and waste a considerable amount of police time and resource that could be better spent helping genuine victims of crime.

Those responsible could be hit with an £80 fixed penalty notice and could even find themselves with a criminal record or a custodial sentence.

Most people who make these claims do so without realising the severity of their actions. Our message to everyone is simple, genuine victims of crime have nothing to fear, but those who make false allegations for financial gain will eventually be found out and dealt with appropriately.

What other support is available?



Victim Support is a national charity that provides emotional and practical help to both victims and witnesses of crime. It is an independent organisation and is not part of the police, courts or any other criminal justice agency.

You are not automatically referred to Victim Support, but the officer dealing with your case will discuss the service with you.

If you feel you would benefit from it, you can ask to be referred, or refer yourself by contacting the service directly. The service is free, confidential and available to everyone, regardless of when the crime happened, and whether or not it has been formally reported.

There are branches in Barnsley, Doncaster, Rotherham and Sheffield, all of which offer:

- someone to talk to in confidence
- information on police and court procedures
- help in dealing with other organisations
- information about criminal injury compensation and insurance
- support and information at court, if you are called as a witness.

To contact the service:

- call **01709 599244** between the hours of 8am and 8pm.
If you are calling out of hours, you can leave a message and all calls will be returned.
- alternatively call the national support line on **0845 3030900** (**18001 0845 3030900** for type talk users)
- e-mail **southyorkshire@victimsupport.org.uk**

SAMARITANS

Samaritans provides confidential and non-judgemental emotional support, 24 hours a day, for people who are experiencing feelings of distress or despair. To access the service call **08457 909090** or e-mail **jo@samaritans.org**



The National Domestic Violence Helpline is a freephone 24 hour number, run by Women's Aid and Refuge. The helpline offers support to those affected by domestic violence and all calls are completely confidential. It also offers information on refuge accommodation, and services such as safety planning and translations.

To contact the service call **0808 200 0247**.



Childline is a free and confidential advice service for young people, and can be accessed by calling **0800 11 11**.

FRANK

If you are concerned about or affected by drugs, FRANK offers free information 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. To access the confidential service call **0800 776600**, text **82111** or visit **www.talktofrank.com**

Your local alcohol advisory service provides advice and support to anyone affected by a drinking related problem. Call:

Barnsley Drug & Alcohol Services **01226 779066**

Doncaster Alcohol Advisory Services **01302 368705**

Rotherham Community Alcohol Service **01709 364804**

Sheffield Alcohol Advisory Service **0114 258 7553**

Your local council can offer information and support on issues ranging from social care to homelessness. Call:

Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council **01226 770770**

Doncaster Council **01302 736000**

Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council **01709 382121**

Sheffield City Council **0114 272 6444**

How to contact us

In an emergency:

 **999**

If life is at risk or a crime is in progress

Important: you will only be able to use this service if you have registered first. To register, text 'register' to 999. You will receive a reply - then follow the instructions you are sent.

 **999**

Only if you are deaf, hard of hearing or speech impaired. Anyone misusing this emergency SMS facility will have their phone disabled.

Non-emergencies:

 **101**

For general enquiries or to report a crime that is no longer happening

(text phone) **0114 252 3294**

If you are deaf, hard of hearing or speech impaired

 **07786 220 022**

If you are deaf, hard of hearing or speech impaired

 **0800 555 111** or
www.crimestoppers-uk.org

To give information to Crimestoppers anonymously

 **0800 789 321**

To contact the anti-terrorist hotline, if you have suspicions about somebody's activities or behaviour

www.southyorks.police.uk

To find out more about local services delivered by the police in your area



write to:
South Yorkshire Police
Headquarters
Snig Hill
Sheffield
S3 8LY



South Yorkshire

POLICE