

Victim and witness care and support

This page is from APP, the official source of professional practice for policing.

First published 20 October 2020 Updated 25 March 2021

Written by College of Policing

6 mins read

Victim and witness care and support should be considered from an early stage in an investigation. This will help to build victim confidence in the criminal justice system and willingness to support the investigation and prosecution. It will also facilitate applying for special measures.

Investigators should consider:

- [**Code of Practice for Victims of Crime**](#).
- [**victim personal statements \(VPS\)**](#), taking into account changes in the victim's emotional and physical needs. See also [**Community impact statements**](#).
- referrals to [**Victim Support services**](#).
- [**victim information packs**](#), which can be read after the officer has left. See the True Vision website for resources. Generic victim publications that don't address the impact of hate crime should be avoided as they may be seen as impersonal and could cause offence.
- Victim Supportline is a national 24/7 service run by [**Victim Support**](#), providing confidential emotional support and practical advice to victims. Contact details: telephone 08 08 16 89 111; TextDirect access number 18001 08 08 16 89 111; they can also be contacted via [**email, online**](#) or via their [**live chat service**](#). For those who aren't ready, or do not wish to speak to someone, they can access interactive self-support guides on [**My Support Space**](#).
- [**family liaison**](#).
- [**special measures**](#).
- reasonable adjustments for victims with disabilities, under the Equality Act 2010.
- [**witness care units**](#) provide a single point of contact (SPoC) for victims and witnesses, minimising the stress of attending court and keeping them up to date with any news in a way that is convenient to them.

Victims should be kept informed at all stages of the investigation. In particular, they should be told if and when a suspect is released under investigation (RUI), charged and/or released on bail.

Investigators should continue to review the victim's needs throughout the investigation as the victim's outlook and reaction may change over time, including their attitude towards necessary support.

For further information see:

- [Victim and witness care](#)
- [Working with victims and witnesses](#)

Risk management

See also [Risk assessment](#).

A risk assessment should not be done in isolation, it should be accompanied by appropriate risk-management interventions with regular needs assessments as the investigation progresses or the victim's needs change.

Interventions will depend on the circumstances and the particular environment in which the hate crime is occurring. They may include:

- issue of personal attack alarms
- issue of evidence capturing devices
- use of local CCTV
- issue of mobile telephones
- introducing or maximising neighbourhood watch schemes
- rehousing victims
- obtaining civil injunctions, community protection orders (CPO) or criminal behaviour orders against offenders

Arresting suspects, where there is evidence to justify doing so, can be the most effective way to manage risk and prevent repeat incidents. Where suspects are released on pre-charge bail, conditions can be used to manage risk.

In addition to repeat victims, there may be other recurring factors in hate crimes, such as specific location. Early identification of trends and effective problem-solving should help to prevent future victims from being targeted.

The level of risk should be monitored and subject to regular reviews, with interventions that adapt to the prevailing situation, provide reassurance and reduce the likelihood of further victimisation. A record of this risk assessment should be kept to ensure openness and accountability.

An appropriate tool to understand and respond to risk is the RARA model.

R	Remove the risk: by arresting the suspect and obtaining a remand in custody.
A	Avoid the risk: by rehousing the victim and/or significant witnesses or placing them in a refuge or shelter in a location unknown to suspect.
R	Reduce the risk: by joint intervention or victim safety planning, target hardening and use of protective legislation.
A	Accept and manage the risk: by continued reference to the RARA model, continual multi-agency intervention planning, support and consent of the victim, and offender targeting within proactive assessment and tasking pro forma and multi-agency public protection panel format.

See also [Partnership working](#).

Witness intimidation

If there is reason to believe that **witness intimidation** may occur in a specific case, proactive steps should be taken to protect the witness(es). This may include:

- home and mobile alarms
- mobile 999 telephone
- surveyed and enhanced home security

- measures to capture evidence of intimidation
- provision of escorts
- targeting of suspects
- [special measures](#)

The witness should understand what action to take, and whom to contact 24 hours a day. These measures should be discussed at an early meeting between the police and the CPS.

Note: victims and witnesses of hate crimes are more likely to feel vulnerable or intimidated because of the type of offending against them. In addition to the legal meaning of witness intimidation, the witness's feelings towards the criminal justice process should also be taken into account. The prospect of giving evidence can be intimidating in itself. It is important that the witness is made to feel as comfortable as possible with the process. See [Witness care units](#).

Tags

Hate crime