



Department of
Justice
www.justice-ni.gov.uk

A Guide to Northern Ireland's Criminal Justice System for Victims and Witnesses of Crime



May 2019

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Section 1

Coming forward

If you are a victim¹ of, or witness² to, a crime, you may be worried about reporting it. However, we would encourage you to come forward. The criminal justice organisations (the Department of Justice, the Police Service of Northern Ireland, the Public Prosecution Service, the Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service, the Northern Ireland Prison Service, the Probation Board for Northern Ireland and the Youth Justice Agency) will treat you in a respectful, dignified, courteous, sensitive, professional and non-discriminatory manner in your contact with them. This will apply irrespective of your background, religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status, sexual orientation, gender, any disability or whether you have dependants

The Victim Charter and Witness Charter provide further information. The Victim Charter is available at www.justice-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/doj/victim-charter.pdf. The Witness Charter is available at www.justice-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/justice/witness-charter.PDF. There are also many support agencies to help you, for example Victim Support NI and the NSPCC (see ‘Support for victims and witnesses’ page 8).

Concerns about coming forward

Will the police be interested in the crime?

It is very important to report all crimes because if the police do not know where crimes are happening, they cannot take any action to prevent further incidents or catch the person responsible. In some cases, if people do not report a crime, there may be little or no evidence available and the police will not be able to investigate the matter further.

¹ Section 28 of the Justice Act (Northern Ireland) 2015 (www.legislation.gov.uk/nia/2015/9/contents/enacted) sets out what is meant by a ‘victim’ for the purpose of the Victims Charter and this Guide. The term ‘individual’ does not apply to an entity such as a business, company or public body.

² Section 30 of the Justice Act (Northern Ireland) 2015 (www.legislation.gov.uk/nia/2015/9/section/30/enacted) sets out what is meant by a ‘witness’ for the purpose of the Witness Charter and this Guide. The term ‘individual’ does not apply to an entity such as a business, company or public body.

Is the crime too trivial to report?

Different people deal with different experiences in a number of ways. No crime is too trivial to report. It may appear to be a minor crime but it can still be very upsetting for you. The police understand this and will take you, and your case, seriously. In addition, anti-social behaviour, that does not appear to have victims, can have a negative effect on the community.

It is too difficult or embarrassing to explain what happened

If you have been the victim of a crime that you find difficult or embarrassing to talk about, for example, a domestic assault or a sexual offence, you may be reluctant to report the crime. Please do. The police will be sensitive to your situation. They will treat you in a respectful, dignified, courteous, sensitive, professional manner and will not judge you in any way. If you are concerned about reporting a crime you may find it helpful to speak to someone in Victim Support NI (see **'Useful contacts'**, page 66).

Giving evidence in court

You may not have to give evidence in court, for example, if the defendant pleads guilty, the case will proceed directly to the sentencing stage. Also, if the defendant initially pleads not guilty and the case goes to trial, the defendant may subsequently plead guilty on the day of trial, therefore you would not be needed to give evidence. If you are a victim or prosecution witness and you have to give evidence and would like support, the Victim Support NI Witness Service or, if you are under 18 years old, the NSPCC Young Witness Service, will be there to help and support you before, during and after your time at court (see **'Witness Support Services'** page 34).

There is also a range of special measures to help vulnerable and intimidated witnesses give their best evidence in court. Further information on special measures as well as who are deemed to be vulnerable and intimidated witnesses can be found at **'Support to give evidence including special measures'**, page 35.

Witness intimidation

It is a criminal offence to threaten a witness or anyone helping the police in an investigation. If you are harassed or feel threatened in any way before, during or after court proceedings, you should tell the police immediately. The police can offer a number of measures to help you stay safe and they will take every step possible to protect you and your family throughout the process.

The Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service have a policy for tackling intimidation on court premises. If you are threatened or feel threatened while on court premises, please tell a court official.

Section 2

Support for victims and witnesses

Victim Support NI, an independent local charity, can help you to cope with the effects of the crime. When you contact them, a trained volunteer will help you work out the type of support you need and make sure you receive that help for as long as you need it. They can meet you at your nearest Victim Support NI office or another suitable location.

You may want to contact Victim Support NI if you:

- want to talk, in confidence, to someone who understands;
- need information;
- need practical help;
- want to make a claim for criminal injuries compensation; or
- are going to court, either as an observer or as a witness.

Victim Support NI also has a database of organisations offering support services, such as counselling, and can give you further details. If you would find that helpful details of Victim Support NI can be found in '**Useful contacts**', **page 66**.

If you have been a victim of a violent crime, you may be able to claim compensation under the Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme (see '**Useful contacts**', **page 62**). Victim Support NI can provide you with help, information and ongoing support throughout the compensation claim process. Victim Support NI will assist you to complete the application form, help with any subsequent review application and, if an appeal is submitted, they can represent you at the appeal hearing. All of these services are provided **FREE OF CHARGE** and Victim Support NI do not take a percentage from any award made.

If you are called to attend court as a victim or a prosecution witness, court support is also available, see '**Witness Support Services**', **page 34**.

If you are a defence witness the defence legal representative can advise you on a witness' role in criminal proceedings and answer any questions that you may have about what will happen when you are at court when you are giving evidence.

Support services for victims of certain crimes

Human Trafficking

If you are a potential adult victim of human trafficking you can access a range of services from the Support Service for Potential Adult Victims of Human Trafficking.

Migrant Help provides support to male victims, couples and families, while Belfast and Lisburn Women's Aid support female victims and children. This support includes:

- having a needs assessment undertaken;
- safe accommodation;
- one-to-one support from a key worker;
- help with living/travel costs and access to healthcare;
- sign-posting to immigration advice and independent legal advice and advice on compensation;
- help to access counselling or other therapeutic services; and
- interpreter/translation services.

Migrant Help has a 24 hour helpline (077 6666 8781) and can also be contacted on 01304 203977. Women's Aid can be contacted on 028 9024 9041.

Help is also available to victims of human trafficking through the National Referral Mechanism, a process that identifies victims of human trafficking and ensures they receive appropriate help and support (with their consent). Further detail on this can be found at www.nationalcrimeagency.gov.uk/about-us/what-we-do/specialist-capabilities/uk-human-trafficking-centre/national-referral-mechanism.

The Modern Slavery Helpline (0800 0121 700) provides advice to potential victims if they have concerns related to modern slavery. There is also a modern slavery website which explains the issue in more detail www.modernslavery.co.uk.

The NSPCC's Child Trafficking Advice Centre (0808 800 5000) provides information and advice for any professional working with children or young people who may have been trafficked into the UK. See '**Useful contacts**', page 64.

Domestic and sexual violence/abuse

If you are a victim of domestic or sexual violence a range of support is available.

You can:

- have access to a 24 hour helpline (0808 802 1414). This provides a confidential telephone, email and text service open to all men and women affected by domestic or sexual violence. Trained helpline workers will take the call. They can refer you to other specialist services;
- be assessed and, if considered to be at a high risk of physical violence, serious injury, harm or death, be referred by the police, or a range of statutory or voluntary groups, to a Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC), where plans can be put in place to provide protection;
- contact the Supporting People Programme, which provides accommodation services and floating support services for victims of domestic violence;
- be offered support through a Sanctuary scheme which enables victims in Northern Ireland Housing Executive properties to remain as safe as possible in their own home, through the provision of support and enhanced protection.

If you are a victim of a sexual offence you can have access to a range of support and services through the Rowan Sexual Assault Referral Centre and Victim Support's Independent Sexual Violence Advocates (ISVA) service. This applies regardless of whether the offence is reported to the police. The Rowan Centre delivers a range of support and services, all year round to children, young people, women and men who have been sexually abused, assaulted or raped – whether in the past or more recently. The Centre can be contacted on 0800 389 4424, 24 hours a day. See **'Useful contacts', page 69**. Victim Support's ISVA service provides one-to-one support to ensure that individual needs are met either by this service or by referring on to a more appropriate service. See **'Useful contacts', page 69**.

Hate crime

If you are a victim of a hate crime you are entitled to be referred to a hate crime advocate who can support you. This applies regardless of whether the offence is reported to the police. You may be referred by the police or by Victim Support NI or a number of other organisations including the Northern Ireland Council for Racial Equality, the Rainbow Project, Leonard Cheshire Disability and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive. The advocate's role is to signpost you to relevant services. See **'Useful contacts', page 69**.

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You can also be assessed by the police for personal and home protection measures under the Hate Incident Practical Action Scheme if your home has been damaged or if someone from your household has been a victim, where the motivation of the attack is racist, homophobic, sectarian, transphobic, faith related or on the basis of disability. You will only be eligible to access the Hate Incident Practical Action Scheme if the crime has been reported to the police. Details of the scheme can be found at https://www.nihe.gov.uk/hipa_leaflet.pdf.

Section 3

Victim and Witness Charters

Victim Charter

The Victim Charter sets out the services to be provided to victims of criminal conduct, by a range of service providers in Northern Ireland. The Charter applies in relation to criminal offences committed in Northern Ireland and to criminal proceedings that take place in Northern Ireland. The entitlements in the Charter apply regardless of the victim's residence status in Northern Ireland or their citizenship or nationality.

The purpose of the Charter is to ensure that victims of crime receive appropriate information, support and protection and are able to participate in criminal proceedings.

Under the [Victim Charter](#) you are entitled to:

- be recognised and treated in a courteous, dignified, respectful, sensitive, tailored, professional and non-discriminatory way;
- have service providers take appropriate measures to help you understand what they are telling you and make sure they understand what you are telling them;
- be told what is happening, at times agreed with the police, where the police are investigating the crime;
- receive information on:
 - what to expect from the criminal justice system;
 - crime reference details;
 - help and support available to you (including information on specialist support organisations);
 - decisions not to continue with or end an investigation;
 - a decision not to prosecute someone;
 - the offences for which the accused is being prosecuted;

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- the date, time and location of key court hearings (trial, sentence and appeal);
- the outcome of relevant bail hearings (where this directly affects you) and the trial;
- claiming expenses, if asked to give evidence;
- claiming compensation (on request); and
- victim information schemes (where relevant);
- have access to free translation or interpretation, if asked for and you do not speak or understand English, when:
 - reporting a crime;
 - being given an acknowledgement of the crime;
 - receiving information about the date, time and location of key court hearings;
 - giving evidence; and
 - receiving information about the outcome of the trial;
- bring someone of your choice to support you when you meet service providers, unless this would not be in your best interest or could affect the case;
- be referred to, and have access to, free of charge confidential services (including specialist services) that can help you, based on your needs – support services;
- have your needs assessed to identify if you need extra help to give evidence to the police or at court;
- be interviewed by the police as few times as possible – only where necessary for the investigation – and to have someone of your choice with you (unless this would hinder the police investigation);
- be told whether a suspect is to be prosecuted or not and to have a decision not to prosecute that person reviewed, where you ask for this;
- get property that you own back as soon as possible, if it is taken as evidence, unless it is needed for the investigation or court proceedings or its return would be an offence;
- apply for compensation, if you are a victim of a violent crime and sustained an injury (within two years of the incident causing the injury);
- be given the opportunity to make a written statement to the court about how a crime has affected you, where the case is to go to court;
- be told if you have to give evidence at court and receive information to help you prepare for this;
- discuss any needs you have with your case officer in the Victim and Witness Care Unit and be referred to a relevant victim support service provider, if appropriate, who can advise you of services (including specialist services);

- ask for a court familiarisation visit before the case is heard, to enter the building through a different entrance from the alleged offender and to sit in a separate waiting area, where possible;
- be protected from contact with the alleged offender at court, where possible;
- where you take part in programmes to engage with the offender, have steps taken to protect you;
- know when the offender leaves custody or hospital or will be supervised as part of their sentence, where you join the relevant victim information release scheme (for sentences of six months or more);
- raise your concerns with a service provider or an independent body, if you are not happy with the service provided or don't think your entitlements under the Charter have been met by service providers; and
- deal with people who are trained appropriately in contact with victims.

Further information on the Victim Charter is available at www.justice-ni.gov.uk/publications/victim-charter

Witness Charter

As a witness you will receive services under the Witness Charter from a range of service providers and may also liaise with a defence legal representative if you are a defence witness. Full details of the entitlements and standards under the Charter, how they will work and the conditions associated with them are set out in the [Witness Charter](#). Listed below is a summary of the main aspects for prosecution and defence witnesses.

Where you are to give evidence as a defence or prosecution witness you will:

- be recognised and treated in a courteous, respectful, sensitive, professional and non-discriminatory way by service providers, and in your dealings with the defence legal representative, under the terms of the Charter;
- have service providers, or a defence legal representative, take appropriate measures to help you understand what they are telling you and make sure they understand what you are telling them, for example, an application can be made to the court for the use of a Registered Intermediary, interpretation or linguistic assistance from someone you know;
- have access to free translation or interpretation, if asked for and you do not speak or understand English, when:
 - reporting to the police that you have witnessed a crime; or
 - giving evidence to the police or at court;

- receive information on:
 - the date, time and location for giving evidence; and
 - claiming expenses, if asked to give evidence by the prosecution;
- be able to bring someone of your choice to give you support when you meet service providers or a defence legal representative, unless this would not be in your best interest or would adversely affect the criminal proceedings or conduct of the case;
- be interviewed by the police as few times as possible, if you provide a statement to them, and to have someone of your choice with you (unless this would not be in your best interests, would hinder the investigation or would adversely affect the criminal proceedings or conduct of the case);
- be told if you have to give evidence at court and receive information about the timing and location of this;
- be able to ask a witness support service provider (for victims and prosecution witnesses) or the Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunal Service if you can visit the court so you are familiar with the building and the court room before giving evidence;
- have consideration given to what assistance there may be to help you give evidence, in the form of special measures, wherever possible and where service providers or the defence legal representative are aware of your needs. Final decisions on this will be a matter for the judge;
- be told by the Public Prosecution Service, or defence legal representative, if special measures have been granted to help you give evidence at court;
- be able to raise your concerns with a service provider, or a defence legal representative, if you have concerns about how you have been dealt with.

Where you are to give evidence as a victim or prosecution witness you are also entitled to:

- receive information on help and support available to you (including information on specialist support organisations);
- have access to free translation when receiving information about the date, time and location for giving evidence;
- discuss any needs you have with your case officer in the Victim and Witness Care Unit and be referred to a relevant support service provider, if appropriate, who can advise you of services (including specialist services);
- be protected from contact with the defendant, their family and supporters at court, wherever possible;
- ask to enter the building through a different entrance from the alleged offender and to sit in a separate waiting area, wherever possible; and
- deal with people who are trained appropriately in their contact with witnesses.

Section 4

Reporting the crime

Reasons for reporting a crime

You may have information that you think the police should know but you may not want to get involved in the matter, particularly if you know that there are other witnesses who could report the crime. Even if this is the case, what you have seen may still help, as the police need as much information as possible. The information you give them through reporting the crime can:

- help to bring the person who committed the crime to justice – this could prevent further crimes and protect others from becoming victims;
- help your community – all crime and anti-social behaviour have a negative effect on the community. Reporting them can help address the problem;
- help you – you may find that it helps you to talk about what has happened and your feelings about it. If appropriate, the police can advise you on crime prevention measures and they will refer you to Victim Support NI; and
- help you claim compensation – if you do not report a crime and you have suffered an injury or damage to your property as a result of the crime, you will not be able to apply for compensation from Compensation Services.

Ways of reporting a crime

There are a number of ways of reporting a crime:

Emergency: In an emergency dial 999 or 18000 for text-phone users. An emergency is where serious injury has been caused or a crime is in progress and suspects are at the scene.

Emergency SMS text service: The police operate an SMS text message registration scheme to help those with certain disabilities contact them in an emergency. This service also enables the police to pass on requests for assistance to the fire and ambulance services. The service is only available to pre-registered users who have

completed an application form (further details and an application form are available on the police website www.psni.police.uk).

Non-Emergency: Where the incident is not urgent telephone 101, dial 1, or report the crime online at www.psni.police.uk/CrimeReportFormPage/.

Third party reporting: If you really do not want to or cannot report the crime yourself, someone else can report it for you, such as a family member or voluntary organisation. They would make the initial contact with the police. You would still be involved later in the proceedings.

Call at your local police station: Where the incident is not urgent you may report it at your local police station, during opening hours.

If you are a defence witness you can speak to the police, or the bodies listed below. You may also provide a statement to a defence legal representative at a later stage.

The crime may also be reported in the following ways:

Crimestoppers: If you do not want to give your name, you can report a crime anonymously by calling the free phone Crimestoppers helpline on 0800 555 111. This service is an independent charity; it is not part of the police.

Harbour or Airport incident: Where the incident has occurred within the grounds of Belfast International Airport you should contact Belfast International Airport Constabulary on 028 9448 4400 (extension 4412) or 07710 819 183. If the incident has occurred within the grounds of Belfast Harbour you should contact Belfast Harbour Police on 028 9055 4422. Incidents at Belfast City Airport will be dealt with by the Police Service of Northern Ireland, through the contact numbers above. Where a major or serious incident such as murder, an act of terrorism or armed robbery has occurred these can also be reported to the Police Service of Northern Ireland.

Police Ombudsman: The Police Ombudsman's Office provides independent, impartial investigation of complaints about the police in Northern Ireland. If you believe that a crime has been committed by a police officer you should report it to the Police Ombudsman who will investigate and may make recommendations to the Director of Public Prosecutions for criminal prosecution.

Section 5

Police investigation

If you are a victim of crime, and report the crime to the police, you are entitled to receive either written information on what to expect from the criminal justice system such as the [Information for victims of crime](#) leaflet, or the details of a website which contains the same information after reporting the crime. This will include your crime reference number and the name and contact details of your investigating officer and where they are stationed. It will also provide you with details of the police Contact Management Support Unit which you can contact if your investigating officer is unavailable.

The information leaflet will also refer you to service providers (and their websites) for more detailed information. You are also **entitled** to be provided with additional information at later stages of the case, as you move through the criminal justice process, depending on your needs and the relevance of this information at each stage of the case. The extent or detail of the information provided may vary depending on your needs and circumstances, the type or nature of the crime, or its relevance to the particular stage of the investigation or criminal proceedings.

The police will automatically pass your details to a victim support service provider so that you can be offered information on support services and information schemes that are available to you. While your contact details and basic details of the crime will automatically be shared for this purpose there is no obligation on you to use the services. You are also **entitled** to tell the police if you do not want your details passed on.

If you have been the victim of a crime or witnessed any part of a crime, the police will normally ask you to make a statement. To do this, the officer will ask you a number of questions to find out exactly what happened. The statement will usually be a written statement. In certain circumstances, a video recorded account of what happened may be taken. Both may be used as evidence in court.

If you have difficulty understanding English, or if you are deaf or hard of hearing, the police will provide an interpreter to help you.

Giving a written statement

The police realise that talking about what has happened to you can be a difficult experience and, if you find making your statement distressing, you can ask for a break at any time. Once the statement has been written, the police officer will ask you to read through it to check that it is correct or you can ask the police officer to read your statement to you, if you would prefer.

You will be asked to sign the statement to say that it is an accurate account of what you think happened. If something is not correct, please let the police officer know so that they can change it. It is very important that you do this, even if you feel awkward about doing it, as it could affect the investigation.

Sometimes the police may need to speak to you more than once, for example, if they need to check information.

Giving a video recorded statement

If the police officer considers that you are a vulnerable or intimidated witness, you may make a video recorded statement instead of a written statement. Video recording of evidence is most commonly used if you are a young person. For example, if you are under the age of 18 and are going to give a statement, your evidence may be recorded by video. The police officer who is carrying out the interview will explain how they will do this before they begin the interview. If you are a young person making a video recorded statement, a supporter will be with you during the interview.

The police officer will not discuss the evidence that you are going to give before the interview is recorded. This is to make sure that you give your own account of what you saw or know.

Collecting evidence

Sometimes the police will need to take samples from where the crime took place. The procedures will depend on the type of crime. They may also want to take photographs or fingerprints. In some circumstances you may be asked to help by providing elimination fingerprints. A specially trained crime-scene investigator will usually do this. The police know how difficult and sometimes embarrassing it can be to have fingerprints or other samples taken and they will be as sensitive as possible.

If you have been physically injured in an assault, the police may also want to photograph your injuries or have your injuries examined by a police doctor. Police doctors are qualified medical practitioners who have agreed to carry out examinations on behalf of the police. The doctor will make a record of the injuries, but if you need more medical attention they will advise you to go to the hospital or to your own GP.

If you are a victim of a sexual offence you may also be referred to the Rowan Sexual Assault Referral Centre. The Centre delivers a range of support and services, all year round to children, young people, women and men who have been sexually abused, assaulted or raped – whether this happened in the past or more recently. You can also self-refer to the Rowan Centre. This applies regardless of whether the offence is reported to the police. The Centre can be contacted on 0800 389 4424, 24 hours a day.

Next steps

Sometimes, depending on the type of crime, it can take quite a long time to gather all the information that is needed. The police are committed to making sure that victims in particular know what is happening with the investigation. They will contact you within 10 days to tell you what they are doing to investigate your crime. If appropriate, they will give you further updates and agree with you when these updates will be. You can contact the police and ask for an update outside the agreed times.

The police will contact you if a suspect is arrested or charged, or if your property is found. The police will provide you with information regarding any of your property which they have taken to help the police investigation or court proceedings.

The police will inform you when a suspect has not been identified in connection with the crime and about any decision not to proceed with or to end an investigation.

The police may also ask the Public Prosecution Service for prosecutorial advice about the quality and admissibility of evidence or the evidence required to support the prosecution of a person for a particular offence.

For certain crimes the police can consider an alternative disposal. An alternative may be a Community Resolution Notice where an agreement is reached regarding how the offender can make good the loss, damage or harm they have caused, or a Penalty Notice for Disorder.

In all other cases an investigation file will be sent to the Public Prosecution Service for a prosecution decision, if the evidence suggests that a crime may have been committed and a suspect is identified. The Public Prosecution Service will then decide whether or not to prosecute and for which offences. If you are the victim, you should be informed by the police if this happens in your case.

Section 6

Will it go to court?

Victim and Witness Care Unit

The Victim and Witness Care Unit is a single point of contact for victims and prosecution witnesses during the prosecution process. The service is available from the point at which the Public Prosecution Service receives the investigation file through to the conclusion of any proceedings (including an appeal).

The Victim and Witness Care Unit will:

- inform you when the Public Prosecution Service receives the investigation file;
- provide you with information about the Victim and Witness Care Unit and the services that it provides – including a single point of contact, means of communication, services and information provided to victims and witnesses of crime and available support services;
- communicate with you using your preferred means of contact – letter, email, telephone, etc. – at a preferred time of day, where possible;
- seek your views on what contact you wish to have with them (including no contact, except where information must be provided to enable you to take part in the criminal proceedings);
- inform you of your case officer's name and telephone number (your single point of contact in the Unit);
- conduct an initial individual needs assessment when a decision is taken to prosecute and a further assessment if you have to give evidence. Further needs assessments may be carried out as circumstances require;
- refer you to other support services (including specialist support services), as appropriate;
- provide you with information about making a victim personal statement;
- make sure consideration is given to individual requirements for special measures or other support, where appropriate, if you are vulnerable or intimidated or have any other needs that require additional support while giving evidence;
- tell you about the case outcome and sentence, as appropriate; and

- tell you if the offender appeals against their conviction or sentence and the outcome.

If you are a defence witness the defence legal representative will:

- be your main point of contact;
- communicate important information about the case by email, so that there is a record of this. If you do not have an email they will contact you by phone or by letter;
- inform you of their contact details and ask for your contact details so they can keep in touch with you; and
- consider applying for special measures, as appropriate, where the defence legal representative is aware that you are vulnerable or intimidated (or you have advised them of this) and you may benefit from special measures to give evidence.

Who will prosecute?

The Public Prosecution Service for Northern Ireland is the prosecuting authority for Northern Ireland. The organisation is independent from the police and from the Government. For further information about the Public Prosecution Service please refer to the [Code for Prosecutors](#).

Decision to prosecute

When the Public Prosecution Service receives a case file from the police, which includes witness statements and other evidence, they may ask for further investigation into any particular matter if they believe extra information is needed to take a fully informed decision.

Prosecutions are initiated or continued by the Public Prosecution Service only where it is satisfied that the test for prosecution is met. The test for prosecution is met if:

- the evidence which can be presented in court is sufficient to provide a reasonable prospect of conviction – the evidential test; and
- prosecution is required in the public interest – the public interest test.

This is a two stage test and each stage of the test must be considered separately and passed before a decision to prosecute can be taken. The evidential test must be passed first before the public interest test is considered.

The Public Prosecution Service must decide if prosecution at court is the most appropriate way of dealing with the case. The other options are:

- Informed Warning – this is a formal reprimand by the police, and although it is not a conviction, it is recorded on the person’s criminal record for 12 months;
- Caution – this is another type of formal reprimand by the police, and again although it is not a conviction, it is recorded on the person’s criminal record for five years in the case of an adult or 30 months in the case of a young person; or
- Youth Conference – Where the defendant is a young person, that is under 18 years of age at the time proceedings were started, there are two types of youth conference that may be made available. A Public Prosecutor may consider a **diversionary youth conference** as an alternative to prosecution at court. This type of restorative conference may involve a number of parties including the defendant, the victim and police. A plan will be produced which must be approved by a Public Prosecutor. A diversionary youth conference is a formal process and, although not a conviction, is recorded on a person’s criminal record for a period of 2 years. If a defendant has been prosecuted at court, a **youth conference** can be arranged. This is a restorative conference facilitated by the Youth Justice Agency with the young person who has offended, their parents or responsible adult. A police officer, the victims and victim supporters may attend and any other person who is relevant to the crime and its impact. The conference will reach agreement on what the defendant will do to make amends to the victim, repair the harm and the steps to be put in place to stop reoffending. Victim participation is voluntary, may be face to face, by video link, telephone conference, tape or through a representative. The victim will be kept informed of the offender’s compliance with the plan if they indicate they so wish.

If a decision is made to prosecute, a case can be commenced with either a charge sheet or a summons.

If the case is commenced by way of an overnight charge, the police will arrest and charge the suspect and hold them in police custody overnight for production at the first available court. The Public Prosecution Service will review the charge before the first court appearance to ensure there is sufficient evidence at that stage for the defendant to be charged. If they are connected to the charge at court, the court will then consider the issue of bail (see the section below about bail). If the case is commenced by way of a 28 day charge, the suspect will be released on police bail to appear before the court on a stated date within 28 days from the charge. Wherever

possible, the Public Prosecution Service will have issued a prosecution decision by the time of the first court appearance.

If the case is commenced by way of a summons, this is issued by the Public Prosecution Service and is served on the defendant either by post or in person. The defendant will be required to attend court on the date stated on the summons.

Witnesses are not called for the first court appearance.

If the Public Prosecution Service makes a decision not to prosecute in the case, the Victim and Witness Care Unit will write to victims and explain the reasons why the Public Prosecution Service has taken this decision.

Information on a decision to prosecute/not prosecute

In relation to prosecution decisions (including a decision not to prosecute), if you are the victim of a crime, you are entitled to ask the Public Prosecution Service to take your views into account when deciding whether to prosecute. The Victim and Witness Care Unit will inform you of a decision by the Public Prosecution Service to prosecute or not to prosecute an alleged offender. If a decision is taken not to prosecute they will also tell you the reasons why.

In all cases, you can ask the Victim and Witness Care Unit for detailed reasons to be given to you for the decision by the Public Prosecution Service not to prosecute so that you can decide whether to request a review of this decision. You can also ask to meet with the Public Prosecution Service decision maker in the case.

If a decision is taken by the Public Prosecution Service not to prosecute, and you do not agree with this, you can ask the Victim and Witness Care Unit for information on how you can ask for a review of the Public Prosecution Service decision.

You can have the Public Prosecution Service review the decision, where you ask for this in writing within three months of having been informed of the decision, and have the review completed by someone other than the person who took the original decision, where no additional evidence or information is provided. If additional evidence or information is provided, the original prosecutor will consider the case. The Public Prosecution Service will inform you of the outcome of the review.

Custody and bail

If a person is charged and released by the police on bail, the first court appearance must be within 28 days from the date of the charge. This takes place in the magistrates' court, where the Judge³ will consider if there is enough evidence to connect the defendant to the crime. When a person is charged with a crime and held in police custody, they must be brought to the first available court for the court to decide whether the person is to continue to be remanded (held) in custody, or released on bail. Once a suspect has been charged with a criminal offence, they become known as the defendant.

The Public Prosecution Service must review the charges and, in consultation with police, will decide before the first court appearance whether to object to any application for bail. The starting point is the presumption that bail should be granted. The prosecution cannot simply object to bail being granted. There must be sound reasons for such an objection.

The Public Prosecution Service will object to the grant of bail if they consider that there is a risk of the defendant not turning up for their trial, interfering with witnesses, committing further offences on bail or if their release would lead to public disorder.

If the defendant is held in prison, they may apply for bail again, but usually only when there has been a change in circumstances since they last applied for bail. The defendant can also apply for compassionate bail for a short period for reasons such as a family funeral. After this, they cannot make any more applications unless they can persuade the judge that something about the case, or their personal circumstances, has changed. The judge must grant bail unless the prosecution can show that there is a specific risk.

If the defendant is granted bail by the court, the public prosecutor will consider whether any bail conditions would help address any risks identified. Bail often means the defendant enters into a recognisance (a bond between them and the court) to pay money if they break the conditions of bail. Anyone providing a guarantee (or surety) may also have to enter into a recognisance. These are people who are prepared to enter into a bond and lose money if the defendant breaks their bail conditions.

Sometimes conditions are placed on the bail, such as, the defendant has to be at the approved address between certain times (this is called a curfew). They may not be allowed to go to certain places, see certain people or drink alcohol. They may have

³ In the magistrates' court the title for the judge is District Judge (MC)

to submit to breath testing. Electronic tagging is also an option as a bail condition. They may also be required to report to a police station at certain designated times on designated days.

If the court grants bail following the Prosecution outlining its objections, the public prosecutor may appeal. This appeal will be heard by the High Court.

Changes to charges

In some cases a decision may be taken not to proceed with the original charge or to accept a plea to a less serious offence. This may happen, for example, if the available evidence has changed or a significant public interest consideration has arisen. When considering whether this should be done, the Public Prosecution Service will, whenever possible, explain to you if you are a victim why this is being considered and listen to your views. In some cases it may not always be possible to speak to you if issues have to be dealt with relatively quickly at court.

Updates from the Victim and Witness Care Unit

If you are a victim, the Victim and Witness Care Unit will provide you with information as the case progresses. They will advise on:

- the outcome of any bail hearing (any relevant bail conditions and any relevant changes to these bail conditions);
- if the defendant has entered a not guilty plea;
- if the defendant has entered a guilty plea; and
- the time, date and location of the trial.

The Victim and Witness Care Unit will provide three-monthly updates to victims in Crown Court cases, where there has been no communication within the previous three months.

There may be occasions when you wish to receive additional information from the Public Prosecution Service. You can ask the Public Prosecution Service for a meeting to discuss a decision:

- not to prosecute a suspect;
- to substantially alter a charge; or
- discontinue all proceedings or offer no evidence in all proceedings.

Updates from defence practitioners

If you are a defendant, your defence practitioner will provide you with information as the case progresses.

Section 7

Letting the court know about the impact of the crime on you

Victim personal statement

A victim personal statement (VPS) allows a victim to say in their own words how a crime has affected or continues to affect them. It is considered when a case goes to court and a person pleads guilty or is found guilty. It will tell the judge about any harm the crime has caused the victim, before a sentence is passed.

The Victim and Witness Care Unit will inform you that you can make a written victim personal statement, once a decision has been taken to prosecute someone for the crime. This would apply if you are:

- a direct victim of crime;
- under 18 your parent or guardian can make a VPS instead of, or in addition to you;
- a parent of a child victim (instead of or in addition to the child or young person);
- a close family member, or representative, where the victim is deceased, or they are unable to make a statement due to their physical or mental health (where the Victim and Witness Care Unit are made aware of this); or
- a bereaved family member on behalf of other family members.

If you want to make a VPS you must contact Victim Support NI, NSPCC Young Witness Service (if you are under 18 years old) or the PSNI Family Liaison Officer (for a family member bereaved through murder, manslaughter or a road death). Ideally you should contact them once you know the trial, or contest, date or if the defendant pleaded guilty. They will advise you about what your statement can/cannot contain and can help you prepare the VPS.

Does a victim have to make a VPS?

You do not have to make a VPS if you do not want to – it is entirely your choice. You may find it helpful to talk it over with someone before making a decision. If you decide not to make a statement, it will not damage the case in any way. No one will assume that you have been unaffected by the crime.

What information should the victim personal statement include?

The victim personal statement should set out the impact on you as a victim or, if that person is deceased, the impact on the family member completing the statement. It may also reflect on how it affects the victim's close family. The types of impacts may include physical injury, emotional, social, financial, or any other impacts. It may also reflect on how it affects the actual victim's close family. If you are completing the statement and are not the actual direct victim or a bereaved family member, for example, a parent or representative, you can set out how the crime has affected both you and/or the victim.

The focus must be on how you have been affected as a result of the crime (or the person on whose behalf the VPS is being made). You should not describe the detail of the crime itself, the court will hear about this separately. You should not give your views on the defendant, any other or alleged offences, or on any punishment that you think should be imposed – that is for the judge alone to decide.

Before the VPS is given to the judge, the Public Prosecution Service will remove any information that should not be in the statement (known as redaction). You may be asked to provide medical evidence to support your statement.

Who will see the victim personal statement?

If the case goes to court, the VPS will be seen by the prosecutor, the defendant, their legal representative and the judge, ahead of any sentencing. The judge may or may not read out the statement or parts of it, or refer to it at sentencing. If no reference is made to it this does not mean that the statement has not been considered. After the statement is submitted it forms part of the case papers.

Where you engage with other criminal justice service providers (the Northern Ireland Prison Service, the Probation Board for Northern Ireland or the Youth Justice Agency) they may find it helpful to see your victim personal statement. This could help them provide services to you. In such cases you should tell them that you want them to see your statement – this is entirely your choice. They will explain what the

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statement would be used for, get your written consent to it being shared with them and then get the statement from the Public Prosecution Service. Steps will be taken to ensure that the statement is stored securely.

More information can be found at www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/victim-personal-statements.

Section 8

Preparing for court

Preparing the case for court

In some cases, the defendant will plead guilty to the offence and you will not have to go to court or give evidence. In others, the defence will agree your evidence and so your statement will just be read out in court without you having to give evidence.

However, there may be some cases where a defendant may plead not guilty, or plead guilty but deny an important part of the offence, which would make a difference to the sentence they could receive. In these cases, the court will need to hear evidence from witnesses, which could include you, to decide if the defendant is guilty.

The court system

There are different types of courts in Northern Ireland. All criminal cases, even the most serious, begin in a magistrates' court.

Magistrates' courts hear and decide on less serious criminal cases, cases involving young people and some civil and domestic cases. In a magistrates' court or youth court (for defendants under the age of 18), the Judge listens to the evidence and decides if the defendant is guilty. They are also responsible for deciding the sentence.

Although many cases are dealt with by a magistrates' court or youth court, the more serious cases are usually sent or committed to a Crown Court for hearing. In the Crown Court, a jury of men and women – up to 12 members of the public – decide if the defendant is guilty, but it is the judge who decides on the sentence.

Please go to www.courtsni.gov.uk for more information and an explanation of the court system.

Assessing your needs

If a decision has been taken to prosecute a suspect, and you are required to give evidence as a victim or prosecution witness, you are entitled to have an enhanced needs assessment by the Victim and Witness Care Unit, to make sure that you are supported in giving your best evidence.

This will consider:

- your needs relating to interpretation, translation, being understood, help to give evidence (in the form of special measures) or other additional support;
- whether you may be intimidated or at risk of intimidation; and
- whether you have any other needs that may require additional support, when giving evidence at court.

Where your safety is at risk due to intimidation, you should, contact the police without delay if you feel your safety is at risk.

Setting the trial date

Before the date is fixed for the hearing, the Victim and Witness Care Unit will contact you, if you are a victim or prosecution witness, to check your availability. This information will then be provided to the court. Every effort will be made to accommodate your availability. The judge will make the final decision on the trial date.

Once the court has fixed the trial date you will be advised of:

- the trial date;
- which court you need to go to;
- how to get to the court;
- information on the support available at court;
- any separate waiting areas;
- what facilities are available at the court; and
- arrangements for people with disabilities.

You should receive enough notice of the date of the trial, but there may be times when this is not possible and only short notice can be given. Although this may be inconvenient, it is important to go to the court as it is very difficult to change court

dates. If you are not able to go to court on the date given, you must contact the Victim and Witness Care Unit and let them know as soon as possible.

As a victim or prosecution witness, the Victim and Witness Care unit will send you leaflets on witness services and attending court as a witness, and information about the court venue. It is the responsibility of the Public Prosecution Service to apply for any special measures (see **page 35**) which you may need in court if you are a vulnerable or intimidated witness to help you give your best evidence. If you are called to give evidence and you feel that you may need special measures, you should speak to the Victim and Witness Care Unit as soon as possible. If you need an interpreter, you should also let the Victim and Witness Care Unit know so they can arrange this for you. The prosecutor will be available on the day of court to explain the process and answer any questions you have.

You can speak to your single point of contact in the Victim and Witness Care Unit if you have any queries or concerns about attending court.

If you are required to attend court to give evidence, as a defence witness:

- the defence legal representative will tell you about this;
- the defence legal representative can advise you on what to expect at court, to help you prepare for going to court and understand the court process, in advance of giving evidence;
- you can contact the defence legal representative, if you have any queries or concerns about attending court to give evidence; and
- you will find information about the court venue (including information on the court location and transport links) and the facilities available, such as, food and drink, at <https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/publications/court-office-information-leaflets>. The defence legal representative may also be able to advise you on this.

Witness Support Services

If you are a victim or witness for the prosecution, witness services will be available before, during and after the trial to make sure that you are well informed and supported. There are two types of witness service available – one for adult witnesses which is run by Victim Support NI (the Witness Service) and one for witnesses under the age of 18 (the Young Witness Service) which is run by the NSPCC. Both services are available in all courts.

The aim of these services is to help victims and prosecution witnesses, and their families and friends, deal with the experience of going to court and giving evidence. Both witness services normally phone witnesses before the court hearing to offer their services. Trained volunteers and staff from the services provide a free and confidential service including:

- having someone to talk to;
- providing information on court procedures;
- viewing a video online about what to expect at court;
- going with you to the court and letting you look around the courtroom before you are called as a witness;
- practicing using the live link TV facility before the trial, when you are to use this to give evidence, where possible;
- asking the Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Services if it might be possible to transfer the case to another court venue if it is difficult for you to attend the original venue;
- allowing you to enter the court building through a separate entrance from the defendant and their family and friends, where possible;
- providing a quiet place for you to wait before and during the hearing;
- having someone to go with you into the courtroom or the live TV link room when you give evidence;
- giving practical help with things such as expense forms;
- putting you in touch with people who can answer specific legal questions (the witness services do not discuss evidence with witnesses); and
- giving you a chance to talk over the case once it is over, to get more help or information.

Support to give evidence including special measures

Special measures are measures which have been put in place to help vulnerable and intimidated witnesses give their best possible evidence in court.

Vulnerable witnesses include children under 18 years of age. Other vulnerable witnesses include witnesses whose quality of evidence is likely to be reduced because they have:

- a mental disorder;
- a significant impairment of intelligence and social functioning;
- learning or communication difficulties;

- a neurological disorder; or
- a physical disability or a physical disorder.

Intimidated witnesses are those witnesses whose quality of testimony is likely to be diminished by reason of fear, or distress, at the prospect of giving evidence. Victims in cases of sexual assault, trafficking, or slavery are defined as falling into this category. Other witnesses who may be considered to be intimidated witnesses include:

- those who have experienced domestic violence;
- those who have experienced past or repeat harassment and bullying, or repeat victimisation;
- those who self-neglect and self-harm;
- the elderly and frail;
- victims of terrorism or organised or hate crime;
- victims of exploitation;
- witnesses to murder or manslaughter; and
- those who are making allegations against professionals or carers.

If your case is passed to the Public Prosecution Service, and you become a prosecution witness, the prosecutor will consider whether special measures could help you when giving evidence in court. If you are eligible, they will make an application to the court. The judge at that hearing will decide whether you should be allowed to use special measures in court. If a special measure application has been granted, you will be told by the prosecutor. They will explain to you how the special measure(s) will be used at court.

If you are a defence witness the defence legal representative will consider your potential eligibility for special measures, taking account of whether you are vulnerable or intimidated where they are aware of this or you have let them know that special measures may help you to give your best evidence.

Special measures include:

- screens/curtains in the courtroom so you do not have to see the defendant and, in some cases, the public gallery when you are giving evidence;
- a live video link allowing you to give evidence away from the courtroom. However, it is likely that you will still be in the court building. You may have a supporter with you when you give your evidence from the live link room;

- giving evidence in private – the public gallery can be cleared in cases involving a sexual offence, trafficking or slavery or where the court is satisfied that someone other than the accused may seek to intimidate you;
- removal of wigs and gowns by judges, and by the defence and prosecution team;
- video recorded statements – these allow you to use a pre-recorded video statement as your main evidence;
- assistance from a Registered Intermediary – Registered Intermediaries are communication specialists who can help you give evidence if you have significant communication difficulties. They are recruited by the Department of Justice to help vulnerable witnesses give their best evidence to the court. They can also assist when you are being interviewed, to help you communicate your evidence to the police; and
- using communication aids, such as alphabet boards (if you are a vulnerable witness).

Further information on special measures at court, for vulnerable and intimidated witnesses is available at

www.ppsni.gov.uk/Branches/PPSNI/PPSNI/Files/Documents/Publications/Special%20Measures%20Leaflet.pdf

Reporting restrictions

In some cases the law says that certain details cannot be published by the media, for example, to protect the identity of the witness. In other exceptional circumstances, the court may place temporary or permanent restrictions on how the media reports on court proceedings. In each case the judge will order that the media cannot report details of the case. Any organisation that breaches the court order, where applicable, will be punished. These restrictions only apply to the UK.

Section 9

The trial and giving evidence at court

It is the responsibility of the prosecution to bring a case against a defendant. To be convicted of any offence, the case against a defendant must be proved beyond reasonable doubt. This means that the Judge or jury cannot find a defendant guilty unless they are satisfied that the evidence available is sufficient to reach the high standard in a criminal trial, namely beyond reasonable doubt.

The trial begins with the prosecutor outlining the facts of the prosecution's case to the court. The prosecution will then call each witness in order. Before giving your evidence you will be asked if you wish to take an oath or make an affirmation that your evidence is true. The difference between an oath and an affirmation is that the oath is a religious commitment whereas an affirmation is non-religious. If you are aged 14 or over, you must take an oath (holding a religious text according to your religious belief) or you can promise that you will tell the truth (affirm). If you are under the age of 14 you will be asked if you understand what it means to tell the truth.

Further information on giving evidence at court is available at www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/giving-evidence-court

Attending court to give evidence

You may have to give evidence at court or simply want to watch court proceedings related to the case. When you arrive at court you should find court security staff, clear signs to help you find your way around and a clearly signposted witness service. You should also be able to see a list of cases to be heard on that day. Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service staff are available at the public counter.

If you are a victim or prosecution witness you will be introduced to someone from the Public Prosecution Service at court. This can involve the Public Prosecution Service engaging independent barristers to handle prosecution cases. Defence witnesses will normally have already met the defence legal representative before coming to court. However, in some cases, for a variety of reasons if you are a defence witness you may only meet them on the day of court.

If you need to leave the court building at any time, you should give your contact details to Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service staff, a victim support service provider (witness services) or the defence legal representative (as appropriate) so they can contact you if necessary. However, you should also speak to whoever asked you to attend court before leaving the building. It is important that you do not leave the court building without being told officially that you may leave.

Support at court

If you are giving evidence at court help and support is available.

If possible a witness support service provider will offer victims and prosecution witnesses a separate room to wait in. This may be a dedicated room or shared with other service providers.

The Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service will arrange to put in place any special measures that have been granted, whether you are a prosecution or defence witness.

Giving evidence

If you have to give evidence, the police or prosecutor will give you a copy of your statement beforehand for you to read over and refresh your memory. If your statement was video-recorded, you may have the opportunity to view the video before the trial. If you are a witness for the prosecution, you will be asked questions first. The prosecution will begin by asking you questions to take you through what you said in your witness statement. The defence will then ask some questions. It is the role of the defence lawyer at a trial to assess the prosecution's case, argue against it and, if necessary, present the defendant's evidence. Essentially they are testing the strength of the prosecution evidence. This is known as cross-examination.

When the cross-examination for the defence has finished, the prosecution may ask you some more questions. The Judge may also ask you questions at any time. After the prosecution witnesses have been cross-examined, the defence case opens.

Witnesses for the defence are asked questions by their own solicitor or barrister first and then the prosecution will cross-examine them.

If you are to give evidence at court you will not be allowed to watch proceedings before you give your evidence.

Waiting time at court

Be prepared to wait a while before you give evidence; some cases are delayed or even put off until another date for various reasons. If you are a victim or prosecution witness you should let your victim support service provider know if you have been waiting a long time without receiving any information.

Wherever possible, the Public Prosecution Service prosecutor will indicate how long you may have to wait before giving evidence and update you regularly during the day and give you an explanation if the delay is longer than expected.

If the case cannot be heard on the day, and where it is possible to do so, you will be told as quickly as is practicable by the Public Prosecution Service prosecutor or you may be told that circumstances of the case have changed and you are no longer required to give evidence.

If you are a defence witness you should speak to the defence legal representative about how long you may have to wait.

Safety at court

When attending court you may be concerned about your safety. You are entitled to have Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service security staff take appropriate measures to make sure that you are safe, where you have advised them that you have concerns about your safety.

Section 10

Outcome of proceedings, sentencing decisions and appeals

Outcome of proceedings

After listening to all the evidence the Judge (in the magistrates' court), or jury (in a Crown Court), will decide on whether the defendant is guilty or not guilty. If a defendant is found not guilty, they will be acquitted. In the Crown Court, if the defendant pleads guilty or is found guilty by the jury, the judge will pass sentence.

If the defendant is found guilty, they will be given either a custodial or non-custodial sentence. In either case, you can receive support from Victim Support NI after the trial if you are a victim or prosecution witness.

Sentencing may be carried out on the day of the trial or it may be adjourned (delayed). If it is adjourned, the defendant will have to come back to court at a later date to receive their sentence.

It is the judge alone who decides on the sentence. They are guided by a number of considerations:

- the maximum sentence they can give, which is usually set by Parliament or the NI Assembly for the offence;
- whether the defendant pleaded guilty or not. If the defendant pleaded guilty, the judge can reduce the sentence (this is called discounting the sentence). The discount will depend on when the defendant pleaded guilty – the biggest discount will usually be given for those who plead guilty at the earliest opportunity;
- the level of sentences in similar cases in the past. This is called case law;

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- the powers of the court. A Crown Court can issue much higher penalties than a magistrates' court;
- any pleas in mitigation or circumstances set out in background reports;
- any victim impact report, which is prepared by an expert, for example, a psychologist; and
- any victim personal statement made (see **Section 7**).

Sentencing

When deciding what sentence to give, the judge will have to take account of a range of factors, including the facts of the case and the offender's circumstances and age. To help them, they may ask the Probation Board for Northern Ireland to produce a report about the offender. This is known as a pre-sentence report.

If you are a victim at court giving evidence, the Prosecutor will explain the outcome, meaning and effect of the sentence to you if you are present at court for the sentencing process. If you are a victim, the Victim and Witness Care Unit will tell you the result of the case and any sentence imposed. This will include a short explanation about the meaning and effect of the sentence. You can ask the Victim and Witness Care Unit for further information about the outcome and about the reasons for the decision. Further information on sentencing following conviction is also available at www.justice-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/doj/sentencing-leaflet.pdf

If you are a defence witness you can ask the defence legal representative to advise you on the outcome of the case and explain any sentence given.

If the offender receives a sentence which includes supervision by the Probation Board for Northern Ireland you can ask them to explain the meaning of any order that is imposed. This can be done by phone, email, in writing or face-to-face (see **'Useful contacts, page 63**).

Appeals

If convicted in a magistrates' court, the defendant can appeal against their sentence or conviction, or both. If the defendant appeals against their conviction, the whole trial will be heard again but this time it will be heard at the county court in front of a judge. The judge may increase the sentence, reduce it, or leave it as it is. If a

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county court appeal has been made against a conviction, you will most likely have to go to court to give evidence again.

Sometimes the prosecution or the defence may believe that the magistrates' court has reached the wrong decision because they misinterpreted the law. In these circumstances, the case may be passed to the Court of Appeal. If the Court of Appeal decides that the magistrates' court was wrong, it can order the magistrates' court to hear the case again, applying the point of law correctly. This would happen in a small number of cases. If this is the case, it is unlikely that you will be called again to give evidence.

The defendant can also appeal against their sentence or conviction, or both, in the Crown Court. These appeals are heard by the Court of Appeal who can quash the conviction (decide it is wrong), order a retrial or leave the conviction as it is.

If a defendant has gone through the whole appeal process and believes there has been a miscarriage of justice, they can apply to have their appeal considered by the Criminal Cases Review Commission. The Commission can refer the case back to the Court of Appeal if they consider that there is a real possibility that a conviction or sentence would not be upheld. This only happens in a very small number of cases.

If the sentence imposed in the Crown Court for certain serious offences appears to be unduly lenient, that case can be referred to the Court of Appeal by the Director of Public Prosecutions. The Director will refer cases where there is a reasonable prospect that the Court of Appeal will find the sentence imposed to be unduly lenient and it is in the public interest for the referral to be made. There is a strict time limit of 28 days from the date of the sentence being imposed for such a referral to be made.

A victim, or a family member of a person who has died, does not have a right of appeal against a sentence imposed. However, if you consider that a sentence imposed is too lenient, you can ask the Director of Public Prosecutions to consider whether the sentence was unduly lenient and whether a referral should be made to the Court of Appeal. As referrals must be made within 28 days of the sentence being imposed, you should bring your concerns to the Director's attention as soon as possible. You can do this by writing to the Director yourself or through a legal or public representative.

Expenses

If you are a prosecution witness and are required to attend court to give evidence you may have to pay for aspects like your travel. In some instances, travel expenses are reimbursed. Expenses are not paid for making a statement to the police about the criminal offence. Witness invitations to attend court, issued from the Victim and Witness Care Unit, will be accompanied by a witness expenses claim form.

If you are a defence witness you should check with the defence legal representative regarding any payment of expenses.

Section 11

Victim information schemes

Once the trial is over, if you are a victim and would like to know when the offender in your case is due to be released from prison or, if they have been given a supervised community sentence the terms that they will have to keep to, you can ask the Victim Information Unit to provide you with certain information. The Unit, which is managed by the Probation Board for Northern Ireland, provides a service which covers all three victim information schemes. These schemes are the Prisoner Release Victim Information Scheme (PRVIS), the Probation Board for Northern Ireland Victim Information Scheme and the Mentally Disordered Offender's Victim Information Scheme. You can find details for the Victim Information Unit in '**Useful contacts**', page 63.

You are entitled to make use of these information schemes if you are:

- an actual victim of the offence (where you are aged 18 or over) or a bereaved family member;
- a family member (or legal guardian) of a person under the age of 18; or
- a family member (or legal guardian) of a victim whose physical or mental state is such that it would be reasonable for you to receive the information.

Once a qualifying sentence has been imposed, the Victim and Witness Care Unit will inform you of this and provide information on how to contact the Victim Information Schemes. They will provide the Victim Information Unit with victim details to enable the Unit to send you a victim registration leaflet and free post envelope, if you wish to register.

You **need to register** if you want to receive information. If you do not register, you will not receive any information. If you prefer, Victim Support NI can act as your representative or you can elect your own representative who can receive information on your behalf and support you through the process e.g. a family friend, a voluntary agency you may have contact with or your solicitor. You can find details for Victim Support NI in '**Useful contacts**', page 66.

The schemes relate to:

- young offenders who have been given the equivalent of a life sentence, convicted of a serious offence or sentenced to detention in a Young Offenders Centre by the Crown Court (when the young offender becomes 18). The prison scheme also covers adult offenders (18 or over) who are sentenced to six months or more;
- offenders who receive a sentence which includes supervision by the Probation Board for Northern Ireland; and
- offenders who are subject to a Hospital Order with a Restriction Order.

Prisoner Release Victim Information Scheme

If you register with the scheme you can receive details of:

- the year and month in which a prisoner is expected to be released from custody or will be eligible to be considered for temporary release – it is not possible for the exact release date to be given;
- when the prisoner is being considered for temporary release;
- any decision taken in relation to temporary release; and
- any known conditions of the prisoner's release, or conditions imposed on temporary release, and any breaches of these which result in the prisoner being returned to custody.

In the cases of prisoners given a life sentence, an indeterminate custodial sentence or an extended custodial sentence which are subject to licence conditions of release by the Parole Commissioners you will be informed about when the prisoner is being considered for release. You can make your views on the release known to the Parole Commissioners (through the Victim Information Unit). You will be informed of the decision the Parole Commissioners make and, if it is to release the prisoner, be told of the licensing arrangements that apply.

You can also register concerns you have about your personal safety and have these considered as part of the assessment process, when an offender applies for temporary release or is to be released on licence.

On occasion it may only be possible to tell you about a release after it happens. In the very unlikely event that an offender in the case you are involved in escapes detention you will be informed about this without unnecessary delay by the police.

Further information on the Prisoner Release Information Scheme is available at www.pbni.org.uk/what-we-do/victim-information-scheme/.

Probation Board for Northern Ireland Victim Information Scheme

The Probation Board for Northern Ireland Victim Information Scheme gives you the choice of having information about the probation sentence in your case. **If you register** you can receive information:

- on the type and length of supervision the offender is subject to;
- on any extra conditions to the sentence;
- about any further court sentence under the order, if the offender breaks it;
- about how the Probation Board for Northern Ireland manages the case and the opportunity to include the victim's concerns in this process; and
- in writing, by phone or in a face-to-face meeting.

Further information on the PBNI Victim Information Scheme and Prisoner Release Information Scheme is available at www.pbni.org.uk/what-we-do/victim-information-scheme/.

Mentally Disordered Offenders' Victim Information Scheme

This scheme applies in cases where the court sentences the offender to be placed in a hospital under a hospital order with a restriction order, or if an offender is transferred from prison to a hospital under a transfer direction with a restriction direction. This means the offender cannot be released from hospital without the authority of the Department of Justice. The scheme only applies to offenders in Northern Ireland with a mental illness.

Under the scheme, **if you register**, you can receive information about:

- temporary leave of absence given to the offender e.g. compassionate release, or release for rehabilitation purposes;
- when the offender is discharged (with or without conditions); and
- any relevant conditions the offender has to keep to.

If you choose to receive information, you will be told when a leave of absence or discharge is being considered. You can give your views in writing, through the

Victim Information Unit, on whether any conditions should be placed on the person and you can make comments on the effect that the offender's leave would have if it threatens your safety or affects your wellbeing in a negative way. Your comments will be considered, along with the Department of Justice's assessment, when decisions are made on whether or not to grant leave of absence.

Further information on the Mentally Disordered Offenders Information Scheme is available at <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/victim-information-schemes>.

Section 12

Getting compensation

If you are a victim of a violent crime and sustained an injury, or you witnessed and were present on the occasion when the other person sustained the injury or were closely involved in its immediate aftermath, you may be able to claim compensation. Unless there are good reasons, you should report the incident to the police as soon as possible after it happened and submit an application for compensation within two years of the date of the incident that caused the injury.

The two year time limit may be waived if Compensation Services consider that there is a good reason for the delay and it is in the interests of justice to do so. Further information about compensation for victims of violent crime can be found at www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/compensation-criminal-injuries or by contacting Compensation Services (see **Useful contacts, page 62**).

Making an application

You are entitled to apply for compensation and have your application considered, if you are a victim of a violent crime and sustained an injury, or you witnessed and were present on the occasion when the other person sustained the injury or were closely involved in its immediate aftermath. The Compensation Services will:

- deal directly with you or, if you prefer, work with a victim support service provider or any other representative acting for you;
- give you information that you need to help you fill in the application form, including clear information on how and under what conditions you can access compensation;
- treat your information confidentially;
- acknowledge your application, provide you with a reference number and the name of the person responsible for processing your claim;
- provide you with contact details;
- provide information on the progress of your application;
- make a decision on your application as quickly as possible and clearly explain the decision made;

- issue an offer of award or denial notification, including reasons for the decision, following enquiries with the police, medical authorities and any other relevant sources; and
- tell you about your right to request a review of the decision, including the procedure and time limits for this.

Access to free compensation advice

Victim Support NI can give you information, advice and support during the compensation claim process. While you can make use of a solicitor if you wish, the confidential Victim Support NI service is **free**. Any award will be paid to you without a deduction for their help. You can ask Victim Support NI for help with completing and progressing your application.

Reviews

If you do not agree with the decision on your compensation application you can:

- request a review of the decision, within 90 days from the original decision;
- have your application for a review acknowledged;
- have the review processed efficiently, fairly and afresh by a different claims officer than the officer who made the first decision; and
- have a clear explanation of the review decision, covering points raised in the review application; and information on appealing the decision, including the procedure and time limits.

Appeals

You can also appeal the result of the review, if you consider that there are grounds for this, to the Criminal Injuries Compensation Appeals Panel for Northern Ireland, within 90 days of the date of the letter informing you of the decision made at the review. This panel is independent of Compensation Services and their decision is final.

Where a hearing is granted, the Criminal Injuries Compensation Appeals Panel for Northern Ireland will:

- send you a Hearing Granted letter that provides all the information you need regarding the Appeal process.

- send you a copy of the review decision evidence used by Compensation Services;
- inform you that you have a further 10 weeks to submit any additional evidence to the panel;
- send you a copy of any new evidence submitted by Compensation Services; and
- inform you of the date, time and location of your appeal hearing.

At the hearing, you will usually be told what the outcome is and will be provided with a decision notice. This will confirm the decision but will not give detailed reasons. Following the hearing, you are entitled to request, from the Criminal Injuries Compensation Appeals Panel for Northern Ireland, the reasons for their decision about your appeal (see '**Useful contacts**', **page 62**). Further information is available at <https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/articles/criminal-injuries-compensation-appeals-panel-northern-ireland>.

Criminal injuries received outside Northern Ireland

If you are applying for compensation for a criminal injury you received outside Northern Ireland, Compensation Services can tell you who you need to contact to make a claim, or you can apply directly by contacting the Criminal Injury Compensation Authority (<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/criminal-injuries-compensation-authority>).

Section 13

Further information

If you need any further information, please do not hesitate to contact the police officer in charge of your case or your single point of contact (case officer) in the Victim and Witness Care Unit. If you are a defence witness you should speak to the defence legal representative.

If you have been bereaved through murder or manslaughter, a specific Bereavement Pack is available to help you at this difficult time. Please ask your police Family Liaison Officer for it. You can also access the Guide to Northern Ireland's Criminal Justice System for bereaved families and friends following murder or manslaughter at www.justice-ni.gov.uk/publications/guide-northern-irelands-criminal-justice-system-bereaved-families-and-friends-following.

If you have been the victim of **sexual violence and abuse**, further information, help and contact details for specialist support organisations can be found through NI Direct, the official government website for Northern Ireland at www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/support-services-victims.

Information for victims of **domestic violence and abuse and hate crime** can also be found on the government website for Northern Ireland at www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/support-services-victims.

Information for victims of **human trafficking and modern slavery** can be found on the government website for Northern Ireland at www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/support-services-victims.

All the criminal justice organisations in this guide who provide information and services to you must recognise and treat you in a respectful, sensitive, tailored, and professional manner without discrimination of any kind. If they fail to do so, or fail to provide the services set out under the Victim Charter or the Witness Charter, you are entitled to have them look into the matter.

Full details of who to contact if you are not satisfied with how you have been treated can be found in both the Victim and Witness Charters. They can be found at <https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/doj/victim-charter.pdf> and <https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/justice/witness-charter.PDF>.

Section 14

Summary of terms used in the Guide

This section provides an explanation of the key words or phrases found in the Guide.

Acquittal

The decision of a court following a verdict or direction that the accused person is not guilty or where the case has been dismissed.

Appeal

An application to a higher court for a review of a decision (such as a conviction and/or a sentence) taken by a lower court, for example, a conviction made in a magistrates' court will be appealed to the County Court or, if on a point of law, to the Court of Appeal. The higher court may overturn or uphold the lower court's decision. Often, permission is required for an appeal to occur.

Bail (and bail conditions)

Bail is the conditional release of a suspect from custody, until his or her next appearance in court. This is usually subject to a surety being given and/or compliance with certain bail conditions, such as periodically reporting to a police station. Decisions on granting bail are a matter for the judiciary, who are independent. The law states that there is a presumption that the accused person will be granted bail, unless there are relevant and sufficient reasons to justify their continued detention (substantial grounds for believing that the accused will fail to surrender to custody, will interfere with witnesses or otherwise obstruct the course of justice or commit offences while on bail). Also see [police bail](#).

Barrister

A lawyer who represents a person as an advocate before a court (i.e. puts a case to the court on their behalf). A barrister speaks in court and presents the case before a judge or jury. Barristers specialise in courtroom advocacy and are sometimes referred to as Counsel.

Caution

A formal warning issued by a police officer or a facilitator from the police. A caution is recorded on a person's criminal record. It is sometimes referred to as a diversionary disposal.

Charge

A method for getting the defendant before the court e.g. charged to court with an offence.

Child

A person below 18 years of age.

Civil

Civil court cases arise where an individual or a business believes their rights have been infringed. These deal with ordinary private, rather than criminal matters.

Complaint

A formal accusation against a person alleging that they have committed a criminal offence.

Compensation

Money paid in respect of personal injury, loss or damage resulting from an offence.

Conviction

A finding of guilt in any criminal proceedings that a person has committed an offence.

Court of Appeal

A court which hears appeals against the decisions of lower courts.

Court

A body of people presided over by a judge, and acting as a tribunal in civil and criminal cases. There are different types of court in Northern Ireland. All criminal cases, even the most serious, such as murder begin in the magistrates' court.

Criminal conduct

Behaviour constituting a criminal offence as governed by the Home Office Counting Rules and the National Crime Recording Standard. These recording practices are followed and applied in Northern Ireland. For the purpose of the Guide criminal conduct is referred to as a crime.

Crown Court

The court in which trials in more serious (indictable) cases take place where criminal proceedings are usually heard before a judge and a jury. It hears the most serious cases.

Defence

The solicitor or barrister representing a defendant.

Defendant

A person who is accused in court of having committed an offence.

Entitlement

Service(s) that must be provided to victims of criminal conduct from the relevant service provider.

Evidence

Written or other material which is considered by a court when reaching a decision.

Family liaison officer

A police officer trained to work with bereaved families to secure their confidence and trust, to provide support and information about the investigation and support Services, and to gather information which contributes to the investigation.

Family member

This refers to one of the following:

- the spouse;
- the partner (including a civil partner or a person who lives with the other person as if they were husband and wife or as if they were civil partners);
- a relative in direct line:
 - son or daughter or person that the victim has or had parental responsibility for (as provided for under the Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995);
 - father or mother or person who has or had parental responsibility for the victim (as provided for under the Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995);
 - grandparent or grandchild;
- the brother or sister (siblings); or
- dependant;
of the victim.

A person will also be treated as a family member where the relationship is by marriage, blood or half blood. If the victim has died it will include a person that, immediately prior to their death, was living together with them as their spouse or partner.

Guardian

A person appointed to safeguard, protect and manage the interests of a person under the age of 18 or a person who is not able to look after their own affairs.

Guilty

A plea entered by the defendant that he or she has committed the offence. The court may also find the defendant guilty after hearing the evidence in the case.

Hate crime

Any criminal offence that is motivated by hostility or prejudice based on the victim's (actual or perceived) disability, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation or transgender identity.

Information

The posting of a letter, the making of a telephone call, a face-to-face meeting or the sending of an e-mail, fax, text message or any other communication method that the service provider considers is most appropriate.

Judge

A legally qualified person who administers the law and who has the authority to hear and try cases in a Court of Law. In this Guide a reference to a judge includes a reference to a District Judge (magistrates' court).

Jury

A group of 12 people who have been selected for the trial of a criminal case, to try the defendant(s) and reach a verdict on matters of fact according to the evidence presented in court.

Licence

This refers to when an offender is released from prison, is supervised by the Probation Board for Northern Ireland and will have to comply with certain conditions designed to protect the public, prevent reoffending and reintegrate the offender into the community.

Manslaughter

There are two types of manslaughter. Voluntary manslaughter is when all the elements of murder are present but the crime is reduced by reason of impaired

mental responsibility (known as diminished responsibility) or the existence of a suicide pact or the defendant's loss of control. Involuntary manslaughter is when the defendant did not intend to cause death or serious injury but caused the death of someone through an unlawful act or gross negligence involving breach of duty.

Murder

Unlawfully killing another person with the intent to kill or cause grievous bodily harm.

Needs assessment/Assessment of needs

An evaluation carried out by service providers to determine the kind of support that a victim may need following a crime. This process is used to identify any additional support, special measures or protection that a victim might need if they are going to be giving evidence in court and to help them do so.

Not guilty

The plea the defendant enters when they do not accept that they committed the offence. The court may also find the defendant not guilty after hearing the evidence in the case.

Offence

Any act contrary to criminal law or statute.

Offender

A person who committed a crime.

Ombudsman

An independent person who investigates complaints that individuals have been treated unfairly or have received poor service from certain service providers.

Alternative disposal

Alternatives to prosecution, such as cautions, informed warnings and penalty notices for disorder.

Plea

The defendant's formal response to the charge that they have committed an offence.

Plead

Where the defendant makes a formal response to the charge that they have committed an offence.

Police bail

When the police release a suspect from custody with or without being charged, but require them to return to the police station or to the court on another day. Also see [bail](#).

Pre-sentence report

A pre-sentence report may be requested by the judge to help them decide what sentence to give the offender. This is produced by the Probation Board for Northern Ireland,

Prisoner

A person convicted of crime(s) and given a sentence of imprisonment.

Probation

A court order that may be imposed by the court instead of sending someone to prison, or as well as sending the person to prison. This involves the offender being supervised by a probation officer in the community.

Prosecution

The term used when criminal legal proceedings are taken against someone. In Northern Ireland that role is performed by the Public Prosecution Service, sometimes referred to as the Prosecution.

Prosecutor

A lawyer employed or instructed by the Public Prosecution Service who conducts criminal prosecutions on behalf of the Director of Public Prosecutions.

Remand

Where an accused person is kept in custody or placed on bail pending a further court appearance.

Restorative justice

A process where those harmed by crime, and those responsible for the harm, are enabled to collectively resolve how to find a positive way forward. This is usually with the help of an impartial third party and is voluntary. Where the victim takes part they would freely consent to this.

Sentence

A punishment or penalty given to a person who pleads guilty or is found guilty by a court of an offence.

Sentencing

The process of passing the sentence on a guilty person. In all court cases only the judge can decide on the sentence given to an offender.

Service provider

A body required to provide services as set out in the Victim Charter and Witness Charter.

Solicitor

Member of the legal profession who advises clients and prepare their cases representing them in some courts.

Special measures

The various measures that a court can order to assist vulnerable or intimidated witnesses to give their best evidence in court, as set out under the Criminal Evidence (Northern Ireland) Order 1999. These measures include live video links, video recorded evidence, screens around the witness box and assistance with communication, including the use of an intermediary. The full list of special measures, with an explanation, is included in **Section 8** and at

www.ppsni.gov.uk/Branches/PPSNI/PPSNI/Files/Documents/Publications/Special%20Measures%20Leaflet.pdf

Statement

A written or video account about the facts and details of a crime or an incident.

Summons

Order to appear before, or to produce evidence to, a court.

Suspect

Someone who the police believe may have committed the crime.

Temporary release

A period of release from prison to which prisoners may be entitled, usually of short duration and as they near the end of their time in custody. This may be to help them prepare for their return to the community. Prisoners are subject to an assessment of their risk to the public and their likelihood of re-offending and must agree to comply with specified conditions. In certain circumstances prisoners can be released briefly on compassionate grounds (for example due to serious illness or the death of a family member).

Trial

The process in which the evidence in a case is presented in court so that a jury can decide whether or not someone who is accused of a crime is guilty.

Victim and Witness Care Unit

The Unit which provides information and support to victims and prosecution witnesses in cases progressing through the criminal justice system.

Victim information scheme

A statutory scheme allowing eligible victims to be given information on an offender's sentence or their release. It also allows them to make representations on conditions to which the offender may be subject on release.

Victim liaison officer

Probation staff who work with victims in the Victim Information Unit. They keep victims informed about key stages or events in the offenders' sentence and ensure victims' views and concerns are considered.

Victim support service provider

Organisations providing emotional and practical support services to victims of crime.

Witness

A person who can give evidence in a case. A victim of crime can also be referred to as a witness for the purpose of court proceedings and services.

Young person

A person below 18 years of age.

Youth conference

This aims to balance the needs of the victim and the young offender by agreeing plans of action which satisfy the victim and create opportunities for the young person to make amends and stop committing crime. The youth conference is delivered by the Youth Justice Agency.

Section 15

Useful contacts

Criminal justice organisations

Compensation Services

6th Floor, Millennium House
25 Great Victoria Street
Belfast, BT2 7AQ

Phone: 0300 200 7887

E-mail: compensationservices@justice-ni.x.gsi.gov.uk

Website: <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/contacts/contacts-az/compensation-services>

Criminal Injuries Compensation Appeals Panel for Northern Ireland

2nd Floor
Royal Courts of Justice
Chichester Street
Belfast
BT1 3JF

Tel: 028 90724823

Email: CICAPNIcustomer@courtsni.gsi.gov.uk

Website: www.nidirect.gov.uk/contacts/contacts-az/criminal-injuries-compensation-appeals-panel-northern-ireland-cipapni

Department of Justice

Victims and Witnesses Branch
Room A4.01, Castle Buildings
Stormont

Belfast, BT4 3SG

Phone: 028 9052 0550

Email: DOJVictW@justice-ni.x.gsi.gov.uk

Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service

Laganside House
23-27 Oxford Street
Belfast, BT1 3LA

Phone: 028 9032 8594

Website: www.nidirect.gov.uk/contacts/contacts-az/northern-ireland-courts-and-tribunals-service

Northern Ireland Prison Service

Prisoner Release Victim Information Scheme
Victim Information Unit
Unit 4, Wallace Studios

Wallace Avenue
 Lisburn, BT27 4AE
Phone: 0300 1233 269
E-mail: niprvis@dojni.x.gsi.gov.uk
Website: www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/victim-information-schemes

Police Service for Northern Ireland

65 Knock Road
 Belfast, BT5 6LE
Phone: Non-emergency call and general enquiries dial 101 (if you are a Tesco mobile or giffgaff user call 028 9065 0222). In an emergency dial 999
E-mail: info@psni.pnn.police.uk
Website: www.psni.police.uk
Crimestoppers: 0800 555 111

Probation Board for Northern Ireland Victim Information Unit

Unit 4, Wallace Studios
 Wallace Avenue
 Lisburn, BT27 4AE
Phone: 0300 1233 269
E-mail: victiminfo@pbni.gsi.gov.uk
Website: www.pbni.org.uk/what-we-do/victim-information-scheme/

Public Prosecution Service

Belfast & Eastern Region / Headquarters Sections
 Belfast Chambers
 93 Chichester Street
 Belfast, BT1 3JR
Phone: 028 9054 2444
E-mail: info@ppsni.gsi.gov.uk
Website: www.ppsni.gov.uk

Public Prosecution Service

Western Region
 Foyle Chambers
 35 Limavady Road
 Londonderry, BT47 6LP.
Phone: 028 7134 0648

Public Prosecution Service

Southern Region
 Newry Chambers
 1 Downshire Close
 Newry
 BT34 1FD
Phone: 028 3083 2500

Public Prosecution Service

Southern Region
 Omagh Chambers

2 Townhall Square
 High Street
 Omagh
 BT78 1BL
 Phone: 028 8224 4319

Victim and Witness Care Unit

Belfast Chambers
 93 Chichester St,
 Belfast, BT1 3JR
 Phone:028 9026 4690
 E-mail: wucubelfast@ppsni.gsi.gov.uk
 Website: www.ppsni.gov.uk

Victim and Witness Care Unit

Foyle Chambers
 35 Limavady Road,
 Londonderry, BT47 6LP
 Phone:028 7134 0632
 E-mail: wcufoyle@ppsni.gsi.gov.uk
 Website: www.ppsni.gov.uk

Youth Justice Agency (including Youth Conference Service)

41-43 Waring Street
 Belfast, BT1 2DY
Phone: 028 9031 6400
E-mail: info@yjani.gov.uk or info@yicsni.gov.uk
Website: www.nidirect.gov.uk/contacts/contacts-az/youth-justice-agency-northern-ireland

Voluntary sector bodies

<p>NSPCC Northern Ireland Divisional Office Block 1, Unit 7, Lanyon Building Jennymount Business Park North Derby Street York Road Belfast, BT15 3HN. Phone: 028 9035 1135 Website: www.nspcc.org.uk</p>	<p>NSPCC Child Protection Helpline If you are worried about a child and need advice. Phone: 0808 800 5000 E-mail: help@nspcc.org.uk</p>
<p>ChildLine Free and confidential 24-hour helpline for children in danger or distress. Phone: 0800 1111 Website: www.childline.org.uk</p>	<p>NSPCC Child Trafficking Advice Centre Phone: 0808 800 5000 Email: help@nspcc.org.uk Website: www.nspcc.org.uk</p>

Service for people who are deaf or hard of hearing text phone users: **Phone:** 0800 056 0566

NSPCC Young Witness Service

<p>NSPCC Young Witness Service Antrim Courthouse 30 Castle Way Antrim, BT41 4AQ Phone: 028 9448 7533</p>	<p>NSPCC Young Witness Service 1st Floor Laganside Court Oxford Street Belfast, BT1 3LL Phone: 028 9024 08473083 4849</p>
<p>NSPCC Young Witness Service 17-21 Bishop Street Londonderry, BT48 6PR. Phone: 028 7127 9555</p>	<p>NSPCC Young Witness Service Newry Courthouse 23 New Street Newry, BT35 6AD Phone: 028 3083 4849</p>
<p>NSPCC Young Witness Service Omagh Courthouse High Street Omagh, BT78 1DU Phone: 028 8224 7856</p>	<p>NSPCC Craigavon Centre, 9-10 Carn Drive Portadown, BT63 5WJ Phone: 028 3834 9381</p>

Victim Support Northern Ireland

<p>Victim Support NI Central Office 1st Floor, Albany House 73–75 Great Victoria Street Belfast, BT2 7AF</p>	<p>Phone: 028 9024 4039 Email: info@victimsupportni.org.uk Website: www.victimsupportni.com</p>
<p>Victim Support NI Belfast Hub 2nd Floor, Albany House 73–75 Great Victoria Street Belfast, BT2 7AF Phone: 028 9024 3133 E-mail: belfast@victimsupportni.org.uk</p>	<p>Victim Support NI Foyle Hub 6F Embassy Buildings 3 Strand Road Londonderry, BT48 7BH Phone: 028 7137 0086 Email: foyle@victimsupportni.org.uk</p>
<p>Victim Support NI Witness Service Antrim Court Office 30 Castle Way Antrim, BT41 4AQ Phone: 028 9448 8631 Areas: Antrim, Ballymena, Magherafelt</p>	<p>Victim Support NI Witness Service Belfast - Laganside Courts 45 Oxford Street Belfast, BT1 3LL Phone: 028 9023 2523 Areas: Belfast</p>
<p>Victim Support NI Witness Service Craigavon Court Office Central Way Craigavon, BT64 1AP Phone: 028 3834 3553 Areas: Craigavon, Armagh, Lisburn</p>	<p>Victim Support NI Witness Service Downpatrick Court Office 21 English Street Downpatrick, BT30 6AB Phone: 028 4461 6233 Areas: Downpatrick, Newry, Newtownards</p>
<p>Victim Support NI Witness Service Dungannon Court Office 49 Killyman Road Dungannon, BT71 6FG Phone: 028 8775 1550 Areas: Dungannon, Omagh, Enniskillen</p>	<p>Victim Support NI Witness Service Foyle Courts 17 – 21 Bishop Street Londonderry, BT48 6PR Phone: 028 7127 9440 Areas: L/derry, Strabane, Limavady, Coleraine</p>

There are many other voluntary organisations which exist to help victims. They are independent and provide their services free and in the strictest confidence. These include:

Domestic abuse and violence

24 Hour Domestic and Sexual Violence

Helpline Phone: 0808 802 1414 (Freephone)

Email: 24hrsupport@dvhelpline.org

Website: www.womensaidni.org

Text: Text 'support' to 07797 805 839.

Confidential, caring service 24/7, 365 days a year. Open to all women and men affected by domestic and sexual violence.

Domestic Violence Officers (PSNI)

Phone: 101 and ask to speak to a local domestic violence officer.

Domestic Violence Unit

Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety

Phone: 028 9052 0597

Men's Advisory Project (MAP)

5th Floor, Glendinning House

6 Murray Street

Belfast, BT1 6DN

Phone: 028 9024 1929

Email: info@mapni.co.uk

Website: www.mapni.co.uk

Relate

3rd and 4th floors, 3 Glengall Street

Belfast, BT12 5AB

Phone: 028 9032 3454

Email: office@relateni.org

Website: www.relateni.org

Women's Aid Federation NI

129 University Street

Belfast, BT7 1HP

Phone: 028 9024 9041

Email: info@womensaidni.org

Website: www.womensaidni.org

<p>Antrim, Ballymena, Carrickfergus, Larne and Newtownabbey Women's Aid</p>	<p>Armagh-Down Women's Aid</p>
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2 Cullybackey Road

Ballymena, BT43 5DF

Phone: 028 2563 2136

Email:

womensaidareaoffice@btconnect.com

7 Downshire Place

Belfast Road

Newry, BT34 1DZ

Phone: 028 3025 0765

Email:

newrywomensaid@btconnect.com

Website:

<p>Website: www.womens-aid.org.uk</p>	<p>www.womensaidarmaghdown.org</p>
<p>Belfast and Lisburn Women’s Aid 30 Adelaide Park Belfast, BT9 6FY Phone: 028 9066 6049 Email: admin@belfastwomensaid.org.uk Website: www.belfastwomensaid.org.uk</p>	<p>Causeway Women’s Aid 23 Abbey Street Coleraine, BT52 1DU Phone: 028 7035 6573 Email: womensaidcoleraine@btinternet.com Website: www.womensaidni.org</p>
<p>Fermanagh Women’s Aid 19 Darling Street Enniskillen, BT74 7DP Phone: 028 6632 8898 Email: womensaidfermanagh@btopenworld.com Website: www.fermanaghwomensaid.com</p>	<p>Foyle Women’s Aid Pathways, 24 Pump Street Derry, BT48 6JG Phone: 028 7141 6800 Email: info@foylewomensaid.org Website: www.foylewomensaid.org</p>
<p>Mid-Ulster Women’s Aid 7 Old Coagh Road Cookstown, BT80 8QG Phone: 028 8676 9300 Email: admin@midulsterwomensaid.org.uk Website: www.midulsterwomensaid.org.uk</p>	<p>North Down and Ards Women’s Aid Bangor Resource Centre 18 Bingham Street Bangor, BT20 5DW Phone: 028 9127 3196 Email: info@ndawomensaid.org Website: www.ndawomensaid.org</p>
<p>Omagh Women’s Aid 27 Market Street, Omagh, BT78 1EL Phone: 028 8224 1414 Email: info@omaghwomensaid.org Website: www.omaghwomensaid.org</p>	

Sexual abuse and violence

<p>Nexus NI Belfast Office 119 University Street Belfast Phone: 028 9032 6803 Email: info@nexusni.org Website: www.nexusni.org</p>	<p>Nexus NI Enniskillen Office 104 Irvinestown Road Enniskillen Co Fermanagh, BT74 6DN Phone: 028 6632 0046 Email: info@nexusni.org</p>
<p>Nexus NI Londonderry Office 38 Clarendon Street Londonderry, BT48 7ET Phone: 028 7126 0566 Email: info@nexusni.org</p>	<p>The Rowan Centre – Sexual Assault Referral Centre(SARC) Antrim Area Hospital 45 Bush Road Antrim, BT41 2RL Phone: 0800 389 4424 (Freephone) Email: therowan@northerntrust.hscni.net</p>
<p>24 Hour Domestic Violence and Sexual Abuse Helpline Phone: 028 3835 0588 Phone: 0808 802 1414 (Freephone) Email: 24hrsupport@dvhelpline.org Website: www.womensaidni.org Text: Text support to 07797 805 839</p>	<p>Victim Support NI Independent Sexual Violence Advocates Foyle Hub ISVA 6F Embassy Buildings 3 Strand Road Londonderry, BT48 7BH Phone: 028 7137 0086 Email: isva@victimsupportni.org.uk</p>
<p>Victim Support NI Independent Sexual Violence Advocates Belfast Hub ISVA 2nd Floor, Albany House 73–75 Great Victoria Street Belfast, BT2 7AF Phone: 028 9024 3133 E-mail: isva@victimsupportni.org.uk</p>	

Hate Crime Advocates

<p>LGB&T Advocacy Officer The Rainbow Project Belfast LGBT Centre 23-31 Waring Street Belfast BT1 2DX Phone: (028) 9031 9030 or 07904 864957 Email: advocacy@rainbow-project.org</p>	<p>Disability Hate Crime Advocate, The Maples Leonard Cheshire 3 Chief St Belfast BT13 3JT Phone: 028 9066 1281 or</p>
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	<p>07827318631 Email: terence.mccorry@leonardcheshire.org</p>
<p>Racial Hate Crime Support Worker Migrant Centre NI Ballynafeigh Community Development Association 283 Ormeau Rd Belfast BT7 3GG</p> <p>Phone: 07827 299347 Email: lingualsupportworker@migrantcentreni.org</p>	<p>Racial Hate Crime Support Worker Migrant Centre NI North West office Migrant Centre NI The Old Church Clarendon Street Derry/Londonderry BT48 7ES</p> <p>Phone: 07827 297119 Email: nikki@migrantcentreni.org</p>
<p>Emma Barronwell Hate Crime Coordinator</p> <p>Victim Support NI Albany House 73-75 Great Victoria Street Belfast BT27AF</p> <p>Phone: 028 9024 3133 Email: hatecrime@victimsupportni.org.uk</p>	

Human Trafficking and Modern Slavery

24 Hour Domestic Violence and Sexual Abuse Helpline

Phone: 0808 802 1414 (Freephone)

Email: 24hrsupport@dvhelpline.org

Website: www.womensaidni.org

Text: Text 'support' to 07797 805 839

Modern Slavery Helpline

Phone: 0800 0121 700

Website: www.modernslavery.co.uk

Salvation Army

Phone: 0300 303 8151 (confidential referral hotline)

Email: info@salvationarmy.org.uk

Website: www.salvationarmy.org.uk/modern-slavery

Migrant Help

Charlton House
 Dour Street
 Dover
 Kent, CT16 1AT
Phone: 01304 203 977 or 0808 8000 630 (24 hour helpline)
Email: mhl@migranthepline.org
Website: www.migranthepluk.org

NSPCC Child Trafficking Advice Centre (for professionals)

Phone: 0808 800 5000
Email: help@nspcc.org.uk
Website: www.nspcc.org.uk/ctac

Citizens Advice

Website: www.citizensadvice.co.uk
www.citizensadvice.co.uk/pages/bureaux/

<p>Antrim District Farranshane House Ballygore Road Antrim, BT41 2RN Phone: 028 9590 6505</p>	<p>Ards 75 West Street Newtownards, BT23 4EN Phone: 0300 123 9287</p>
<p>Armagh 9 McCrums Court Armagh, BT61 7RS Phone: 028 3752 4041</p>	<p>Banbridge District 77 Bridge Street Banbridge, BT32 3JL Phone: 028 4062 2201</p>
<p>Belfast Merrion Business Centre 58 Howard Street Belfast, BT61 6PJ Phone: 0300 1233 233 Email: amyinbelfast@citizensadvice.co.uk</p>	<p>Carrickfergus Unit 1, 11 Antrim Street Carrickfergus, BT32 7DG Phone: 028 9600 1333</p>
<p>Causeway 24 Lodge Road Coleraine, BT52 1NB Phone: 028 7034 4817</p>	<p>Cookstown 7-11 William Street Cookstown, BT80 8AX Phone: 028 8676 6126</p>
<p>Down District Ballymote Centre 40 Killough Rd Downpatrick Phone: 0300 30 30 306</p>	<p>Dungannon 5-6 Feeney's Lane Dungannon, BT70 1TX Phone: 028 8676 6126</p>
<p>Fermanagh Fermanagh House Broadmeadow Place Fermanagh, BT74 7HR</p>	<p>Larne The Market Yard 2 Station Rd Larne, BT40 3AA</p>

USEFUL CONTACTS SECTION 15

Phone: 028 6632 4334	Phone: 028 9600 1333
Lisburn Bridge Community Centre 50 Railway Street, Lisburn, BT28 1XP Phone: 028 9266 2251	Londonderry Embassy Court 3 Strand Road Derry, BT48 7BJ Phone: 028 7136 2444
Lurgan Mount Zion House Edward Street Lurgan, BT66 6DG Phone: 0300 123 3233	Newtownabbey Dunanney Centre Rathmullan Drive Newtownabbey, BT37 9DQ Phone: 028 9590 6505
Newry and Mourne Ballybot House 28 Cornmarket Newry, BT35 8BG Phone: 0300 30 30 306	North Down Bangor Bangor Community Hub 39a Hamilton Road Bangor, BT20 4LF Phone: 0300 1233 9287
North Down Holywood Queens Hall Sullivan Place Holywood, BT18 9JF Phone: 0300 123 9287	Portadown Portadown Health and Care Centre Tavanagh Street Portadown, BT62 3Bu Phone: 0300123 3233
Strabane 17 Dock Street Strabane, BT82 8EE Phone: 028 7138 2665	

Age Sector Platform Merrion Business Centre 58 Howard Street Belfast, BT1 6PJ Phone: 028 9031 2089 Email: info@agesectorplatform.org Website: www.agesectorplatform.org	Age NI 3 Lower Crescent Belfast, BT7 1NR Phone: 0808 808 7575 Email: info@ageni.org Website: www.ageni.org
Alternatives (a restorative justice organisation) Northern Ireland Alternatives 64 Woodvale Road Belfast, BT13 3BT Phone: 028 9031 1420 Email: tom@alternativesrj.co.uk	Alzheimer's Society Unit 4, Balmoral Business Park Boucher Crescent Belfast, BT12 6HU Phone: 028 9066 4100 Email: nir@alzheimers.org.uk Website: www.alzheimers.org.uk
Barnardo's Safe Choices	Migrant Centre NI

<p>230b Belmont Road Belfast, BT42 2AW Phone: 028 9065 8511 Email: Jacqui.montgomery@barnardos.org.uk</p>	<p>127-131 Ormeau Road Belfast, BT7 1SH Phone: 028 9043 8962</p>
<p>Disability Action Portside Business Park 189 Airport Road West Belfast, BT3 9ED Phone: 028 9029 7880 Email: hq@disabilityaction.org Website: www.disabilityaction.org</p>	<p>Northern Ireland Council for Racial Equality c/o NICRE 7 Rugby Road, Belfast, BT7 1PS Mobile: 07710 767235 Email: patrick@nicre.org Website: https://nicre.org/</p>
<p>Queer Space 1st Floor, Old War Memorial Building 9-13 Waring Street Belfast, BT1 2DX Phone: 028 9066 4111 Email: info@queerspace.org.uk Website: www.queerspace.org.uk</p>	<p>Rainbow Project Belfast Office 1st Floor, Old War Memorial Building 9-13 Waring Street Belfast, BT1 2DX Phone: 028 9031 9030 Email: info@rainbow-project.org Website: www.rainbow-project.org</p>
<p>Rainbow Project Foyle Office Orlan House 20 Strand Road Londonderry, BT48 7AB Phone: 028 7128 3030 Email: info@rainbow-project.org Website: www.rainbow-project.org</p>	<p>Sure Start Service (outreach, family support and childcare service that some victims with young children are directed to) Website: www.nidirect.gov.uk/sure-start-services</p>
<p>The Law Society of Northern Ireland 96 Victoria Street Belfast, BT1 3GN Phone: 028 9023 1614 Email: info@lawsoc-ni.org Website: www.lawsoc-ni.org</p>	<p>The Samaritans 5 Wellesley Avenue Belfast BT9 6DG Phone: 028 9066 4422 Email: jo@samaritans.org Website: www.samaritans.org</p>

If you have been a victim of crime in the Republic of Ireland, you may want to get help from the following.

The Crime Victims Helpline
Email: info@crimevictimshelpline.ie
Website: www.crimevictimshelpline.ie

There are many other voluntary organisations and government agencies which may be able to provide the help you need. The organisations listed above will help to put

you in touch with them. Victim Support NI in particular has a database of organisations offering support services.