



Court Usher

Magistrate

Police Officer

Witness

Prison Officer

Victim Support Volunteer

Probation Officer

Inside Justice

The Criminal Justice System and you

CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM



Protecting you from crime



**reporting and
investigating
a crime**



**preparing for
the courts**



**going to
court**



sentencing



**punishing and
rehabilitating**

Did you know?

- The risk of being a victim of crime, at 24 per cent, is the lowest recorded since the British Crime Survey began in 1981.
- Domestic burglary and vehicle thefts are down 57% on 1995.
- Violent crime has reduced by 43% since 1995.
- The police are undergoing a programme of change that puts the public at the heart of the service they provide.
- If your phone is lost or stolen you can ring 08701 123 123 to stop it being used on any network – even if the SIM card has been changed – making it useless to a thief.

Ever heard of the Criminal Justice System?

Even if you haven't, you'll recognise some of the people who work as part of it – like the police, probation officers and judges. These people form part of the system for preventing and dealing with crime and offenders in this country.

This leaflet takes you through the Criminal Justice System (CJS). It shows you how we create safer communities by:

- protecting the public and supporting victims and witnesses
- bringing offenders to justice
- turning offenders away from crime or stopping crime happening in the first place.

Why should it matter to you?

The CJS is there to support members of the public. Crime levels in this country are getting lower. But crime still affects us all. If you haven't been a victim, you might still have seen the effects on the community around you. And maybe you're asking what you can do about it.

One thing you could do is support the CJS. You might want to take up one of the suggestions in the *What you can do* sections in this leaflet.

The CJS is keen to ensure that it is representative of the communities it serves. We want people from all backgrounds to be involved in CJS volunteer opportunities and have confidence that the system is meeting their needs.

Support from the public is vital to our work. Whether you're a victim reporting a crime or anti-social behaviour, or you're a CJS volunteer, you play an important part in making sure your community is a safer place to live.

The CJS is there to support members of the public

What you can do

Report crime and anti-social behaviour.

Call your local police force for non-urgent cases or 999 in an emergency.

Visit www.police.uk

Give information to the police about crime anonymously.

Call Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.

Visit www.crimestoppers-uk.org for information on becoming a **Crimestoppers Volunteer**.

Become a **Community Support Officer** – help the police to tackle anti-social behaviour and offer reassurance to the public.

Call your local police force.

Visit www.policecouldyou.co.uk/cso

Join or start up a local **Neighbourhood Watch** scheme.

Contact your local police station.

Visit www.neighbourhoodwatch.uk.com

Reporting and investigating a crime



Did you know?

- Victims get personal support after they suffer a crime. Victim Support has more than 10,000 volunteers working at a local level to support victims and witnesses of crime and their friends and family.
- Because we know that a lot of crime is related to drugs, some police forces now test offenders for drugs to encourage them out of crime and into treatment.
- Youth Offending Teams work with young people at risk of offending and those who commit crimes and anti-social behaviour to help them stay away from offending in the future.
- You can also do identity parades on video, so it's less intimidating to identify an offender.

When you report a crime

The police take all crime seriously. Police officers search for evidence at the crime scene and take statements from victims and witnesses. They try to identify a suspect, who will be arrested for questioning at the police station.

Once the questioning is finished, the police have several choices:

- refer the case to the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) for a decision on whether the suspect should be charged
- ask the suspect to return at a later date
- give the suspect a formal warning
- release the suspect, if there is no evidence to suggest that they committed the crime.

The police will also offer to put you in touch with Victim Support for help and information. They will also offer you the opportunity to complete a victim personal statement. This gives you the chance to tell the police about any support you might need and how the crime has affected you. It becomes part of the case papers and should be taken into account by the police, prosecutors, magistrates and judges.

If you're a victim or a witness, you can expect to be treated sensitively and with respect by the CJS. We also work hard to make sure that we keep you informed about what is happening with the investigation into your case, as well as letting you know about the support services that are available to you.

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What you can do

Volunteer as an **Independent Custody Visitor** – a person who visits police stations to carry out checks on police cells and how people in custody are being treated.

Call the Independent Custody Visiting Association on 020 7837 0078.

Visit www.icva.org.uk

Become a **Special Constable** – a volunteer police officer supporting regular officers in helping to prevent and reduce crime.

Call your local police force.

Visit www.policecouldyou.co.uk for more details on recruitment or www.specialconstables.gov.uk for more information about the Special Constabulary.

Become a **Police Support Volunteer** – many forces have volunteers who help out in various areas, such as administration and customer services.

Call your local police force to see what opportunities they offer.

Preparing for the courts



Did you know?

- We are increasing the number of trials ready to go ahead on their scheduled day so offenders can be tried faster.
- The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) is increasing the number of cases brought to court, and more offenders are being brought to justice for their crime.
- Witness Care Units are being rolled out across the country – providing all the services needed to support witnesses going to court. There is now at least one Witness Care Unit in every criminal justice area and full national coverage is expected by the end of 2005.
- Some witnesses can give evidence on a videolink (which is not always in the court building), and there are separate waiting areas for prosecution witnesses in many courts.

Getting the charge right

After the police have finished an investigation, most cases will be referred to the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) for a decision on whether a suspect should be charged and what that charge should be.

The CPS employs lawyers and caseworkers working to get the charge right first time, because court time can be wasted if a charge needs to be changed later on.

The CPS also prepares the case and presents it at court. Sometimes, it can ask the court to allow vulnerable or intimidated witnesses to give evidence under special conditions. This might be from behind a screen, so that they don't have to look at the person accused of committing the crime.

If you need to give evidence in court, those working in the CJS will do their best to make it as easy as possible. The independent Witness Service, run by Victim Support, is also on hand to help.

Whether you are attending court as a victim, witness or defendant, the Criminal Justice System website, www.cjsonline.gov.uk, provides useful information and advice. The interactive walkthroughs on the site take you through a virtual experience of what it's like to come into contact with the CJS.

Vulnerable or intimidated witnesses sometimes give evidence under special conditions

What you can do

If you are a victim of a crime, or you're a witness to a crime, think about coming forward and be prepared to give evidence in court.

Be part of a **Crime Prevention Panel** – groups of people who run campaigns to tackle local crime. **Call** the Crime Prevention Officer at your local police station for more details.

Become a **Victim Support Volunteer** and provide local support either to victims of crime or to witnesses at court.

Call Victim Support on 020 7735 9166

Visit www.victimsupport.org.uk

Email info@victimsupport.org.uk

Think about a career in the CJS.

Visit www.cjsonline.gov.uk for more details.

Going to court



Did you know?

- The Witness Service now provides support for victims and witnesses, and their friends and family, in all Crown Courts and Magistrates' Courts.
- The CJS is developing specialist courts to deal with local issues. Specialist domestic violence courts are already in place and we plan to develop more across the country in the coming year.
- The CJS is clamping down on people who don't pay fines, fail to turn up at court, or don't complete their community penalties.
- England and Wales' first Community Justice Centre is being piloted in North Liverpool. CJS agencies and local services have come together to tackle quality of life crime and anti-social behaviour.

There are three kinds of criminal court:

1. Magistrates' Courts

All criminal cases start in a Magistrates' Court and over 95% of cases are completed here. Cases in Magistrates' Courts are usually heard by a panel of three magistrates, sometimes called 'Justices of the Peace'. Many magistrates are volunteers from the local community, there are around 30,000 in England and Wales.

2. Crown Court

Crown Courts are for more serious offences – like rape, murder or burglary. Because of the seriousness of the cases, they are heard by a judge and a jury. The jury decides if it thinks the accused is guilty and the judge passes sentence.

3. Youth Courts

A Youth Court is a Magistrates' Court established to deal with criminal proceedings involving young people. They have specially trained magistrates and cases are heard in private.

In all courts, the accused can be found not guilty and released without a criminal record. Or, they can be found guilty and sentenced.

The courts rely on the commitment of victims and witnesses to speak out and help stop crime. But there are also thousands of people acting as volunteers in support services that keep the courts running smoothly and efficiently.

The courts rely on the commitment of victims and witnesses to speak out

What you can do

Volunteer for the **Witness Service** – to assist witnesses in court.

Contact your local branch of Victim Support. Details can be found at www.victimsupport.org.uk

Apply to become a **Magistrate**.

Call 0800 003 007

Visit www.dca.gov.uk

Sit on a **Youth Offender Panel** – a body that helps decide how a young person should make amends for a crime they have committed.

Visit www.youth-justice-board.gov.uk

Sentencing



Did you know?

- Some prisoners released into the community now wear electronic tags, so that if they break certain restrictions, they can be taken straight back to prison.
- More sentences are now forcing offenders to make amends to their local community – and to their victims.
- Dangerous, violent and sexual offenders are kept in custody for as long as they present a risk to the public.
- The government has introduced Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs) to tackle low-level thuggery in your local community. By December 2004, 4,649 ASBOs had been imposed by the courts.

Getting the right sentence

When magistrates or judges pass sentence, they need to do more than just punish the offender. They need to think about:

- protecting the public
- encouraging the offender to make amends for their crime
- looking at what caused the offender to offend so that the CJS can help them get out of a life of crime
- persuading the offender not to commit crime again.

If the defendant is found guilty, courts have four main options. They can:

1. Discharge the offender
2. Fine the offender
3. Impose a community sentence
4. Impose a custodial sentence

An offender may be discharged if the court believes that further punishment is not appropriate. A discharge may impose certain conditions on the offender - for example that he commits no offence within a certain period. The offence also appears on their criminal record.

A **community sentence** is not a soft option. It combines punishment with changing offenders' behaviour and making amends – sometimes directly to the victim of the crime. It can also encourage the offender to deal with any problems that might be making them commit crime – like drugs.

A **prison/custodial sentence** is for the most serious crimes or for repeat offenders.

It's really important that we give offenders the right sentence, because it can affect whether they offend again in the future. It's in all our interests that offenders see the consequences of their crimes and begin to live more responsible lives.

The right sentence can help stop a person offending again

What you can do

Become a **Probation Volunteer** to help enforce a community sentence.

Call your local probation office for more information.

Visit www.probation.homeoffice.gov.uk

Volunteer as a **Victim–Offender Mediator** – a person who helps victims of crimes and offenders communicate and explore what can be done to put things right.

Visit Mediation UK at www.mediationuk.org.uk

Email Mediation UK at enquiry@mediationuk.org.uk

Punishing and rehabilitating



Did you know?

- The number of people being reconvicted for crime is decreasing.
- The Youth Justice Board has over 10,000 volunteers working alongside its Youth Offending Teams: 5,000 on Youth Offender Panels, and 5,000 working to support and help young people in a variety of roles.
- Community sentences can now be tailored to the needs of an individual offender, increasing the chance of them developing a life away from crime.
- The CJS agencies work with other organisations, such as health and housing agencies, to closely monitor offenders who have committed sexual and violent crimes. Police, probation, prison and other agencies meet regularly in every area under Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) to assess and manage the risks posed by offenders.

Putting public safety first

When offenders are sent to prison or into custody, public safety is a very important consideration. At the same time, it's important that we encourage rehabilitation – encouraging offenders to live a more responsible lifestyle. Prisons promote responsible behaviour to try and reduce the risk of prisoners re-offending in the future.

Offenders with a community sentence are supervised by probation staff or a local Youth Offending Team (YOT). Some people who leave prison will also report to probation or their YOT. The National Probation Service works with offenders to help them understand the effects of their crimes and to change their attitude and behaviour. They will also help them deal with problems that increase the

chances of them committing crime again – like unemployment or homelessness. If an offender fails to adhere to the conditions of their sentence, they will be returned to court.

Prison and probation services have recently been brought closer together under the National Offender Management Service (NOMS). This creates a single service responsible for the management of offenders. NOMS will ensure punishment and rehabilitation of offenders in consistent, coherent and constructive ways so as to reduce re-offending.

Why do we place so much importance on rehabilitation? Because a rehabilitated criminal is less likely to offend again. For example, drug offenders sometimes steal to fund their addiction. If we give them treatment for their addiction in prison,

they are less likely to offend again when they are released.

It is an investment that creates a safer society for us all.

Members of the public can have a serious impact on an offender's chance of rehabilitation by volunteering to help former offenders lead more responsible lives.

A rehabilitated criminal is less likely to offend again

What you can do

Enquire about becoming a **Prison Visitor** – someone who visits prisoners, listens to them and helps them get their life back on track.

Call your local prison.

Visit the National Association of Prison Visitors at www.napv.org.uk

Help out at your local prison's **Visitors' Centre** – some prisons have volunteers giving advice and information to visitors.

Call your nearest prison and speak to whoever runs the Visitors' Centre to find out if they need volunteers.

Become a **Mentor** – someone who acts as a positive role model, particularly for young offenders who might not have a positive figure in their life.

Visit the National Probation Service at www.probation.homeoffice.gov.uk

Email the National Probation Service for more details at npd.publicenquiry@homeoffice.gov.uk

Want to know more?

CJS Online

If you come into contact with the Criminal Justice System as a victim, witness, defendant or juror, or you simply want to know more, then the CJS website should be your first port of call.

www.cjsonline.gov.uk

Information on the CJS

Criminal Justice System and Office for Criminal Justice Reform
www.cjsonline.gov.uk

Police Service
www.police.uk

Crown Prosecution Service
www.cps.gov.uk

Courts
www.hmcourts-service.gov.uk

HM Prison Service
www.hmprisonservice.gov.uk

National Probation Service
www.probation.homeoffice.gov.uk

National Offender Management Service
www.noms.homeoffice.gov.uk

Youth Justice Board
www.youth-justice-board.gov.uk

Information on supporting the CJS

Victim Support and Witness Service
www.victimsupport.org.uk

Crime reduction
www.crimereduction.gov.uk

Getting involved in the CJS
(publication by the Prison Advice and Care Trust)
www.ccjf.org/what/index.html

Neighbourhood Watch
www.neighbourhoodwatch.uk.com

Crimestoppers
www.crimestoppers-uk.org

Government departments

Home Office
www.homeoffice.gov.uk

Department for Constitutional Affairs
www.dca.gov.uk

Law Officers' Departments
www.lso.gov.uk

The Criminal Justice System

The Criminal Justice System (CJS) is one of the major public services in the country, covering everyone who works to deliver justice – from magistrates and Crown Prosecution lawyers to police and prison officers.

At a local level, the work of the CJS agencies is co-ordinated by 42 Local Criminal Justice Boards. At a national level, three government departments are responsible for overseeing the government's drive to improve the system.

The Office for Criminal Justice Reform is the cross-departmental team that supports all criminal justice agencies in working together to provide an improved service to the public. It is answerable to the National Criminal Justice Board, which is made up of ministers, heads of the CJS services and civil servants from the government departments that oversee the work of the CJS.

Some services and initiatives within the CJS are run by a number of voluntary groups like Victim Support and the National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders (Nacro).

Race

The experience of people from black and minority ethnic backgrounds in the CJS is not always the same as for white people, and discrimination exists. The CJS is committed to reform to ensure fairness and equality across the system. A programme of work to get beneath the surface of race issues in the CJS has been established. If you want to know more about race and the CJS, contact CJSRace@cjs.gsi.gov.uk



Criminal Justice System: working together for the public