



Ministry
of Justice

Reporting a rape or sexual assault

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If you are a victim of rape or sexual assault, this guide will help you understand the process of reporting a crime to the police. It is always your decision whether to report to the police.

It is important to remember that what happened to you was not your fault.

You can access a **glossary** for more information on the terms used in this guide (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guides-for-victims-of-rape-and-sexual-assault/glossary-of-terms>).

As a victim of crime, **the Victims' Code** sets out what you can expect from organisations in the criminal justice system (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-code-of-practice-for-victims-of-crime>).

Support to decide about reporting to the police

If you are still not sure whether to report the crime to the police, you can seek independent, free and confidential support to find out about your choices. **You can be supported by an Independent Sexual Violence Advisor at any point while you decide whether to report the crime or not.** More information about the types of organisations that can help you can be found in our guide, 'Support following a rape or sexual assault' (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guides-for-victims-of-rape-and-sexual-assault>).

If you are still deciding if or when you want to report a crime, it is recommended that you keep the clothes you were wearing at the time of the offence and, if possible:

- do not wash the clothes
- keep them in a separate container, preferably not plastic if the items are wet
- keep the container in a cool and dark place

This can help an investigation if you decide to report the crime in the future.

You can still report a crime even if you don't have the clothes you were wearing at the time. It is important to remember that you can report a crime at any time regardless of when it happened.

You can also visit a Sexual Assault Referral Centre if you don't feel ready to report a crime (<https://www.nhs.uk/service-search/other-services/Rape-and-sexual-assault-referral-centres/LocationSearch/364>). Some centres can take and keep forensic evidence for up to several years. You can find out more in our guides, 'Investigating a rape or sexual assault' and 'Support following a rape or sexual assault' (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guides-for-victims-of-rape-and-sexual-assault>).

How to report a rape or sexual assault

There are different ways that you can report to the police. It does not matter when the offence took place.

By telephone

- In an emergency you should contact the police on **999** and ask for assistance.
- If you are in danger and unable to talk on the phone, call **999** and then press **55** when asked.
- If you have a hearing or speech impairment, you can use the **textphone service on 18000** or the **999 BSL** app or website (<https://999bsl.co.uk/>).
- If it is not an emergency, you can call **101** and ask for your local police station.

Visiting a local police station

You can find your nearest police station through your local police force website (<https://www.police.uk/pu/contact-the-police/>).

When you go to the police station, a specially trained officer will take your initial complaint. If there isn't a specially trained officer when you arrive, the police may take your details and ask you to wait until a specially trained officer can help.

Contacting your local police force online

You can make a report online (<https://www.police.uk/pu/contact-the-police/>).

If you want to report the crime but don't want the police to know your identity, you can call Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111 or visit [crimestoppers-uk.org](https://www.crimestoppers-uk.org).

Third party reporting

If you do not want to contact the police yourself, someone else – who would formally be described as ‘a third party’ – can make a report to the police on your behalf. This includes:

- a GP
- another health practitioner
- a friend or family member
- a support organisation

A third party does not have to reveal who you are. They can report as much or as little detail as you wish. This can still be useful to the police now or in the future.

What happens when you report a crime

When you first report a crime you may be asked about details like:

- whether there are any risks to your ongoing safety
- what happened to you
- any injuries you might have, and whether you need medical help
- if you know the person(s) responsible or if you can describe them
- when and where the offence happened
- whether there are any witnesses

These questions help the police to start an investigation and understand if you are at risk of further harm.

Notes from these initial police reports may be used if the case goes to court. If your initial report is made over the telephone, a transcript may be used.

When you report a crime to the police you will be given a crime reference number. When contacting the police about your case after the initial report, tell them this number as it helps to identify your case within the police system.

What you are entitled to when reporting a crime

Under the Victims' Code, when reporting a crime, you have the following rights (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-code-of-practice-for-victims-of-crime>):

- to use an interpreter if you have difficulty understanding or speaking English
- to use a sign language interpreter if you are deaf or hard of hearing
- to have the crime recorded without needless delay
- to be given written confirmation of the report in a language and using words that you understand – this confirmation will include:
 - ◆ basic details about the offence
 - ◆ your crime reference number
 - ◆ contact details of the police officer dealing with your case

If the police think that providing written confirmation will increase the risk of harm to you, they will provide this information in another way.

The police will also explain to you where you can get further information about your rights (https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/974376/victims-code-2020.pdf).

The police can help to put you in touch with an **Independent Sexual Violence Advisor for support**.

If you are not given any of this information, you can ask for it. After reporting the crime, the police will talk to you about the next steps for investigating your complaint. More information about how the police investigate a case can be found in our guide 'Investigating a rape or sexual assault'. Further guides on the criminal justice system can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guides-for-victims-of-rape-and-sexual-assault>.

If you want to report a rape or sexual assault that happened abroad

You can still seek support within the UK no matter where the offence(s) took place.

If you are in a European Union country, you can make a report by calling 112 for local emergency services.

Wherever you are in the world, contact +44 (0)20 7008 5000 for your nearest British Embassy, High Commission or Consulate, or the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office in London.

Consular staff at the the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office will provide you with immediate support on the telephone 24/7. They will try to provide in-person assistance as soon as possible, where timing and location allow. They can also tell you about local police and legal procedures.

If you want to contact the police, consular staff may be able to attend the police station with you, where timing and location allow.

In most countries, you must report the crime before returning to the UK if you want it to be investigated locally.

In a very small number of countries, being the victim of rape or sexual assault could be unsafe or considered illegal. If you have any concerns about this, contact the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office for advice.

More information is available on rape and sexual assault abroad (<http://www.gov.uk/guidance/victim-of-rape-and-sexual-assault-abroad>).

Country-specific information for victims of rape or sexual assault is also available (<http://www.gov.uk/government/collections/rape-and-sexual-assault-abroad>).

Travel advice pages contain up-to-date, country-specific information on the local security and safety situation and should be read before travelling abroad (<http://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice>).



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