



How long waits in the Crown Court affect people

What we found out



Easy Read



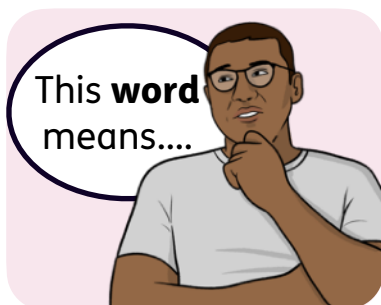
This is an Easy Read version of some information. It may not include all of the information but it will tell you about the important parts.



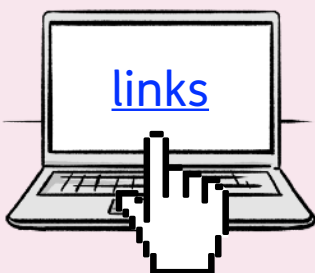
This Easy Read booklet uses easier words and pictures. Some people may still want help to read it.



Some words are in **bold** - this means the writing is thicker and darker. These are important words in the booklet.



Sometimes if a bold word is hard to understand, we will explain what it means.



[Blue and underlined](#) words show links to websites and email addresses. You can click on these links on a computer.

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About this booklet



This is a report from the **Victims Commissioner for England and Wales**.



The **Victims Commissioner for England and Wales** works to improve how the police and court system works for victims.



This report is about **victims** of crime who have to wait a long time to go to court.

A **victim** is someone who is harmed or injured because of a crime.

The report will tell you about how the long waits in the Crown Court affect:



- Victims.



- The police and court system.



- Victim services - these are groups that support victims of crime.



The report will also tell you how victims not getting enough information about the long waits makes it worse.

What we found out



In 2024, we did 2 **surveys** - 1 with victims of crime and 1 with staff who work for victims' services.

A **survey** is a set of questions for you to answer.



We also talked to victims who had waited a long time to go to court.

How long waits for Crown Court affect victims' health



Victims said that waiting for a long time to go to court made them very stressed and affected their **mental health**.

Mental health is the way you think, feel, and behave. Having good mental health means being able to cope with your emotions.



Some victims said that the long waits made it hard for them to move on and recover from the crime.



The long waits made some victims have thoughts of **suicide**.

Suicide is when you kill yourself on purpose because you are finding life too difficult.



It is possible to stop suicide. There are support services that can help, like The Samaritans: www.samaritans.org



Some victims and staff said that waiting for a long time to go to court made victims **self-harm** or **misuse alcohol and drugs**.



Self-harm is when you hurt yourself on purpose.



Misusing alcohol and drugs is when you drink alcohol or take drugs in a way that harms your body or mind.

How long waits for Crown Court stop victims from moving on with their lives



Victims said that the long waits made their daily lives difficult.



Some victims said that even when they were given a court date, this was changed many times which made this worse.



They said they had to take a lot of time off work or school to attend each court date.



Some victims said that the relationships they had with their family and friends were affected by the long waits for court.



Other victims said the long waits for court made it hard for them to apply for **compensation** in time.

Compensation is when money is given to someone to make up for the hurt they have experienced as a result of the crime.

How long waits for Crown Court make it hard for the police and court system to work well



The long waiting time for the trial meant that victims could not remember what happened during the crime as well as they had before.



Some victims and staff said this meant they might give less strong evidence in court.



Other victims and staff said the long waits for trial meant victims did not want to go to court or give evidence anymore.



Some victims said they could not trust the justice system anymore.



This made them less likely to want to deal with the criminal justice system again.

How long waits for Crown Court make it harder for victim services to help victims



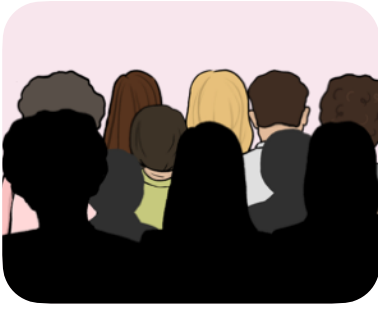
Some victims said the long waits stopped them from getting support.



This is because they were told they could not have therapy about the crime until the trial had finished.



This meant they spent a long time without support, which stopped them from recovering.



The long waits in the Crown Court also meant that support services were trying to help a larger amount of people.



They said they did not have enough staff to do this which meant they needed to put victims on a **waiting list** to receive support.



A **waiting list** is a list of people who have asked for something which cannot be given to them straight away.

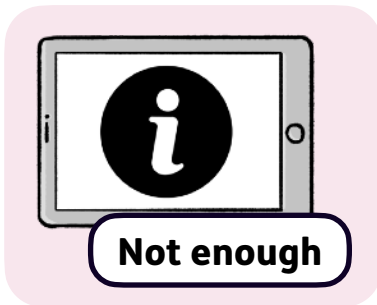


Some support staff said that not being able to help everyone meant that staff were less happy with the job they were doing.



This meant that some people were very stressed and wanted to leave their jobs.

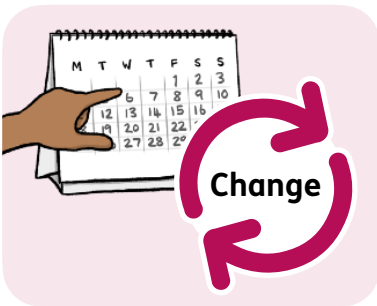
How victims not getting enough information about the long waits makes it worse



Victims said they were not given enough information when they were waiting for trial.



This included not being told about how long they would have to wait to go to court.



Some victims said they were only told on the day of the trial or the day before the trial that the trial date had been changed to another date in the future.

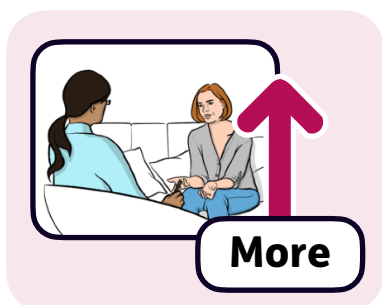


This made them stressed and upset as they had already been waiting a long time to be able to go to court and some victims had already travelled there.

What should happen now



We have some ideas about how the Crown Court can improve.



There should be more help for victims who are affected by the long waits in the Crown Court.

This means that:



- The courts need to make sure that they are looking at what victims need all the way through the court process.



- The courts should look at where waiting a long time for court can put certain groups of people at more risk of harm.

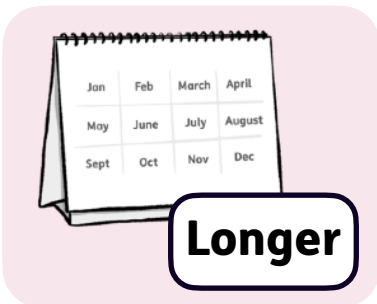


- Organisations in the criminal justice system who are giving victims advice should tell them they are allowed to have therapy if they want to before the trial takes place.



There should be more help for victims whose lives and futures are affected by the long waits in the Crown Court.

This means that:



- There should be a longer deadline so victims can still apply for **criminal injuries compensation** even if the trial is delayed.



Criminal injuries compensation is when money is given to someone to make up for the hurt they have experienced as a result of the crime.



- Victims should be able to claim back the money they spent on getting to court, even if the trial does not go ahead.



More needs to be done to make sure the courts and criminal justice system can carry on working properly.

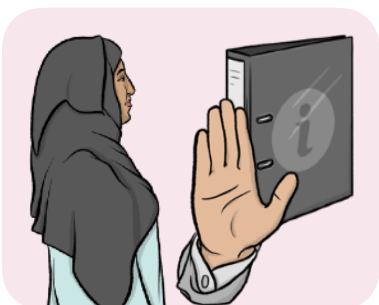
This means there should be an organisation that makes sure rules and systems in the courts are followed to look at:



- The needs and rights of victims in the court system.



- How victims are spoken to.

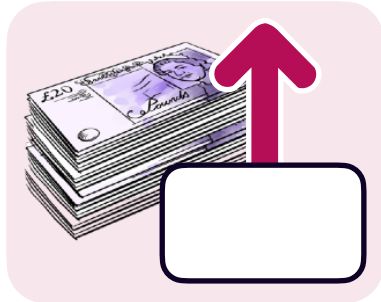


- Barriers there might be to them accessing information.

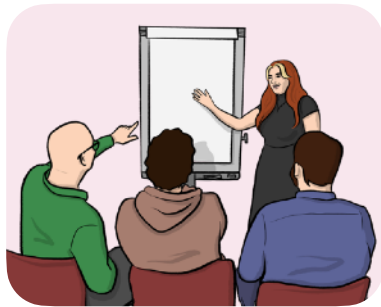


There should be help for victim services who are affected by the long waits in the Crown Court so they can carry on supporting victims.

This means that:



- There needs to be more funding to help support services provide very good support to victims.



- Staff should have training and support to help them with the stress of their job.



Organisations need to share information better with victims about the long waits in the Crown Court and what can be done to help.

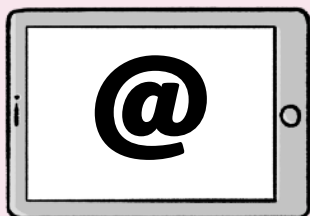


This means that there should be a review which looks at how well information is shared with victims all the way through the court process.

Find out more



You can look at our website here:
www.victimscommissioner.org.uk



The best way to contact us is by:

- Email:
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You can also contact us by:

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