



The Victims and Prisoners Act

IOPC factsheet

What is the Victims and Prisoners Act 2024?

Part one of the [Victims and Prisoners Act \(VPA\) 2024](#) (the VPA) introduces measures to promote and enhance the rights of victims outlined in the Victims' Code and ensure that criminal justice agencies deliver these rights. The IOPC must comply with the VPA and the Victims' Code when conducting a criminal investigation.

More information on the VPA can be found in the relevant circular from the Ministry of Justice on this [page](#) and in the [explanatory notes](#) to the Act.

Most of part one of the VPA came into force on 29 January 2025. This factsheet deals with how the VPA relates to the IOPC. It will be updated as further information comes to our attention.

Who is defined as a victim under the Act?

The VPA introduced an amended definition of victim which, in brief, includes people who have suffered harm because:

- they were subjected to criminal conduct
- they saw, heard, or directly experienced criminal conduct when it took place
- a close family member died as a direct result of criminal conduct
- they are a child and a victim of domestic abuse, which is criminal conduct

Harm includes physical, mental or emotional harm and economic loss.

Criminal conduct means conduct which is a criminal offence.

What is the Victims' Code?

The Victims' Code of Practice, also known as the Victims' Code, is guidance which is required by the VPA. It sets out the services and minimum standards that a victim of crime must be provided with by organisations in England and Wales. We are one of these organisations, as are the police.

Is the Victims' Code applicable within IOPC misconduct investigations and reviews?

The IOPC must comply with the VPA and the Victims' Code when conducting a criminal investigation but if you have any questions, or feel you require further support or information, please do not hesitate to contact your IOPC point of contact.

What rights do victims have under the Victims' Code and VPA 2024?

There are 12 main rights in the code. These relate to things like making sure a victim/survivor is given information about the investigation, trial process and outcome, and their right to be referred to support services.

In certain circumstances, you may also be eligible for enhanced rights.

Further information including a full explanation of each right and enhanced rights is [available here](#).

Who else can receive rights under the Victims' Code?

Someone can also receive rights under the code if they are:

- a) a parent or guardian of the victim if the victim is under 18 years of age, or
- b) a nominated family spokesperson if the victim has a mental impairment or has been so badly injured because of a criminal offence that they are unable to communicate or lack the capacity to do so.

How can I complain if I feel that my rights are not being upheld under the Victims' Code and VPA 2024 in an IOPC investigation?

Victims and survivors have a right to complain if they do not feel that their rights, as per the Victims' Code, are being upheld. In the first instance, if you feel comfortable to do so, you should raise this with the investigation team so that they can assist you directly.

If you wish to make a complaint you can do so to IOPC's Complaints and Feedback team via [Feedback about our service](#).

Please note - this is only for IOPC complaints. If you wish to complain about the police not upholding your rights, please contact the [police service or organisation](#) you wish to make a complaint about.

What are my rights if I am unhappy with the IOPC's response to my complaint?

If you are a victim/survivor under the Victims' Code and your complaint is about the IOPC failing to comply with the Victims' Code in an independent or directed criminal investigation, then you can contact the Public Service Ombudsman and ask them to look at your complaint using their [online complaint form](#).

Please note that the Public Service Ombudsman will only consider a complaint about the IOPC where the IOPC are investigating criminally, or directing a criminal investigation, and where you have completed both stages of the IOPC's internal complaints process but remain dissatisfied.

The IOPC are unable to escalate your complaint to the Public Service Ombudsman on your behalf.

There is no route for external escalation of any other complaints about the IOPC or its staff.

Where can I get extra support to help me during my contact with the IOPC?

The IOPC can signpost you to appropriate and relevant local and national support services, depending on your needs. Please contact your IOPC point of contact for further information. In general, some useful support services are:

- Your GP and [NHS](#) services.
- Your Local Authority (council) website will contain local support information.
- [Samaritans](#) available 24/7 to speak to anyone who needs support.
- [Victim Support](#) independent, free, and confidential advice following a crime.
- [Cruse Bereavement Support](#) available for bereavement support and advice.
- [Inquest](#) provide expertise on state related deaths and investigations to bereaved people.
- The [Victims Commissioner](#) also provides independent advice for victims.

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We welcome telephone calls in Welsh

Rydym yn croesawu galwadau ffôn yn y Gymraeg

