

Violence

Information from
Victim Support

What is violence?

Up to two and a half million people are assaulted or threatened every year.

Threats and verbal abuse are forms of violence, just as much as physical attacks. Violence can happen anywhere - at home, in the street, in clubs and pubs, and at work. Some types of violence, such as domestic violence and racist attacks affect particular groups of people. Often, violence is carried out by someone the victim knows.

Being threatened or assaulted is a frightening experience. No one should have to live in fear. Many people are shocked at how strongly they are affected by being threatened or assaulted. The effects can last a long time, particularly if you are afraid you will be attacked again.

It can be very difficult to talk about having been hurt by violence, but most people find that it helps to talk to someone who understands.

How Victim Support can help

Victim Support is an independent national charity for people affected by crime. We help thousands of victims of violence every year. Our volunteers are specially trained to give information, practical help and emotional support to people who have been threatened or assaulted.

The service is confidential, free and available to everyone.

Victims of crime are usually put in touch with Victim Support by the police. But you can also contact us directly, whether or not you want to report the crime to the police and regardless of when the crime happened.

If you do decide to report the attack, our volunteers can, if you want, accompany you to the police station and to court. They can give you information about court procedures and applying for compensation. They can also help you to contact other organisations if you need different kinds of help.

If you are the relative or the friend of someone who has been threatened or assaulted you can also get help from us.

People who are injured

If you have been injured in an attack it is always sensible to seek medical attention. Sometimes you can be hurt more badly than you realise, especially if you are in shock.

If you are unable to work because of your injuries you should tell your employer. Your employer may ask you to fill in a self-certification form or to get a sick note from your doctor or the hospital to show that you are unwell.

You may be entitled to Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) if you are sick for four days or more. Your employer may pay you more than this depending on your contract of employment.

More information about benefits is available from the Benefits Agency (local office and freecall telephone numbers are listed in the phone book) or your local Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB).

Reporting the crime to the police

The decision about whether or not to report the crime to the police is yours. It may help to talk this over with someone, such as a Victim Support volunteer, first.

If you want to claim Criminal Injuries Compensation you must have reported the attack to the police straight away (there is more information about compensation later on in this leaflet). Otherwise you can report the attack later, if you decide to.

The police may take a statement from you and should tell you if someone has been arrested and cautioned or charged.

Always tell the police if your attacker threatens or bothers you again, and even if you are just afraid that they might. This information may be important for

decisions about, for example, the offender's bail application.

When the police charge someone, they pass the evidence to the Crown Prosecution Service who then decide whether to take the case to court.

Going to court

If your case is taken to court, it may be several months before a date is set. Most cases are heard in the magistrates' court. Some more serious cases are heard in the Crown Court.

If the person charged with the offence pleads guilty, you may not be called to give evidence but you should be told the date of the court case and you can attend the hearing, if you wish.

If the person pleads not guilty, you will normally be asked to attend court to give evidence about what happened. The police will tell you if you need to appear in court as a witness. If this happens you don't have to go to court alone, you can usually take a friend or relative with you.

Victim Support runs the Witness Service in every criminal court in England and Wales. The service provides support and information for victims and witnesses about what happens in court.

The Witness Service can arrange visits to the court so that you can look around before the trial. They can also find you somewhere quiet to wait before and during the hearing, and they can help with other things such as expense claims forms.

You will receive a leaflet called *Going to court* about the Witness Service when you are called to give evidence in court.

Compensation

As a victim of violence you may be eligible for Criminal Injuries Compensation, but the crime must normally have been reported to the police without delay. Victim Support can give you further information about claiming compensation and help you to fill out the application form.

There may be other ways you can get compensation. The courts have the power to order the person who attacked you to pay you compensation, and you should be asked by the police about how the crime has affected you so that the court has information to decide about this.

Alternatively, you may be able to take out a private prosecution or sue the person in a civil court to get compensation. You should get legal advice from a solicitor if

you plan to do this. The costs involved in making a claim will vary. Find out how much you might have to pay before entering into any agreement.

Release of offenders

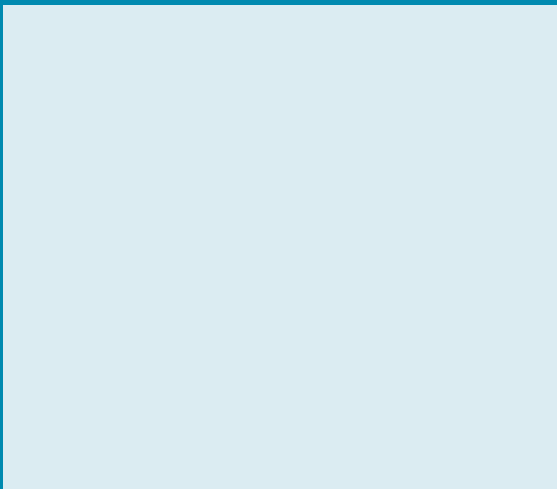
If the offender is sentenced to one year or more in prison, you should be asked by the Probation Service if you want to be told when he or she is to be released. You can express any concerns you may have about this. Your concerns may affect the conditions of the offender's release. You should receive a leaflet about this from the police after the offender is sentenced.

If you would like support at that time, your local Victim Support branch can help.

For more information about Criminal Injuries Compensation

Criminal Injuries Compensation
Authority,
Tay House, 300 Bath Street,
Glasgow G2 4LN
Freephone: 0800 358 3601
www.cica.gov.uk

Contact your local Victim Support branch



Victim Supportline can also put you in touch with your local Victim Support branch.

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