

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?

- Crime in this country has decreased by a quarter since 1997.
- The risk of becoming a victim of crime is at a historic low and has fallen by a third 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 journey of 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.

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 of crime.
- 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.

The police will also offer to put you in touch with Victim Support for help and information.

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.

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.

You can expect to be treated sensitively and with respect by the CJS

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 for witnesses going to court.
- 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 right charge

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 right charge 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.

Less serious cases – like theft or handling stolen goods – are usually heard at a **magistrates' court**.

More serious cases – like murder, rape and serious assault – will be heard at a **Crown Court**.

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. See www.cjsonline.gov.uk for information for witnesses and to take a 'Victim's Walkthrough'.

If you are a defendant, or you know someone who is, you can get help and advice at www.cjsonline.gov.uk and from the **Legal Services Commission** at www.legalservices.gov.uk

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 witnesses in all Crown courts and magistrates' courts.
- The government is developing specialist courts to deal with local problems. Special courts for domestic violence are already in place.
- The CJS is clamping down on people who don't pay fines or turn up at court.
- We are introducing reforms to allow an offender's previous convictions to be included in court hearings.

There are three kinds of criminal court:

1. Magistrates' courts

Magistrates' courts generally deal with less serious cases – like motoring offences, minor theft and criminal damage. Many magistrates are volunteers from the local community who go through special training. Three magistrates hear each case and pass sentence.

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

There are special youth courts to handle most cases 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.

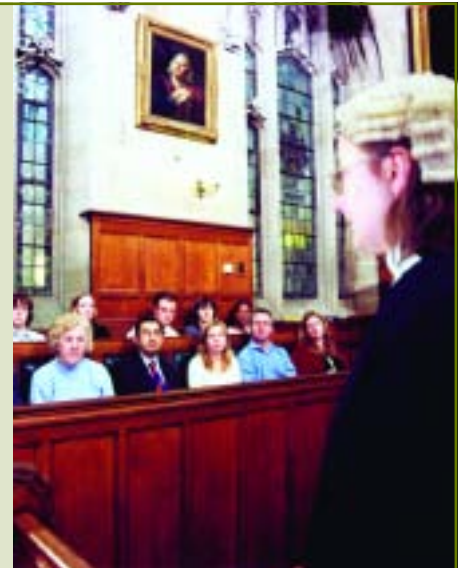
The courts rely on the commitment of victims and witnesses to speak out

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

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 brought 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 March 2004, 2,445 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.

Magistrates and judges have four options:

1. to find the person not guilty
2. fining the offender
3. a community sentence
4. a prison sentence for adults or a custodial sentence for young people.

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, such as by acting as a mentor.

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 5,000 volunteers on its Youth Offender Panels and 5,000 mentors acting as positive role models for young offenders.
- 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. So, prisons promote responsible behaviour to try to reduce the risk of prisoners offending again in the future.

Offenders with a community sentence are supervised by probation officers or a local Youth Offending Team (YOT). Some people who leave prison will also report to a probation officer 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.

Prison and probation services have recently been brought together to form the National Offender Management Service (NOMS), which will create a single service responsible for the management of offenders. NOMS will be responsible for punishing and rehabilitating offenders so that they are less likely to reoffend.

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.

In the end, this 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 gives them a sense of self-respect to help them get their life back on track.

Call your local prison service establishment.

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?

Information on the CJS

Criminal Justice System and Office for
Criminal Justice Reform

www.cjsonline.gov.uk

Police Service

www.police.uk

www.policereform.gov.uk

Crown Prosecution Service

www.cps.gov.uk

Magistrates' courts

www.dca.gov.uk

www.magistrates-association.org.uk

Crown courts

www.courtservice.gov.uk

www.dca.gov.uk

HM Prison Service

www.hmprisonservice.gov.uk

National Probation Service

www.probation.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

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.lslo.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 efforts 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 reforming 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 find out more about the work of the Race Unit, contact CJSRace@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk

