beacon
Hertfordshire victim care centre

"Hertfordshire is a safe county but even one victim is one too many..."

Information for Victims of Crime in **Hertfordshire**

Your Crime Reference No

Please contact us for more information on 0300 011 5555

catch 22

David Lloyd
Police and Crime Commissioner
for Hertfordshire

HERTFORDSHIRE CONSTABULARY

This booklet is designed to give you all the information you might need

14914 Herts Beacon - Victims of Crime Booklet - Generic.indd 1 24/11/2017 10:01

14914 Herts Beacon - Victims of Crime Booklet - Generic.indd 2 24/11/2017 10:01

Contents

Welcome Messages	4
About this Booklet	5
What Happens Next	6
Your Entitlements under the Victims' Code	8
Support: Beacon, Hertfordshire's Victim Care Centre	10
Stages of the Criminal Justice System	12
Making a Victim Personal Statement	14
Business Impact Statement	15
Young Victims	16
Vulnerable Adults	17
Alternatives to Court	18
The Court Process - Going to Court	19
Victims' Right to Review	21
Compensation and Financial Support	22
Restorative Justice	24
How to Make a Complaint	25
Victims' Voice	26

14914 Herts Beacon - Victims of Crime Booklet - Generic.indd 3 24/11/2017 10:01

A message from David Lloyd, your Police and Crime Commissioner for Hertfordshire



Being a victim of crime can be a traumatic and sometimes a life changing event. I want you to feel confident in the support you will receive after you have reported a crime to the police.

This booklet is designed to help people affected by crime understand the services accessible to them in Hertfordshire and what you can expect from the police and others whose job it is to help you.

Here in Hertfordshire, a range of local services are available through a dedicated unit called Beacon, Hertfordshire's Victim Care Centre.

Victims of crime have a number of rights and entitlements under the national Code of Practice for Victims' of Crime. These are set out within this booklet.

If you have any comments or questions about the service you receive, in the first instance, please speak to the police officer dealing with your case. If this is not practical, then contact Beacon. You can also record your views using the Victims Voice survey on the Beacon website.

A message from Charlie Hall, your Chief Constable for Hertfordshire



At Hertfordshire Police, we all recognise that being a victim of crime can be a stressful time and we understand that the impact of the crime will differ from person to person. Our officers and staff are able to deal with all aspects of your investigation and will keep you updated with any developments as they arise.

I want you to feel confident that Hertfordshire Police will ensure that you are offered support with both your emotional and practical needs and will provide you with the best possible service at all times.

By working closely with our criminal justice partners we hope to achieve a satisfactory outcome for you and your family. This booklet has been written with you in mind and I hope you find it useful and informative. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the officer looking after your case.

I want you to feel reassured that you don't have to face this situation on your own; there are teams of staff who are ready to help you every step of the way.

14914 Herts Beacon - Victims of Crime Booklet - Generic.indd 4 24/11/2017 10:01

About this Booklet

This information booklet is designed to give an understanding of what to expect throughout your journey as a victim of crime. It outlines your rights and the contact and support you can expect to receive from agencies within the Criminal Justice System.

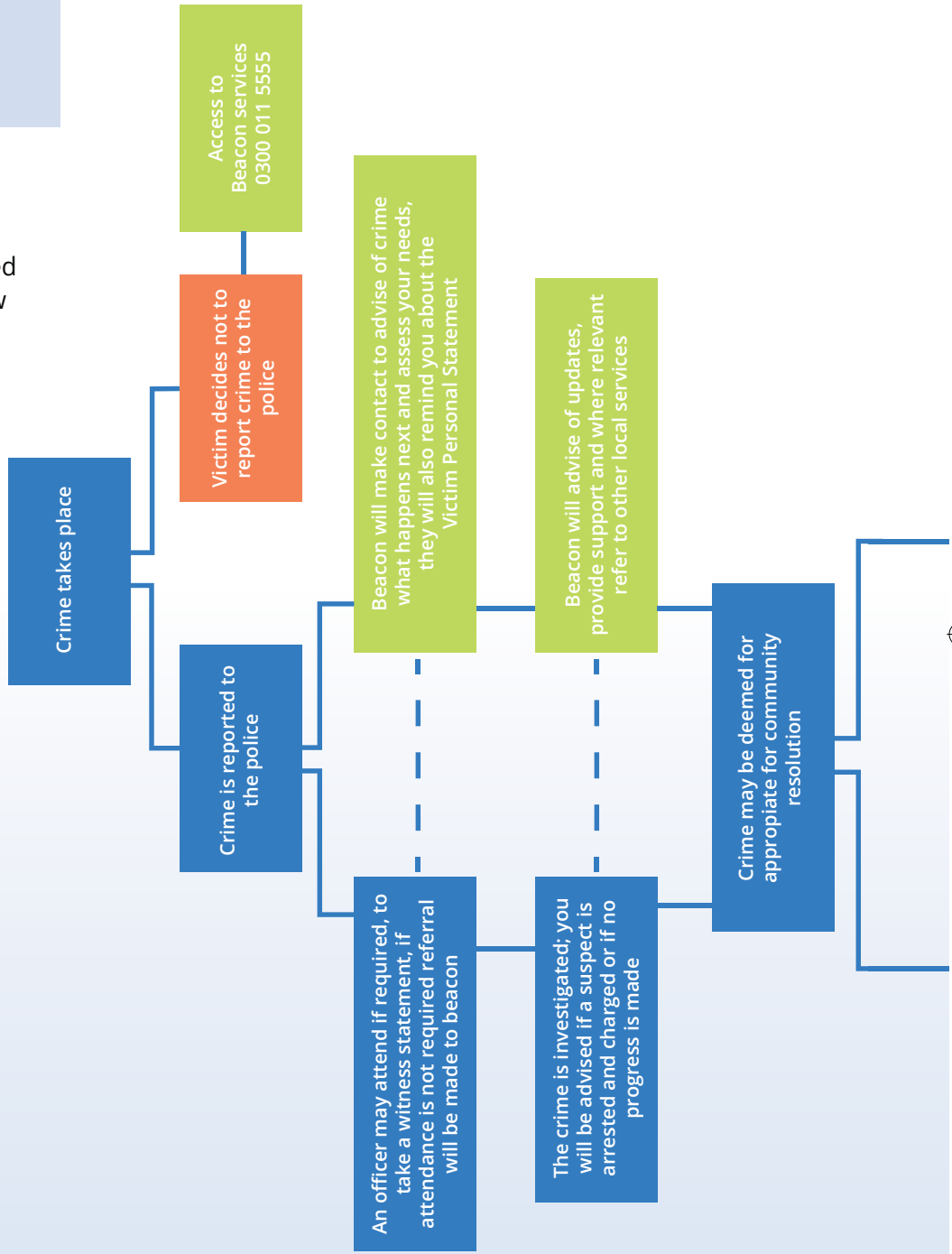


It is important to remember that it is OK to feel angry or upset about the crime that has taken place. All of the above emotions and many more are completely normal and expected reactions to the event. Some emotions you might feel straight away whilst some you might experience later on. All of your emotions are valid and there are support services available to help you with them.

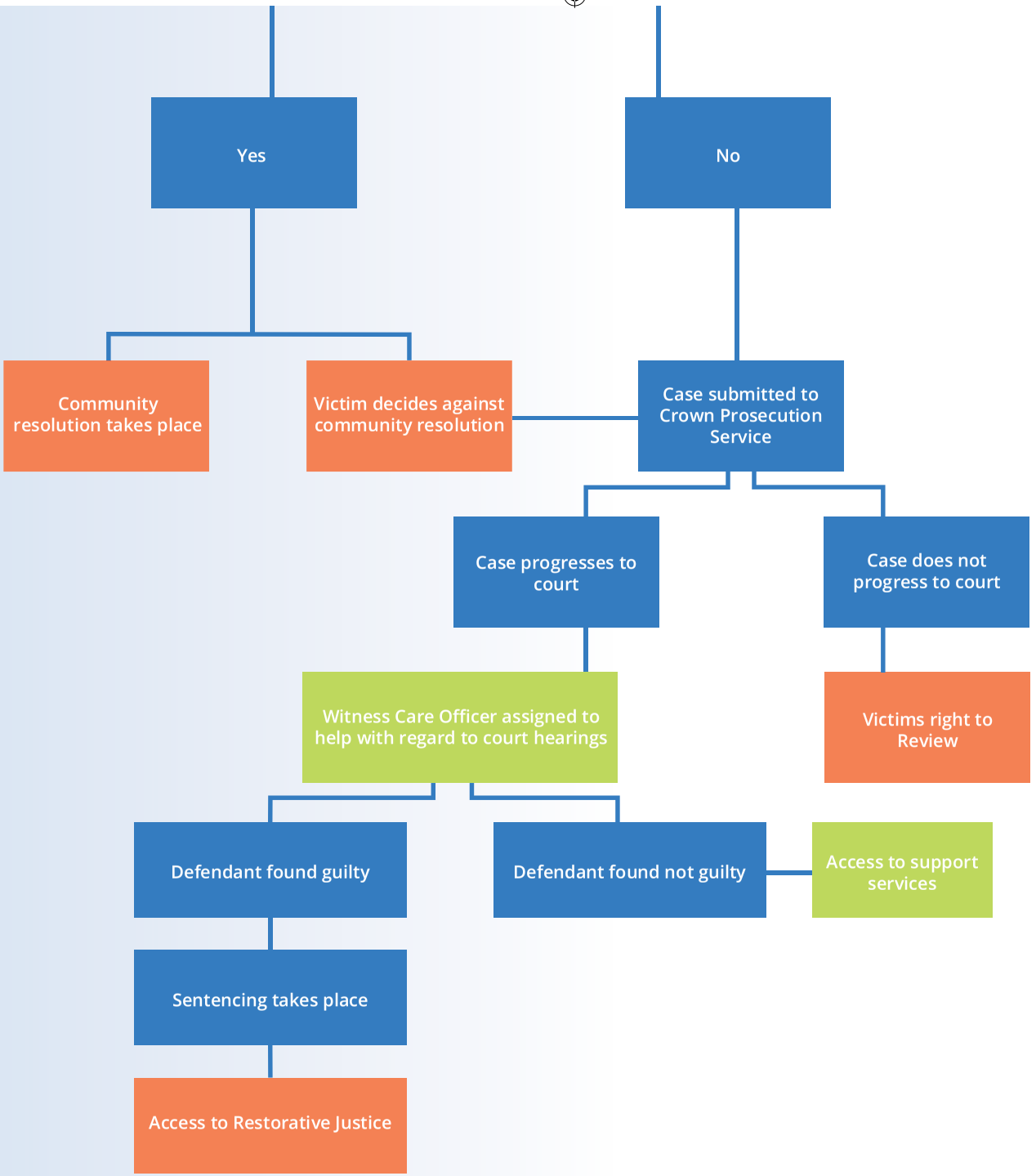
14914 Herts Beacon - Victims of Crime Booklet - Generic.indd 5 24/11/2017 10:01

What Happens Next

For many, being a victim of crime is an overwhelming experience – the following chart has been designed to give you a brief and clear overview of the possible outcomes.



14914 Herts Beacon - Victims of Crime Booklet - Generic.indd 6 24/11/2017 10:01



14914 Herts Beacon - Victims of Crime Booklet - Generic.indd 7 24/11/2017 10:01

Your Entitlements under the Victims' Code



The Code of Practice for Victims of Crime sets out the minimum levels of service which victims can expect from agencies that are signatories to it. Under the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime, you are entitled to support from criminal justice agencies even if you don't report the incident to the police. You are also entitled to support if you are a close relative of somebody who has been killed as a result of a crime.

Under the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime you are entitled to:

A written acknowledgement that you have reported a crime, including the basic details of the offence.	An enhanced service if you are a victim of serious crime, a persistently targeted victim or a vulnerable or intimidated victim.	Information on what to expect from the Criminal Justice System.
A needs assessment to help work out what support you need.	Be informed about the police investigation, such as if a suspect is arrested and charged and any bail conditions imposed.	Be referred to organisations supporting victims of crime.
Make a complaint if you do not receive the information and services you are entitled to, and to receive a full response from the relevant service provider.	Receive information about Restorative Justice and how you can take part.	Seek a review of the police or Crown Prosecution Services (CPS) decision not to prosecute in accordance with the National Police Chiefs Council (NPCC) and CPS Victims' Right to Review schemes.

14914 Herts Beacon - Victims of Crime Booklet - Generic.indd 8 24/11/2017 10:01

Make a Victim Personal Statement (VPS) to explain how the crime affected you.	Be informed if the suspect is to be prosecuted or not or given an out of court disposal.	Be informed of the time, date and location and outcome of any court hearings.
Be informed if you need to give evidence in court, what to expect and discuss what help and support you might need with the Witness Care Unit.	Arrange a court familiarisation visit and enter the court through a different entrance from the suspect and sit in a separate waiting area where possible.	Meet the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) advocate and ask him or her questions about the court process where circumstances permit.
Be informed of any appeal against the offender's conviction or sentence.	To opt into the Victim Contact Scheme (VCS) if the offender is sentenced to 12 months or more for a specified violent or sexual offence.	Apply for compensation under the Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme.

A more comprehensive list of entitlements can be found within the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime, which can be located on www.gov.uk

14914 Herts Beacon - Victims of Crime Booklet - Generic.indd 9 24/11/2017 10:01

Beacon, Hertfordshire's Victim Care Centre

What is Beacon Victim Care Centre?

Beacon is Hertfordshire's Victim Care Centre and is staffed by professionals from both Hertfordshire Constabulary and Catch22. At Beacon, our primary focus is to help you cope and recover from your ordeal. Our team of dedicated and trained professionals will support you every step of the way.

What happens after a crime?

If you have reported the crime to the Police, you will automatically be contacted by the Victim Service Team who will advise you of:

- Your Crime Reference Number
- What happens next
- The services available to you

As part of the Victims' Code, Beacon staff aim to keep you updated in a way that suits you so you know what is happening with your investigation.



When and how Beacon will contact you

You should be updated within 5 working days if a suspect is;

- Arrested
- Released without charge
- Considered for a change in bail conditions
- Interviewed under caution
- Released on police bail

You will be asked how you would like to be notified of progress with your crime and how often you would like to be updated.



14914 Herts Beacon - Victims of Crime Booklet - Generic.indd 10 24/11/2017 10:01

Emotional and Practical Support



If you have been a victim of a crime and would like help and support, but you do not want to report the crime to the police, you are still entitled to the services Beacon can provide.

Under the Victims' Code of Practice, some victims have personal circumstances that entitle them to additional support.

A needs assessment will be offered, which will take into account the impact and harm caused by the crime including any physical, emotional, psychological or financial hardships caused.

They will develop a package of support tailored to your needs and if you wish, act as your advocate.

Where necessary, this can include a referral on to partners who have specialist skills and knowledge; however, rest assured this can only happen with your approval. Your Victim Care officer will keep in touch to ensure you are happy with the support you receive and discuss the options open to you.

To contact Beacon please call 0300 011 555. The Beacon helpline is open between 8am and 8pm Monday to Friday and 9am - 5pm on Saturdays..

At Beacon, we'll give you all the emotional and practical support you need.

14914 Herts Beacon - Victims of Crime Booklet - Generic.indd 11 24/11/2017 10:02

Stages of the Criminal Justice System



There are a number of agencies within the Criminal Justice System who you may encounter who will work on your behalf.

The information here outlines what you can expect from the different agencies involved in the Criminal Justice System and when you can expect them to contact you.

The Police

- Provide you with a crime reference number
- Take statements from you and witnesses
- Identify if you are vulnerable and/or intimidated
- Provide updates to you throughout the investigation
- Inform you of the role of the Witness Care Unit

Beacon and other Support Services

- Give you non-judgement support and advice, whether you choose to report the crime or not
- Discuss and assess your needs
- Provide practical and emotional support
- Other support in court
- Assist with Victim Personal Statements

The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS)

- Determine whether the case is heard in court
- Apply for special measures for the court, if required
- Ensure the prosecutor introduces themselves to you, where appropriate, and present the case in court
- If the case is discontinued they will write to you with a full explanation

The Witness Service

- Arrange a court familiarisation visit so you know what to expect
- Meet you on the day at the court and take you to a witness service room
- Provide support on the day of the trial

The Witness Care Unit (following the first court hearing)

- Inform you of any outcomes, for example, if the offender pleads not guilty, the trial date and court location
- Keep you updated as the case progresses, including any final outcome
- If the sentence is over 12 months, you will be given the opportunity to become involved in a Victims Contact Scheme

14914 Herts Beacon - Victims of Crime Booklet - Generic.indd 12 24/11/2017 10:02

The Courts

- Make decisions on special measures applications and ensure they are in place, if granted
- When setting trial dates, consider your availability

Youth Offending Services (if the offender is under 18)

- Inform you of the outcome of the case
- Ask for your views on what you think an offender should do to make amends for their actions

Probation Service (if someone is sentenced to 12 months or more for violent / sexual offences)

- Explain the sentence to you and tell you about the Victim Contact Scheme
- Inform you about key stages of offender's sentence
- Tell you when the offender will be released
- Keep you informed about Parole Board dates and decisions
- Advise you on making a victim personal statement for the parole board

Prison service

- Provide a helpline number for you to call if there is unwanted contact from the offender

Parole Board

- Give you the opportunity to make a victim personal statement and express your views and consider this information when discussing the possible release of the offender

Agencies will work on your behalf

14914 Herts Beacon - Victims of Crime Booklet - Generic.indd 13 24/11/2017 10:02

Making a Victim Personal Statement



Victim Personal Statement

A Victim Personal Statement (VPS) is a written account that you can give to the police if you have been a victim of a crime. It is your way of telling people, working in the Criminal Justice System, about the crime you have suffered and the impact it has had on you, whether this is physically, emotionally, psychologically, financially or in any other way.

Your VPS gives you a voice and helps the court to understand what you have been through. Before deciding to make a VPS, you will be advised by the police that if the case reaches court, it will be seen by the defence and that you may be asked questions about it during the trial.

You will be asked if you would like to read your statement out in court or have someone read it out aloud on your behalf, if the defendant pleads guilty. Again, this is up to you and your Victim Personal Statement will still be taken into account by the courts whether it is read out aloud or not.

If you do want to read your Victim Personal Statement out in court, the court will decide whether this is appropriate. You will be notified of the court's decision. If it is read out there is a possibility of it being repeated in the press.

What your VPS can contain

- Any physical or psychological harm that you have suffered
- If you no longer feel safe
- The impact on your family
- How your quality of life has changed on a day-to-day basis
- Any concerns about the alleged offender being given bail
- If you feel the crime was racially motivated or that your faith, sexuality or disability played a part in the crime
- If you need or are receiving additional support as a result of the crime
- If you intend to claim compensation from the offender for any injury, loss or damage

You can choose to make a Victim Personal Statement at any point as long as it is made before the case goes to court or before the offender is sentenced. If you are not ready to make a statement now, you can speak to the police officer dealing with your case or staff at Beacon about arranging this.

The VPS is a formal statement and you will need to sign a declaration confirming that it is true to the best of your knowledge.

14914 Herts Beacon - Victims of Crime Booklet - Generic.indd 14 24/11/2017 10:02

What a VPS must not contain

Your VPS must not include your thoughts or opinion on how the alleged offender should be punished – this is for the magistrate or judge to decide. Any inappropriate content, such as unsubstantiated claims against the alleged offender, may be removed from the final version of the statement before the court.

Adding to your VPS

You cannot change or withdraw your original VPS. However, you can make a further VPS to add to or clarify your original VPS at any time before the trial or sentencing. You can make a second VPS if you want to describe the full impact of the crime, such as the longer term effect the crime has had on you, or any other issues that may not have been apparent at the time of making your original VPS.

For Businesses

The Victims' Code also entitles you to make a further impact statement if your business or enterprise has been the victim of a crime; this is called a Business Impact Statement.

The Business Impact Statement allows you to detail how the crime has affected your business in terms of the direct financial impact (assets stolen or damaged), indirect financial impact (loss of custom, loss of staff time) and non-financial impact (reputational damage).

You can make a Business Impact Statement alongside a separate Victim Personal Statement. If appropriate to your circumstances, the officer in the case will arrange for the completion of this statement.

At Beacon, we'll help you prepare your Victim Personal Statement

14914 Herts Beacon - Victims of Crime Booklet - Generic.indd 15 24/11/2017 10:02

Young Victims



As a young victim you are entitled to the same entitlements as an adult victim, set out on pages 8 and 9 of this booklet. However as a victim under the age of 18, you and your parent or guardian, will also be automatically entitled to receive an enhanced service under the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime.

You can choose for your parent or guardian to be updated with the progress of the case, if you would prefer.

If you are under 18 you are able to have your Victim Personal Statement video recorded to make it easier for you to tell the police what happened. Making a video recorded statement may also mean that you do not have to repeat this evidence in court. However, you can choose to give live evidence at court if you would prefer to do so.

On page 20 of this booklet there is a list of special measures that victims may request to make giving evidence easier. Two of these special measures that are used mainly for young victims are; giving evidence in a different room by video link and judges and solicitors removing their wigs and gowns in court to create a less formal environment.

These measures can be discussed with the officer in charge of your case or your Witness Care Officer.

Your statement can be recorded to make it easier to tell the Police what happened.

14914 Herts Beacon - Victims of Crime Booklet - Generic.indd 16 24/11/2017 10:02

Vulnerable Adults



If you are an adult with a vulnerability such as physical or learning disability, you are entitled to additional support.

You will be entitled to an enhanced service under the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime and you may be entitled to special measures in court. These are explained on page 19 of this booklet.

These measures, additional support and anything else you need can be discussed with the officer in charge of your case or your Witness Care officer.

Another adult may be required to support you when you talk to the police and to help you understand documents or what is said. Specialist police officers may record your evidence.

You can choose for a person you trust and/or who is responsible for your care to be updated with the progress of the case if you would prefer.

"The officers all looked past my diagnosis, and did not appear to have judged the situation at face value; instead listened to me, making helpful suggestions."

14914 Herts Beacon - Victims of Crime Booklet - Generic.indd 17 24/11/2017 10:02

Alternatives to Court

In some cases lower level crimes can be dealt with out of court. Out of court disposals are not suitable for more serious cases, cases where the offender does not admit their responsibility or for offenders who repeatedly commit crimes.

Hertfordshire Constabulary, the Crown Prosecution Service or Youth Offending Team may consider an out of court disposal is a more appropriate method of dealing with your case. If this is the case, you will be asked for your views, which will be taken into account before any decision is made.

Community Resolution provides an out-of-court alternative

Community Resolution

A Community Resolution is an out-of-court option available to deal with anti-social behaviour and low level crime in the community if considered suitable.

Community Resolution gives you a much greater say in dealing with offenders who commit low level crime and anti-social behaviour.

Some of the options available include:

- The offender paying for the damage they have caused
- Where relevant, the offender being referred to a substance misuse programme
- The offender entering into a contract which spells out acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. If the offender breaks this contract, this can be used as evidence for further action

The suitability of the options depends on the nature of the offence, the age of the offender and the particular circumstances. A police officer will discuss the situation with you, to help come to the best solution. They will do their best to take all of your views into account before deciding the final course of action.

14914 Herts Beacon - Victims of Crime Booklet - Generic.indd 18 24/11/2017 10:02

The Court Process - Going to Court



If you're a victim of a crime in Hertfordshire, you may have to go to court to give evidence at the trial. We know this can be a distressing experience and at Beacon, our trained staff are here to help you both before the hearing and on the day itself.

- If your case **does not** go to court, you should be told the reason for this decision
- If your case does go to trial, you will be assigned a Witness Care Officer or other point of contact. They will inform you about attending court and will keep you up to date about what is happening. This includes information about the dates and locations of court hearings and whether you will be required to give evidence

The Witness Service

The Witness Service will give you free support before and during the trial. This will help to reduce stress in the period before the hearing and make you more aware of the whole process:

- A Witness Services volunteer will be at the court on the day of the trial
- They will offer you support and ensure that you have a copy of your statement on the day of the trial, prior to you giving your evidence
- You can contact the officer at any time for further information and support. This includes any help you may need with childcare and transport
- You can also visit the court before the day of the trial if you wish for a familiarisation visit. You may find this helps you to feel less anxious on the day
- If you need any particular help, for example, if you're disabled and need help getting to court or moving about in the court building, you should tell the Witness Care Officer who will make the necessary arrangements for you

If you have any problems or concerns about going to court, you must let the person who asked you to go to court know as soon as possible. This will enable any issues raised to be resolved as quickly as possible.

Your Beacon contact will also be on hand to provide any help as well as advice and information. We want to ensure you feel as comfortable and confident with the process as possible, so if you have any questions you can always ask us.

14914 Herts Beacon - Victims of Crime Booklet - Generic.indd 19 24/11/2017 10:02

Help in Court - Special Measures

Courtrooms are formal places, which can make being a witness quite daunting. This is especially true for children, young witnesses or if you are a vulnerable or intimidated victim.

Special measures are arrangements which can be put in place, to help you give the best evidence in court. You can contact the officer in your case or your Witness Care Officer if you would like more information on how special measures may help you.

The police and the Crown Prosecution Service will apply for any special measures on your behalf but the court will make the final decision about whether the special measures that have been requested can be used.

Special measures can include:

1. Screens - available to screen you from the defendant in the court room so that you cannot be seen whilst giving evidence.

2. Live link - you can give evidence during the trial from a room outside the court room or a suitable location outside the court house, via live TV link. Hertfordshire has live link facilities in use in some police stations.

3. Evidence given in private - members of the public are excluded from the court room whilst you give evidence.

4. Removal of wigs and gowns (used at Crown Court) to create a less formal environment. This is mostly used for young witnesses.

5. Video Recorded Interview as Evidence in Chief - The prosecution can apply for a video interview to be used in place of you physically giving evidence in court.

6. Having someone (an Intermediary) to help you understand questions when being interviewed or giving evidence.

7. Aids to communication - This could include using an interpreter or someone to communicate for you or it could cover the use of a communications aid or technique.

14914 Herts Beacon - Victims of Crime Booklet - Generic.indd 20 24/11/2017 10:02

Victims' Right to Review



The Victims' Right to Review scheme allows you to request a review of a Police or Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) decision not to prosecute a suspect or to otherwise terminate criminal proceedings.

You are entitled to be notified of the reasons why this decision was made, how you can access further information about the decision and how you can seek a review of the decision if you are not satisfied with it.

Right to Review - Police

A victim can request a review where the police:

- Make a decision not to bring proceedings in cases where the police have authority to charge; or
- Make a decision that the case does not meet the Threshold Test for referral to the CPS for a charging decision

As a victim of crime if you feel that your case has not been handled appropriately under the above circumstances, you have the right to request a review of your case. You can find further information on how to request a Right to Review of the decision made by the police at https://www.herts.police.uk/Information-and-services/Victim-services/Victims-right-to-review.aspx

Right to Review - CPS

The Victims' Right to Review scheme also gives you the right to request a review of a decision made by the Crown Prosecution Service.

Any victim of crime or bereaved family member can now ask for their case to be reviewed if you do not agree with a decision made not to charge the suspect, to discontinue proceedings or offer no further evidence at court.

Details of how you can ask the Crown Prosecution Service to review this decision can be found at cps.gov.uk



14914 Herts Beacon - Victims of Crime Booklet - Generic.indd 21 24/11/2017 10:02

Compensation and Financial Support



If you have suffered financial loss as a result of being a victim of crime, there are some schemes that may be able to help you. These include court-awarded compensation, criminal injury compensation and the Hardship Fund. You can also claim expenses for giving evidence in court.

You may be able to claim compensation if you are a:

- Victim of a crime
- Close relative of someone who has died because of a crime
- Witness to a serious crime, intervened and were seriously injured

Expenses for Going to Court

Attending a hearing can leave you out of pocket as your employer doesn't have to pay you for the time you'll have to take off work. You may be able to claim expenses for your travel, meals, loss of earnings and childcare when you give evidence at a trial.

Making a claim

You should receive a witness expense claim form, a prepaid envelope and a list of your allowable expenses before the trial. If for any reason you haven't received these, your solicitor or a court official should provide them for you.

Let Beacon help you

At Beacon, our trained advisers will help you get all the financial help and compensation you're entitled to. We'll guide you through the claims processes and help you complete the forms you'll need to submit.

There are schemes available which may be able to help you

14914 Herts Beacon - Victims of Crime Booklet - Generic.indd 22 24/11/2017 10:02

Court Awarded Compensation

The court can order a guilty party to pay you compensation. However, you'll need to tell the police that you want this form of compensation and what you're claiming for.

This could include:

- personal injury
- losses from theft or damage to property
- losses from fraud
- being off work
- medical expenses
- travel expenses
- pain and suffering
- loss, damage or injury caused by a stolen vehicle

The police will pass your request for compensation to the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS). The CPS will ask the court to order the convicted person to pay compensation on your behalf. Bear in mind that the court will set any compensation according to what the offender can afford to pay. If the offender receives a prison sentence, they'll be unable to work, so ordering them to pay compensation is unlikely. It's the court's job to collect compensation from the offender and pass it on to you. You won't have to have any dealings with the offender.

Criminal injury compensation

If you're a victim of violent crime and can't get court-awarded compensation, you may be able to claim from the Government-funded Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority (CICA).

You can claim for physical and mental injuries. Any mental injury you claim for must be a recognised psychiatric or psychological illness and covered by the scheme.

You can apply to CICA within two years of reporting the incident, providing you've cooperated with any investigations. You can call CICA on **0300 003 3601**.

Hardship Fund

If you have to take time off work as a victim of violent crime, you can apply for help from the Government's Hardship Fund. This could provide temporary relief from financial hardship and reduce some of the stress of your experience. If you apply for relief from the Hardship Fund, Victim Support will assess your eligibility for a claim. They'll then forward your application to CICA who will process it for you.

You can apply for relief from the Hardship Fund if you:

- Earn less than the minimum amount needed to qualify for Statutory Sick Pay (SSP)
- Couldn't work for at least seven consecutive days as a result of the crime
- Don't have any unspent convictions that resulted in a custodial sentence or community order

For more information on The Hardship Fund, contact Victim Support on **0808 16 89 111**.

14914 Herts Beacon - Victims of Crime Booklet - Generic.indd 23 24/11/2017 10:02

Restorative Justice



Restorative Justice brings offenders face-to-face with the impact of their actions. It's their opportunity to make amends to you personally. The aim is to give you, a chance to have your say, get answers to your questions and move on with your life.

Provided the offender has admitted to the crime, Restorative Justice can take place at any point in criminal justice proceedings. Taking place in Restorative Justice will not affect the outcome of the case and most victims tell us it helps.

85 per cent of crime victims who have used Restorative Justice were satisfied with the process.

How Restorative Justice works

To start with, you'll have a meeting with a trained facilitator. At the meeting, you can explain:

- What happened
- How it affected you
- What would make you feel better about it

The facilitator may then suggest a conference, which is a meeting between you and the offender. They'll take your wishes and any concerns you may have into account and treat your safety as a top priority.

If the facilitator doesn't feel a face-to-face meeting is a good idea, they'll let you know and explain why. Instead of the meeting, they can convey a message from you to the offender.

Restorative Justice can be used alongside other schemes in Hertfordshire, including Community Remedy.

Getting started with Restorative Justice

If you have any enquiries, please contact Beacon on 0300 011 5555

A chance to have your say

14914 Herts Beacon - Victims of Crime Booklet - Generic.indd 24 24/11/2017 10:02

How to Make a Complaint



Hertfordshire Police is committed to giving you the best service possible, however if you have a complaint or wish to raise any concerns, please let us know.

You are entitled to be treated in a respectful, sensitive and professional manner. Where this is not the case or where the services you are entitled to have not been provided, you have the right to complain.

The Hertfordshire Police Professional Standards Department is responsible for the investigation of these complaints. There are a number of ways you can make a complaint:

- By phoning and speaking to an operator who will record your complaint and forward to the relevant department
- By visiting: https://www.herts.police.uk/Report/Report-Shared/Make-a-complaint.aspx where you can access and complete the online complaint form
- By writing to Professional Standards Department at: Hertfordshire Police HQ, Stanborough Road, Welwyn Garden City, Hertfordshire, AL8 6XF.
- By contacting the Independent Police Complaints Commission, (please note that under the new complaint legislation, the IPCC will take a much smaller role in the processing of complaints and any complaints sent to them will be forwarded automatically to Hertfordshire Police) ipcc.gov.uk/complaints
- In person, at any police station that has a front office counter, for details of police stations please visit: https://www.herts.police.uk/Information-and-services/About-us/Contact.aspx
- By emailing: OPCCCustomerResponseTeam@herts.pcc.pnn.gov.uk

Where any service provider other than the police does not provide you with the services required under the Victims' Code, you are entitled to make a complaint directly.

They must provide you with either an acknowledgement or a response within ten working days of receiving your complaint. In the first instance, and if you feel comfortable doing so, we encourage you to discuss your complaint directly with the service provider.

14914 Herts Beacon - Victims of Crime Booklet - Generic.indd 25 24/11/2017 10:02

Notes

14914 Herts Beacon - Victims of Crime Booklet - Generic.indd 26 24/11/2017 10:02

14914 Herts Beacon - Victims of Crime Booklet - Generic.indd 27 24/11/2017 10:02

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Hertfordshire victim care centre

Victims' Voice

If you have any feedback on the services you have received as a victim of crime we would like to hear from you. Your views, good or bad, help us to develop and improve the support we provide and will be gratefully received.

Please complete our online **Victims' Voice Survey** available here:
hertfordshirebeacon.org/what-we-do/have-your-say

If instead, you'd prefer to give us your feedback in your own words or would be interested in taking part in a focus group please email us at:

contact@victimsvoice-herts.info or call us free on 0800 999 7499.

Local Services in Hertfordshire

For details of local services please visit:
hertfordshirebeacon.org/get-help where you will find a service map to show you local partners near you.

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