How we can help

Victim Support is an independent charity that offers free and confidential support to anyone affected by crime and traumatic incidents.

We will listen with compassion and tailor our support to you.

We can work with you to understand the impact of the crime, and where you may want further support. Our help could include speaking to the police, accessing legal advice, financial support or mental health services.

We also provide opportunities for you to share your experience with others, such as the media, or to help other victims.

Telling the police

We are independent of the police and will support you whether or not you've reported the crime to them.

If you decide you want to report it, we can give you information about what to expect and support you through the process.

Diversity matters and we value it

We are committed to supporting the needs of the diverse communities we serve. We can provide interpreters and information in alternative formats. If you have additional needs please let us know so we can put the right support in place.

Supportline: 08 08 16 89 111

Your local Victim Support:

Devon & Cornwall
0300 303 0554

We are an **independent** charity offering **free**, **confidential** support to people affected by crime and traumatic incidents.

For information and support, contact us by:

- calling: Supportline **08 08 16 89 111**
- using our 24/7 live chat service: **victimsupport.org.uk/live-chat**
- using BSL: **victimsupport.org.uk/bsl**
- Online: **victimsupport.org.uk**

To find out how you can help us, visit **victimsupport.org.uk/get-involved**

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VICTIM SUPPORT

SUPPORTING VICTIMS OF CRIME

Information and advice for supporting someone who has experienced a crime or traumatic incident



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The impact

People who've experienced a crime or traumatic event may be going through a range of emotions. These can change over time, as they process what's happened.

Having people to provide support during this time can be extremely valuable.

Victims might be feeling:

- overwhelmed or confused
- helpless
- frustrated and angry
- in shock or numb
- upset.

The impact of crime varies from person to person. There's no time limit on the way they may be feeling.

Starting a conversation

If you suspect someone you know has been a victim of crime, there are ways of exploring this with them further.

For example, you might notice a change in their behaviour, they may be acting more distant than usual or avoiding talking about certain topics. They may make statements that are unusual for them, or appear more tired.

It's important for victims to feel they have someone to talk to who they can trust and who will listen empathetically.

Avoid rushing them to talk before they're ready. Instead, approach them when you are both somewhere private and gently ask if something has happened.

If they disclose a crime has happened, it's ok not to know what to say. Many people just want someone to listen and believe what they are saying, giving them space to talk openly.

Let them work through the conversation at their own pace. Avoid pushing them for details if they are not ready to talk about it.

Even starting the conversation about crime can be incredibly difficult, so it's important not to push them.

Victim blaming

Victim blaming happens when a victim is held responsible in some way for a crime or traumatic incident that's happened to them.

When talking to someone who's experienced crime, be aware of the language you're using. Many victims may fear the reaction from those around them, and take negative comments to heart. Consider how you can support someone in a non-judgemental way.

Using language such as: 'You shouldn't have got drunk' or 'What were you wearing at the time?' implies the victim is responsible for what happened and does nothing to reassure or comfort them. Instead, try asking 'Would you like to talk about what has happened?' or 'Is there anything I can do to help?' You can also help to validate their feelings by saying 'That sounds awful, this is not your fault'.

If a child is groomed online, don't punish them by taking their phone away or grounding them. This implies the crime was their fault and they have something to be ashamed of. Instead, they should feel safe to talk about what has happened.

How you can support someone

You may feel frustrated or sad that you can't help to resolve everything, or stop someone feeling bad. However, any support you can provide, in whatever form is appropriate, is worth it.

You could offer someone a safe space to talk about what happened or how they are feeling.

You could offer to help with practical things, such as helping around the house, childcare, or making appointments and phone calls for them.

They may feel overwhelmed with certain tasks or knowing who to talk to.

Our online resource My Support Space has guides for both victims and those supporting them, including how to talk to a child after crime.

To create your free account visit:
mysupportspace.org.uk/moj

Looking after yourself

Crime is difficult for everyone. It can be distressing to hear that something has happened to someone you know.

Make sure you are aware of how you are affected. Help from Victim Support is available to anyone affected by crime.