

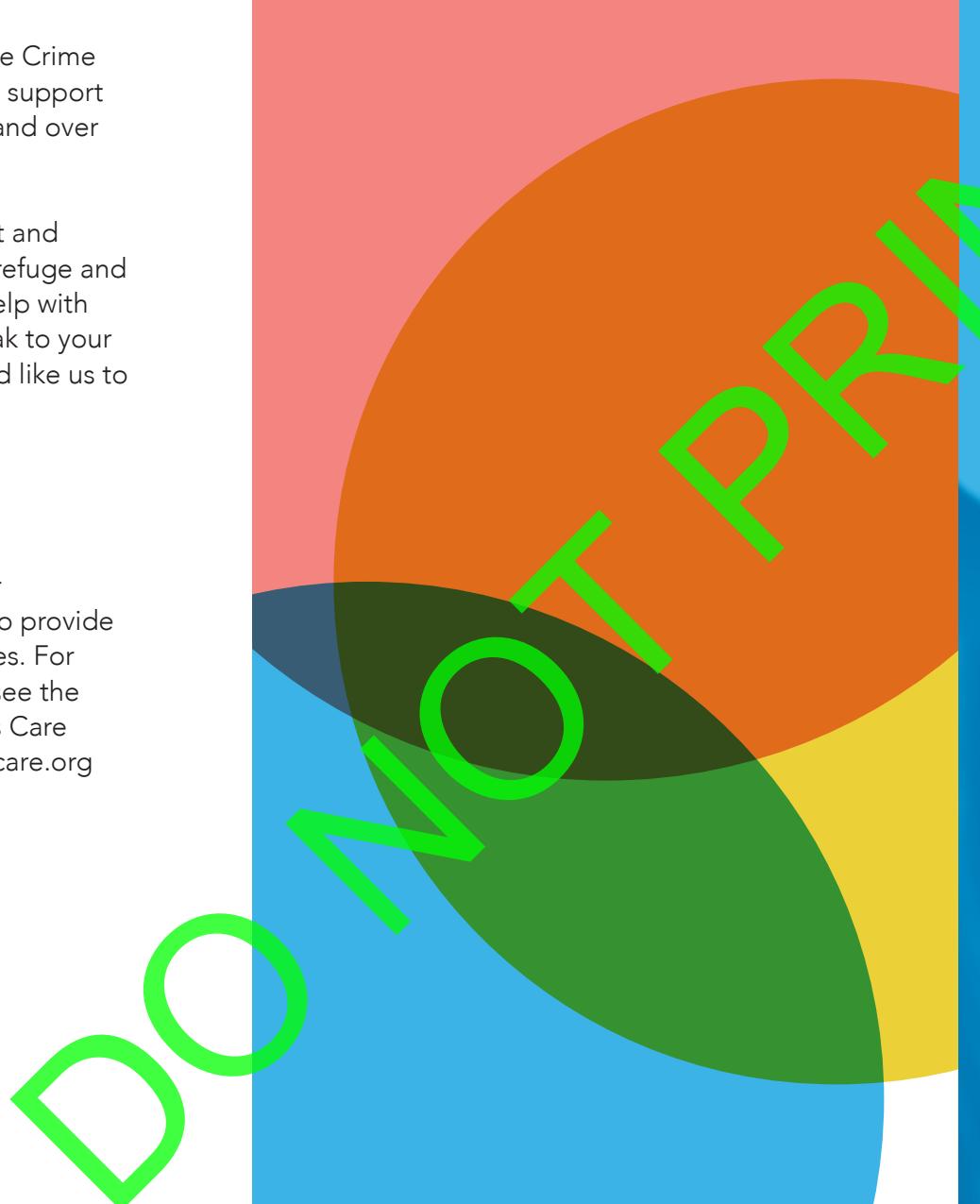
Where can I go for support?

In addition to our services, Hate Crime Advocates provide one-to-one support and advice, both face-to-face and over the telephone.

They can provide crisis support and practical advice, help arrange refuge and supported housing, and can help with family court proceedings. Speak to your Victim Care Officer if you would like us to arrange a referral for you.

Other useful services

There are also a range of other independent organisations who provide free support and advice services. For details of these organisations see the Lighthouse Victim and Witness Care website www.lighthousevictimcare.org



Commissioned by Avon and Somerset Police and Crime Commissioner



Guiding you through...
**The Criminal
Justice Service**



 **LIGHTHOUSE**
Victim and Witness Care

CJ177/HC

Being a victim of any crime can be a difficult experience, particularly when faced with the prospect of having to attend court. We are here to guide you through the criminal justice process and ensure you have the information, advice and practical support you need.

Your Victim Care Officer will be your point of contact throughout your case. If you have not already done so, you should make a note of their contact details. You can call them if you have any concerns or questions at any stage.

Your Victim Care Officer will:

- Make sure you have all the practical advice, support and information you need.
- Work with the Crown Prosecution Service, the court and the police officer(s) handling your case to make sure your needs and wishes are taken into account.
- Work with any specialist support worker you may be in touch with (such as a Hate Crime Advocate) and keep them updated on your case if you would like us to.

Frequently asked questions

Q My case is going to court – what happens next?

When someone is charged with an offence, they become known as the 'defendant' and will be told to appear at a Magistrates' Court. If the defendant pleads guilty, the court decides what sentence to give them, either on the same day, or another date if they need additional information. If the defendant pleads not-guilty then a trial will take place. Depending on how serious the charges are, the case may need to go to Crown Court.

Q How will I be kept updated on the case?

We will keep you updated as the case progresses using your preferred method of contact (telephone, email, post or text message) and are here to explain anything you may be unsure about.

Q Will I have to attend court?

If a defendant pleads not-guilty then a trial will take place. If this happens, you may have to attend court and give evidence. We will guide you through the process and can assist you with practical things, such as helping to arrange travel and accommodation, to find childcare and to claim expenses. We can also arrange for you to visit the court in advance to see how things work, and be supported at court on the day of the trial.

Q What if I don't want to give evidence?

We understand the idea of going to court can be worrying. We are here to help, and it's important you tell us if you have any concerns. Special measures can be applied for, such as screens to shield you from the defendant, to make you feel more comfortable whilst giving evidence. We can also arrange for someone to support you on the day, and for you to visit the court in advance if this would be helpful.

Q How can I make sure the court know how this has affected me?

Victims are entitled to make a Victim Personal Statement (VPS) to say how you feel about the crime and the effect it has had on you and your family, including how it has affected you financially, physically or mentally. If you have not yet made a VPS and would like to, please tell us and we will arrange this for you.

Victim Personal Statements are usually read on your behalf by the Prosecutor, Judge or Magistrate if the defendant is found guilty and when the court is deciding on the sentence they should receive. If you would prefer to read the statement out yourself, let us know and we will ask the court for you.