



Reporting sexual offences


Information and support guide

What will this leaflet tell me?

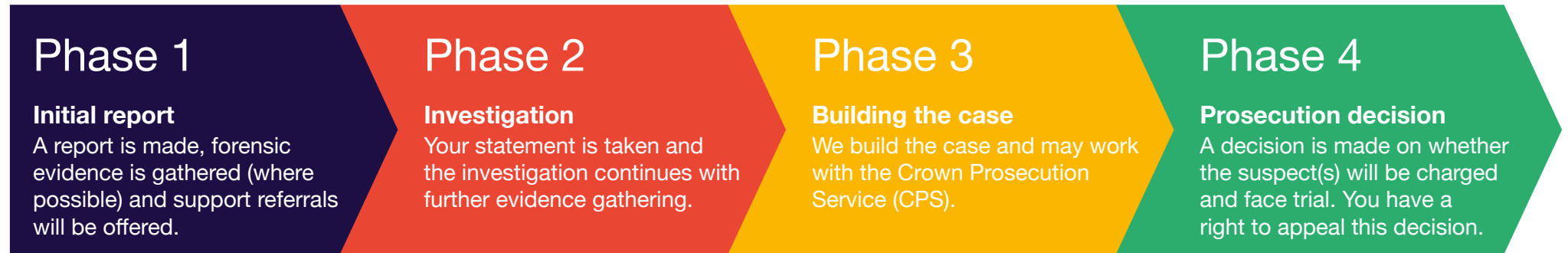
This leaflet will help you to understand:

- The four stages of a police investigation [page 4](#)
- Answers to Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) [page 10](#)
- How to report sexual assault and rape that happened some time ago. [page 20](#)
- How to access support services..... [page 22](#)
- Investigation word terminology in the Glossary section [page 24](#)



This booklet is interactive
For ease of navigation, please click on the items listed above or the hyperlinks at the bottom of each page. 

The four stages of a police investigation



Phase 1

Once a report has been made to the police, they will first take any necessary action to ensure your safety. You will then be asked to give an initial account of what has happened to you.

If there could be any recent forensic evidence to collect, you may be asked to complete a medical examination at a Sexual Assault Referral Centre (e.g. The Solace Centre) but only if it is necessary, and only with your consent.

These activities in Phase 1 mean that the police can start their investigation, secure vital evidence, and protect you and other people from further harm. Please be aware in most cases this will involve arresting the suspect

The police will offer to refer you to a specialist support service, for example, an Independent Sexual Violence Advisor (ISVA) who can support you throughout the criminal justice process. If you wish, the ISVA (or other support specialist) can act as your single point of contact with the police and witness support.

You can also self-refer to these support services, listed on page 22 of this booklet.

Phase 2

After your initial report, you will be asked to give a formal statement. This is sometimes called an Achieving Best Evidence (ABE) statement. You will be asked to recall the events surrounding

your report in as much detail as possible to help the investigation.

With your consent, the ABE will be video-recorded and if the case goes to trial, it can be played in court instead of you having to give your account in person.

The police will also continue their investigation. For example, they may ask for your consent to secure evidence from your phone or social media or ask you about relevant records held by other organisations such as your GP or social services. If you are asked to give your consent to share this information, you can ask the police further questions about the process or speak with others (such as an ISVA) to help inform your decision.

The activities of Phase 2 will give police more information about the crime you have reported. During this phase you will be kept updated about the progress of your case, and you can continue to access independent, confidential support, including pre-trial therapy.

During this phase you may find that there is a lot of contact and this may be from different people (we try to keep this to the minimum). This can be due to the information we require as the investigation progresses.

Phase 3

At this point, it may feel like things slow down. The police will be aiming to build the strongest case possible

against the suspect, which often takes many months. You should still be kept regularly updated about the progress of your case. If there is enough evidence, the police will ask the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) to assess the evidence in the case. The CPS then decides whether or not a suspect should be charged and prosecuted in court. Whatever the outcome, by the end of Phase 3 the investigation will normally be completed.

Please be aware that during this phase your Officer in the case or single point of contact may change (we try to keep this to the minimum).

Phase 4

In Phase 4, all the available evidence is assessed thoroughly, and a decision is made about whether there is enough evidence for the case to go to court.

At this stage, the case might be closed if it is decided there is not enough evidence available for there be a realistic prospect that the suspect could be convicted. A case may also be closed if a prosecution is prevented or “not in the public interest”, e.g. if the suspect is too old or sick to stand trial. This is a decision that will be made by the Crown Prosecution Service based on the evidence received.

If you do not agree with this decision, you are entitled to seek a review under the Victim’s Right to Review (VRR) Scheme (see page 29).

If it is decided there is enough evidence to take the case to court, you can receive support from an ISVA and the Witness Liaison service throughout the trial process.



After the trial, the accused could be found guilty, not guilty or in some cases there is no result as the jury could not agree an outcome on the evidence they saw. In this case you will be consulted about a retrial. If the accused is found guilty, they may receive a sentence from the court. The court can order different types of punishment, and in some cases this may not result in a prison sentence.

To inform the sentencing decision, a Victim personal statement (VPS) will

be requested and provides you with an opportunity to describe how the crime committed has affected you.

The VPSs can include:

- Any physical, financial, emotional or psychological injury you have suffered and/or any treatment you have received as a result of the crime;
- If you feel vulnerable or intimidated;
- If you no longer feel safe;
- The effect on your family;
- How the quality of your life has changed on a day-to-day basis;
- If you need additional support, for example, if you are likely to appear as a witness at the trial; and
- The continued effect of the crime on your life.

This initial and any further VPS may be taken later, during the court process, but it must be made before the defendant is sentenced. The decision to provide a VPS is yours, however if you choose not to make one when initially offered, some cases (for example, early guilty plea cases) may be dealt with very quickly by the courts, and the opportunity to have your say may be lost.

Once a VPS is made, it becomes part of the court papers, meaning it can't be altered or withdrawn. The police should always explain that the VPS

will be shared with the CPS, and also the defence, if the case goes to court.

If the offender goes to prison, the probation service can continue to manage this person with conditions once they are released. The Witness Liaison service is responsible for keeping you informed of when the offender will be eligible for parole. Whatever the outcome of the case, both the police and support agencies will support you throughout this process.

Safety

In addition to these four stages of the investigation, the police will also be conducting other work to ensure your safety and the safety of others.

This will involve conducting risk and safeguarding assessments, as well as looking at other opportunities to disrupt suspects, such as applying for civil orders. Your information could contribute to these other avenues for preventing future offending, both in the UK and abroad.

There are also personal civil orders that you can apply for. You can ask your dedicated ISVA or officer if you want to know more about these processes.



A small group of the Surrey Police Sexual Offence Liaison Officers from the SOIT Team

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Common questions asked about the stages of the investigation...

Q What happens at the forensic medical examination?

A If you are reporting a very recent rape or sexual assault (e.g. which has taken place up to seven days from the offence taking place dependant on the type of offence), the police might suggest you undergo a medical examination to collect forensic evidence. If a forensic medical examination is needed and you consent to having it, this will take place at The Solace Centre a Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC). Although you can report sexual assault at any time, there is only a limited timeframe in which medical forensic evidence can be taken. To help preserve forensic evidence you should avoid washing, eating, or drinking prior to the forensic examination. You can shower and change your clothes at The Solace Centre.

At the Solace Centre, you will be supported through the medical examination process. A forensic nurse or doctor will carry out the examination. They are specially trained to do this as sensitively as possible. You can request to see a female or a male nurse or doctor. The nurse or doctor will take your medical history and explain fully what will happen, for example, the use of swabs. The purpose of the examination is firstly to ensure your medical welfare, and secondly to record any injuries and take evidential samples which may assist the investigation. You can choose to participate in the medical examination and then decide at a later date if you wish to share the evidence collected with the police. Please discuss this with a Crisis Worker at the Solace Centre if you wish to explore this option.

Q Will I be supported through a Police investigation?

A Surrey Police have a team of SOLO's (Sexual Offence Liaison Officers). Introduced in October 2019, covering between 07:00 and 20:00 daily and will be there to support those victims who make reports that'll be investigated by SOIT (Sexual Offence Investigation Team). They will engage with the you and they will support and assist with the journey through the criminal justice system and keep you informed in conjunction with your ISVA through all the stages. On other investigations you will be asked if you would like the support of Surrey Police Witness and Victim Care Unit who will support, update and keep you informed.

Q Will you need to download my phone or social media?

A The police have a legal duty to investigate "all reasonable lines of enquiry", this means gathering all information directly relevant to the crime, and this sometimes includes downloading relevant information from your phone or social media. If

a phone/social media download is required, the officer will seek your written consent to access your phone and will provide you with written information explaining what specific data they want to access and why. If this is required the Officer in the Case will discuss this with you and clarify what they are looking for, they will then arrange a date when your device can be examined. Dependent upon the circumstances, your device may be examined at a time and location convenient to you, however your device may need to be examined in a digital laboratory. If this is the case, the police will not take your phone for longer than 24 hours to download the necessary information. Whilst they have your phone you will be offered a basic loan phone (this is not necessarily a like for like). If a suspect is charged, any information that may be used by the prosecution in court, including phone and social media data, must be provided to the defence and therefore can become known to the suspect. If you are asked to give your consent to share this information, you can ask the police further questions about the process or speak with others (such as an ISVA) to help you decide.

Q How will my Data be kept and disposed of?

A Police forces have a statutory responsibility to comply with the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA) and UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR). Any data downloaded from your device will be kept on Surrey Police secure server or on a secure digital medium, such as an encrypted DVD. It will be handled, stored and retained securely in accordance with Management of Police Information (MoPI) Authorised Professional Practice (APP) policy issued by the College of Policing.

The retention of the data will be in line with the guidance laid out in the above policies. Phone downloads in crimes of a sexual nature have a retention period of 10 years. If stored on a disc, we would retain the disc for the 10 years, at this point it would be shredded on site, unless specifically requested for the investigation or for court purposes to be kept longer. Digital copies, for example those kept on our digital record management system Niche, get deleted in line with MoPI above.

Q Will the suspect have their phone taken?

A This will depend on the case. The police have a legal duty to investigate all reasonable lines of enquiry, which may include downloading and reviewing relevant information on the phone of any suspect.

Q What happens if I do not want to give the police access to my phone, social media, medical records, or similar personal records they have requested?

A If a suspect is charged and the case goes to trial, the defence could suggest that you were hiding something if there is a reasonable suspicion that there is relevant information in your records or on your digital devices, such as your phone. The police will only download or access your phone, social media or other personal records with your consent, and only take what is directly relevant to the crime. If you do not wish to give officers access to this information, the officer will discuss with you your reasons for not handing over your

phone/disclosing particular records and will try to address your concerns. It may be that your reasons will be brought up in court to explain why the police did not obtain information from your phone. If you are asked to give your consent to share this sort of information, you can ask the police further questions about the process or speak with others (such as an ISVA) to help inform your decision.

Q Who do police need to contact as part of the investigation and who is told I have reported a crime to the police?

A The police take great care in protecting the anonymity of victims and witnesses of crime. If there are witnesses in your case, the police may contact them and they may have to tell some of the witnesses your name if gathering information about your case is impossible without doing so. If a suspect is interviewed, the police will need to tell the suspect your name. It is against the law for anyone to publish your name or details that might identify you (including on social media), as those who report sexual offences are automatically given the right to anonymity for life.

Q How long does it take to complete the investigation?

A There is no fixed timeframe, but police investigations can be lengthy, and will take months rather than weeks. In a small number of cases the investigation can take much longer, for example where new evidence comes to light or there are delays in obtaining relevant evidence. If the suspect is charged and the case goes to court there can be a further lengthy wait for a court date.

Code of Practice for Victims of Crime in England and Wales - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-code-of-practice-for-victims-of-crime/code-of-practice-for-victims-of-crime-in-england-and-wales-victims-code>

The police officer leading the case (OIC) will keep in contact with you and you will also receive contact from the victim and witness care team before a court case.

Q Will I have to go to court?

A If a suspect is charged and pleads “not guilty” it is very likely that you will be asked to give evidence in court. There are so-called “Special Measures” in place to make giving evidence in court easier for you, for example, by giving evidence from behind a screen or via a live video link. Other Special Measure options can include the pre-recorded ABE (Phase 2) being played in court instead of you giving your statement in person, you giving evidence in private by having the public gallery cleared, and the use of interpreters or intermediaries to help you give your evidence. These special measures will be discussed together with you ahead of time to ensure the measures in place are tailored to your personal needs. If you wish, you will also be able to visit the court before the trial and have a look around, and have the court process explained to you. Your ISVA as well as the Witness Service can support you before and during the trial.

You can watch this video to see what it is like to be a trial witness in a Crown Court (this video does not include the ‘Special Measures’ mention above).

www.youtube.com/watch?v=tZYvvs5R-s

Q What do the CPS (Crown Prosecution Service) do?

A CPS are committed to securing justice for victims of sexual violence and the linked guide explains what you can expect from the criminal justice system if you decide to report what has happened to the police. This information applies to all victims of sexual violence - including women and girls and men and boys.

CPS Victims Guide
<https://www.cps.gov.uk/rasso-guide/rasso-victims-guide>
Crown court witness video
<https://www.victimsupport.org.uk/courtroom-support/>

The police take great care in protecting the anonymity of victims and witnesses of crime.



General questions asked about reporting sexual offences...

Q I'm not sure I want to report to the police. Is there someone I can talk this through with?

A Reporting to the police can feel daunting and you do not have to report to them. If you would like to talk though your decision before reporting to the police, you can contact the ISVA service through RASASC (details on page 23) or the Solace Centre (sexual assault referral centre, SARC) to discuss this confidentially.

Q Am I doing the right thing by reporting to the police?

A Every report is valuable. Even if you decide that you do not wish to participate in a full investigation or criminal prosecution, making a formal statement to police can still be helpful. Your report could still help protect you or others from (further) harm, identify potential serial perpetrators, and build a better understanding of crime, even if what you are reporting happened a long time ago. Once you have reported a crime, you can

withdraw your complaint at any time. You do not have to go through with a full police investigation or prosecution in court if you do not want to. Either way, the information you provide to the police can still be used to identify crime patterns, dangerous locations or serial perpetrators, especially if you are able to give the police a formal statement. It is important to note that the police have a duty to keep people safe and in some cases that will mean that we may carry on the investigation and the suspect may be arrested and questioned.

Q What are my rights as a victim of crime?

A As a victim of crime, you have rights and entitlements when you report your crime to the police. For example, you have a right to have your crime recorded without undue delay, to be provided with information about the investigation, to be referred to support services, and to make a Victim Personal Statement that lets you explain to the court and the offender how the crime has impacted you. If you are unhappy with how you are

being treated by the police or with the decision made in the case, you have a right to make a complaint or have your case reviewed. These rights are set out in the Code of Practice for victims of Crime in England and Wales. You can find more information here: www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-code-of-practice-for-victims-of-crime/code-of-practice-for-victims-of-crime-in-england-and-wales-victims-code

Q Where can I find support services, and can I receive therapy?

A You can receive independent, confidential therapy at any stage of the report process, including while the investigation is ongoing. Your officer in the case can refer you to a specialist independent service such as RASASC. They can advise you on what can happen to you notes if the case goes to court and if you consent can share you notes with police if required.

If your case goes to court, the police will have to let the Crown Prosecution Service know that you received therapy, and they may request access to relevant parts of the counselling notes, which may then be disclosed to the defence. You can discuss any concerns you might have about the

possibility of counselling notes being disclosed with your therapist and counsellor and Fundamentally, it is important for you to get any help you need as soon as you need it, rather than waiting until the investigation is completed. RASASC are an independent service that you can self-refer to for counselling, advocacy and support without coming to the police (please see page 23 for details).

Q Can I talk to my friends and family about the case? Can I talk to other people?

A To protect the integrity of your evidence it is very important that you do not discuss the details of what you have told the police with anyone else. You can tell family and friends about how you are feeling so they can support you.

Q Will this be in the news?

A It is against the law for anyone, including journalists, to publish your name or any details that might identify you, including on social media. This is because those who report sexual offences to the police are automatically

given the right to anonymity for life. If you go to trial, courts are open to the public and there may be a reporter present who wishes to report on the case, but the media are not allowed to publish your name or any information that might identify you.

Sometimes the police put out a press release about a case where it is thought to be in the public interest (e.g. seeking witnesses or other potential victims), but you cannot be named publicly by the police. The police take the protection of your anonymity very seriously and are experienced in protecting victim anonymity.



You have taken the bravest of steps. Whilst everything may seem unfamiliar and daunting, you can absolutely do this. You do not have to face this alone, help is available to guide and support you. Please just ask.

Take good care, rest when you need, cry when you must and be kind to yourself throughout.

Heidi, survivor

Q I am finding the investigation traumatic and stressful. Is there support I can access?

A Reporting a sexual offence to the police is not easy, and sometimes the police investigation can bring back traumatic memories and be emotionally difficult. The police will refer you to a special support service in Phase 1 of the investigation, who you can discuss your concerns and experiences with. ISVAs are experienced in helping victims of sexual offences through the criminal justice process and are there to support you. You can also contact the special support services listed on page 23.

Q If I no longer want to go through with the investigation, can I stop the process or take my report back?

A You can withdraw your support of the investigation at any time. You do not need to continue participating with the police investigation or support a prosecution if you do not want to. You can always request for your case to be reopened at a later point if you later change your mind. Even if you do not wish to progress with the investigation, every report made to

the police can help them learn about offenders, crime patterns, dangerous locations, and might help them to identify serial perpetrators and prevent them from causing further harm. Telling the police the reason why you no longer want to carry on can help them improve how they support victims of crime. It is important to note that the police have a duty to keep people safe and in some cases that will mean that we may carry on with the investigation and the suspect may be arrested and questioned.

Q My case has been closed without the suspect being charged. Can I challenge the decision?

A Yes. The Victim Right to Review scheme means you are entitled to have the decision explained to you, and to have it reviewed if you wish. If it is the police who decided to close the case you can appeal the decision and request a review. This must be done within three months of the decision being made. If the police close your case you will receive a formal letter that explains the decision, which will also contain information about how you can appeal. If the police have referred the case the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) and the CPS have decided not to charge, the

Victims Right to Review (VRR) scheme also entitles you to a review of this CPS decision. If you decide to make use of your VRR, the prosecutor who has made the decision to close your case will meet with you to explain their decision, and the CPS must review the decision. Your ISVA will be able to support you through this process. You can find more information here: www.cps.gov.uk/legal-guidance/victims-right-review-scheme

Q How do I complain if I am unhappy with how the police treated me or handled my report?

A You can file a complaint against Surrey Police on their website: www.surrey.police.uk

If you are not satisfied with the outcome of your complaint or do not wish to complain directly to the police force handling your case, you can contact the Victims Commissioner appointed by the government to represent the voices victims and witnesses of crime. victimscommissioner.org.uk

How to report sexual assault and rape that happened some time ago

You can report a sexual assault or rape that happened at any time, even if this was many months, years or decades ago. The police take every report seriously, no matter how much time has passed. The police understand that there are lots of reasons why someone might delay telling anyone about what has happened, including the police. The police know it is common for victims to take time to realise that what has happened is a crime or, for a number of reasons, they may not feel ready to report to police right away.

To report a sexual offence, you can use a dedicated online portal on the Surrey Police website. www.surrey.police.uk/ro/report/ras/alpha-v1/v1/rape-sexual-assault-other-sexual-offences/. You will be asked a few questions to establish how best we can help you. A specialist officer will arrange to visit you in person to explain your options and how an investigation could proceed. You can report an offence on behalf of yourself, someone else or anonymously. You can also call the police on 101 to make a report.

Every report is valuable. Even if you decide that you do not wish to participate in a full investigation or criminal prosecution, making a formal statement to police can still be helpful. Your report could still help protect you or others from (further) harm, identify potential serial perpetrators, and build a better understanding of crime, even if what you are reporting happened a long time ago.

It is important to note that the police have a duty to keep people safe and in some cases that will mean that we may carry on with the investigation and the suspect may be arrested and questioned.

The police will support you throughout the process and will offer you a referral to specialist support. There is more information about how to access support on the next page.

A photograph of a man with short brown hair and a light beard, wearing a light blue button-down shirt over a white t-shirt. He is sitting at a white table, looking off to the side with a thoughtful expression. He has a green pen in his right hand, resting his chin on it. In his left hand, he holds a white smartphone. On the table in front of him are a pair of glasses and an open notebook. A speech bubble is drawn over the top left of the image, containing the text: "You don't have to have it all figured out to move forward." The background is a blurred indoor setting, possibly a cafe or office.

You don't have to have it all figured out to move forward.

Accessing support

It is always your choice. If you decide not to report you can still seek advice and support from services for survivors of sexual violence.

If you have been a victim of sexual assault or rape you can access specialist support. These support services are free of charge and open to anyone, and you do not need a referral or to have reported to police to access them.

These services can support you in a variety of ways, including offering a confidential discussion if you are thinking of making a police report but want to discuss it, or supporting you through the investigation and court process if you decide to report to the police.

Alternative reporting options

You can also make an anonymous report to the police through the Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC), called the Solace Centre, or the Independent Sexual Violence Advisor (ISVA) Service, RASASC, rather than going directly to the police.

The SARC can also collect forensic medical evidence without police involvement and store it, giving you the option of making a formal police report at a later time if you choose to do so.



RASASC - Rape & Sexual Abuse Support Centre

We are a charity that support survivors of all genders over the age of 13 from across Surrey, who have been raped, sexually abused or have had an unwanted sexual experience.

Tel: 01483 546400

www.rasasc.org



Solace Centre

We Listen. We Hear. We offer free support and practical help to anyone in Surrey who has experienced sexual violence and/or sexual abuse.

Tel: 01932 867 581 or 0300 130 3038

Email: surrey.sarc@nhs.net

www.surreysolace.org



Surrey domestic abuse helpline

Tel: 01483 776822

www.healthysurrey.org.uk/domestic-abuse/help/rape-and-sexual-abuse-support



Victim & Witness Care Unit

The Victim and Witness Care Unit is open from 8am to 5pm Monday, Wednesday and Friday. 8am to 7pm Tuesday and Thursday.

Tel: 01483 633949

www.victimandwitnesscare.org.uk



The Survivors Trust

A society that acknowledges, supports, and advocates for men and non-binary people who have been affected by rape or sexual abuse.

Tel: 08088 010818

www.thesurvivorstrust.org



Survivors UK

Tel: 020 3322 1860

www.survivorsuk.org



STARS (Sexual Trauma: Assessment, Recovery, Support)

STARS are a Mindworks Surrey multi-disciplinary trauma focused team who offer a CISVA (Child Independent Sexual Violence Advisor) and therapy service for children, young people and their families who have been affected by sexual abuse.

Tel: 01372 203096

Email: rxs.sabpstars@nhs.net

<https://www.mindworks-surrey.org/our-services/intensive-interventions/sexual-trauma-assessment-recovery-and-support-stars>

Glossary

This section includes words and terms you may come across if you report, or are thinking of reporting an experience of sexual assault or rape to the police. Always let the police or support services you are engaging with know if there is anything you don't understand, or if you have any questions. It is their job to explain the criminal justice process to you.

A

Achieving Best Evidence (ABE)

An ABE is a formal statement that you will give the police in Phase 2 of the investigation. You may be asked to recall in as much detail as possible what has happened, and answer a few questions. With your consent this statement is video-recorded rather than written down by a police officer. If your case goes to court, a video recorded ABE can be played in court instead of you giving your evidence in person, which many victims find easier.

Affirmation/oath

A declaration that someone is required to give before they give evidence in court, to swear that what they say will be the truth.

An oath is a religious version of this sworn on a holy book, whilst an affirmation is non-religious.

Age of consent

The age of consent is the age at which a person is considered to be legally competent to consent to sexual acts, and is thus the minimum age of a person that another person is legally permitted to engage in sexual activity with.

In England and Wales this age is 16 years.

Age of criminal responsibility

This is the minimum age at which a person can be arrested and charged with a crime. In England and Wales this age is 10 years.

Assault by penetration

This is a sexual assault where by the perpetrator penetrates the victim with either a body part or an object, without reasonable belief that the victim has consented; for example, using hands or fingers.

B

Bail conditions

After a suspect is arrested for a crime, if they are granted bail they may be allowed to go home or to a different, specific address until the date of their trial. They will only be released if they promise to adhere to bail conditions such as not contacting certain people, or reporting to a police station at certain times.

Barrister

A lawyer who presents the case in court. Both the defence and the prosecution will have a barrister. In criminal cases, barristers might wear robes and wigs, as often seen on TV. 'Special measures' allow you to ask for these wigs and robes to be removed in court if you find them intimidating or distressing.

C

Civil Orders

There are lots of different types of civil orders. These could be orders that you can take out yourself, such as a non-molestation order or a restraining order. There are also civil orders that the police can apply for that aim to disrupt repeat offending by imposing conditions on a person who has demonstrated a pattern of concerning behaviour, such as a Criminal Behaviour Order.

Consent

This means you giving your permission for something to happen; consent should be informed and willing, having the freedom to consent means having the freedom to choose and knowing nothing bad will happen to you if you decline. Having the capacity to consent means that an individual should be able to understand the implications and consequences of their choice, and be able to communicate this choice to another.

Court

A building where trials take place. One court house will often have several court rooms within it, so more than one trial will likely take place within the building in a single day.

Cross-examination

The questioning of a witness/victim during the trial by the barrister representing the opposite side, e.g. when the prosecution barrister asks questions of the defendant, or the defence barrister asks questions of the victim.

Crown Prosecution Service (CPS)

An independent group of lawyers who decide whether cases brought by the police will go on to court; CPS will then prepare cases which are going forward to trial.

D

Defendant

A person who has been accused of a crime and is standing trial.

E

Evidence

This may be anything which helps to prove or explain the events which have led to a trial.

I

Independent Sexual Violence Advisor (ISVA) and RASASC (Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Centre)

Specialist advisors who give independent help, advice and support to victims of rape or sexual assault, regardless of whether they want to report to the police or not. The ISVA service is part of RASASC who are an independent service that can help with specialist counselling, advocacy and support (please see page 23 for details).

Initial Statement

This is the first statement victims give to the police when they first make their report. It may be quite brief, i.e. telling the officer what happened, where, and providing any details known about the suspect.

Intermediary

An intermediary is to help vulnerable victims and witnesses (for example who might have a learning difficulty, mental health condition or are a child/young person) communicate with the police, prosecution service or in court. They are registered professionals who specialise in communication skills and are likely to have background in psychology, speech and language therapy, social work or mental health.

J

Judge

The person who oversees a trial and ensures that everything is happening according to the law; the judge may also determine a sentence for those who are found guilty of a crime.

Jury

A group of twelve members of the public, who are randomly selected, to listen to all the evidence presented throughout a trial. They will decide whether the defendant is guilty, or not guilty.

O

Officer in Case (OIC)

A police officer who leads the investigation process in a case.

P

Perpetrator

The person, or people, who have committed a criminal offence.

Plea

An accused person's formal reply to a charge in a criminal court, the choices being guilty or not guilty.

Police Investigation

After a crime is reported the process of a Police Investigation may begin, where the police begin to collect evidence and speak with witnesses and suspects.

Pre-trial preparation hearing

A hearing that takes place in court after someone is charged with an offence, during which they must enter a plea to each of the charges listed. Other administrative duties will also be dealt with by both barristers during this hearing in order to get the case ready to go to trial. The victim is not required to attend.

Pre-trial visit

An optional visit to a court for a victim or witness before the date of the trial, in order to familiarise themselves with the building and facilities.

Prosecution

The prosecution is the team who present the witness' case, and work towards prosecuting the alleged perpetrator.

R

Rape

When one person penetrates the mouth, vagina or anus of another individual with his penis, without the reasonable belief that that person is consenting, or able to consent. Examples of not being able to consent is being under the age of consent (under 16) or being too intoxicated to consent.

Remanded in custody

When a person has not yet been convicted of a crime but is detained in a prison until a trial or sentencing hearing takes place. Should the individual be found guilty the judge will subtract the time they spend on remand from their sentence.

Restraining order

A court order issued to prohibit an individual from carrying out a particular action for a certain period of time, especially approaching or contacting a specified person.

S

Sentence

the penalty given to an individual who has been found guilty of a crime, at the end of the court process.

Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC)

This is a place where victims may go to shortly after an incident of rape or sexual assault in order to have a medical examination by specialist medical professionals. During the examination some victims may agree to have physical evidence collected from their body. A SARC can provide victims with medical support including emergency contraception, and may also provide counselling or advocacy. Victims of sexual assault or rape can also go to a SARC to have medical forensic evidence taken without having reported to police, and the SARC can store it in case the person wants to make a formal complaint to police at a later date.

Suspect

A person who has been accused, or is suspected, of having committed a crime, and who is under police investigation.

T

Trial

The process where evidence is presented to a jury, who then find an individual to be guilty or not guilty.

V

Verdict

A jury's final decision about whether the defendant is guilty, or not guilty, is also called the 'verdict'. When the jury has decided they will deliver their verdict to the judge, who will then decide on the appropriate sentence.

Victim

An individual who a crime has happened to; in court this person might also be called the complainant.

Victim's Code of Practice

An official document that sets out victim's rights and sets minimum standards organisations such as the police and the CPS have to provide to victims of crime.

Victim Personal Statement (VPS)

Read out/played after sentencing of perpetrator if he/she is found to be guilty. This is a statement detailing the victim's point of view on how the crime has affected them. It is up to the victim to decide if she/he wants to give a VPS and wants it read out/played.

Victims Right to Review (VRR)

A scheme that entitles victims of sexual offences to have a police or CPS decision to close the case without charging a suspect explained to them and have the decision reviewed.

W

Witness

A person who is asked to give evidence in court, about something they may have witnessed or been told about.

Witness Care Officer (WCO)

Witness care officers are allocated to cases when a suspect has been charged and the case is going to trial. WCOs are responsible for ensuring victims and witnesses are informed about dates of court hearings and court hearing outcomes.

Witness Liaison

see Witness Care Officer

Witness Service

A team of staff based in the court whose job is to support prosecution witnesses, and their families and friends, to deal with the experience of going to court and giving evidence.

Officer contact details and notes

Occurrence/crime number:

Officer name:

Contact email address:

Phone contact number:

Your notes:



surrey.police.uk | Follow us on     @SurreyPolice