

Going to court

Information for
witnesses and
victims going to
magistrates' court or
the Crown Court

Going to court?

Going to court as a witness or as the victim of a crime can be a worrying experience, particularly if it is your first time and you don't know what to expect.

Court procedures can be confusing. This leaflet tells you how to get information and support which will help you cope with giving evidence.

The Witness Service

The Witness Service helps witnesses, victims, their families and friends before, during and after a hearing.

It is run by Victim Support, the national charity which helps people cope with crime.

There is a Witness Service in every Crown Court centre and magistrates' court in England and Wales.

The service is confidential and free.

Trained volunteers provide emotional support and practical information about court proceedings.

The Witness Service will normally contact you in advance of the court hearing to offer its services.

The Witness Service helps

- witnesses who are called to give evidence, including defence witnesses
- victims of crime and their families and friends attending court for any reason
- children as well as adults.

If you are attending court, you may find it useful to take the following

- a friend or relative – you don't have to attend court alone (at the Central Criminal Court, known as the Old Bailey, you will have to give notice in advance that you are bringing someone with you)
- any information you have about the case (for example, the name of the police officer dealing with your case, if you know it)
- the letter asking you to attend court, if you receive one
- something to read or do – you may have to wait a long time for the case to be called
- money to cover costs on the day, such as car parking or refreshments.

Claiming expenses

If you are called as a witness, you can claim your expenses after the trial. These expenses may include travel to the court, essential childcare, or loss of earnings. Ask the Witness Service for more information on claiming expenses.

Our commitment

Victim Support offers a service to all sections of the community and is committed to ensuring that minority and disadvantaged groups are welcomed and involved throughout the organisation.

Victim Support welcomes comments and suggestions about the service provided for victims of crime. There is also a formal complaints procedure, if you think things have gone wrong. Please contact your local branch of Victim Support / the Witness Service or the National Office for further information.

Further information

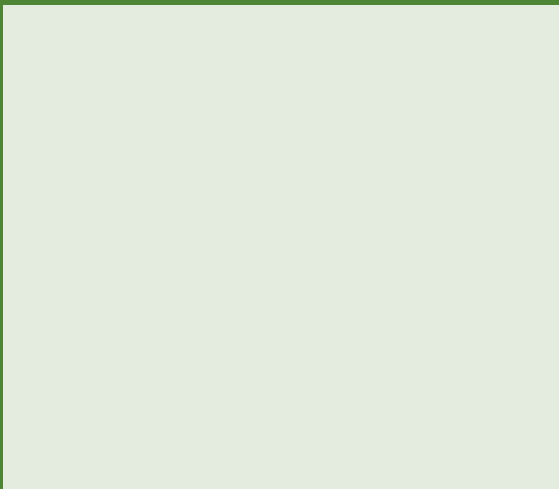
You may find it useful to refer to the *Witness in Court* leaflet, published by the Home Office. If you have received a letter from your local police advising you of the date you have to attend court, a copy of this leaflet should also have been enclosed.

The Witness Service can offer

- someone to talk to in confidence
- a visit to the court centre and, where possible, a look round a courtroom before you are called as a witness
- information on court procedures
- a quiet place for you to wait before and during the hearing
- someone to accompany you into the courtroom if you have to give evidence
- practical help, for example with expense forms
- to put you in touch with people who can answer specific questions about your case (the Witness Service cannot discuss evidence or offer legal advice)
- a chance to talk over the case when it has ended and to get more help and information.

If you are going to court as a witness or victim of crime, the Witness Service can provide free and confidential support to help you cope.

Contact the Witness Service at



Victim Supportline can also put you in touch with your local Witness Service.

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