

West Sussex Youth Offending Service

Referral Orders - A Guide for Young People and Parents

What is a Referral Order?

In most cases, a young person aged 10—17 who appears in Court for the first time and pleads Guilty to an offence, will be made subject to a Referral Order. The length of a Referral Order can vary from 3 to 12 months, depending on the seriousness of the offence. The Court decides the length of the Order and you are then referred to a Referral Order Panel, which will agree the work you are to do whilst you are on a Referral Order. This is to: -

1. Allow you to hear about the impact of the offence on the victim.
2. Help you take responsibility for your behaviour.
3. Agree what you need to do to put things right.
4. Decide the best way to prevent you offending in the future.
5. See how you, your family and friends can support any changes you need to make.
6. Help you make positive decisions about your future.

What Happens After Court?

An officer from the Youth Offending Service (YOS) will meet you to discuss the offence and write a report including your needs and interests. A Referral Order Panel Meeting will then be convened and we will write to you with the date and time.

The Referral Order Panel Meeting

The Referral Order Panel consists of at least two volunteers who live in your area and a worker from the Youth Offending Service. The person you harmed will also be asked to come, or to send someone else to represent them, to let you know how they have been affected by your actions. Both you and the victim will have an opportunity to talk about the offence and its effects. It may be that your friends or family have been hurt by your actions. The Referral Order Panel will discuss with you and your family how you can 'make good' the harm you have caused and what can be done to prevent further re-offending. Out of these discussions will come a contract, which outlines the agreed action to be taken. If agreement cannot be reached, a second meeting will be held. The panel have an option of arranging a second meeting or returning the order to court.

The Contract

The contract will contain an element of reparation; either directly to the victim, e.g. a letter of apology, or indirectly through doing unpaid work in the local community. It will include activities to help you stop offending in the future, for example, returning to school or addressing your misuse of drugs. You will be asked to agree to the contract and then you, your parents and a Referral Order Panel Member sign it. The Referral Order begins on the date the contract is signed rather than when the Order was imposed by the Court.

You will meet with a worker from the Youth Offending Service on a regular basis and they will support you to successfully complete your Referral Order. You will be expected to attend all the sessions and appointments made for you.

If you fail to comply with the Contract in any way, a Referral Order Panel Meeting will be called to decide if you should be returned to Court for re-sentencing.

At the end of the Order

When you have successfully completed the Order, your conviction will be 'spent'. This means you do not have to declare it when applying for most jobs. If you re-offend, the Court when sentencing will take the Referral Order into account.

West Sussex Youth Offending Service have policies in place regarding confidentiality and information sharing and about making a complaint if you are not happy with the service you receive. These will be discussed with you at your first meeting with the Youth Offending Service, when you will also be asked to sign an agreement about your responsibilities whilst on a Referral Order.

If you have any questions or would like any further information, please contact:

The Youth Offending Service

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OFFICE HOURS

Monday – Thursday - 9.00am – 5.00pm

Friday - 9.00am – 4.30pm