



**Easy
Read**

What you need to know if you are the victim of a crime



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

Easy Read



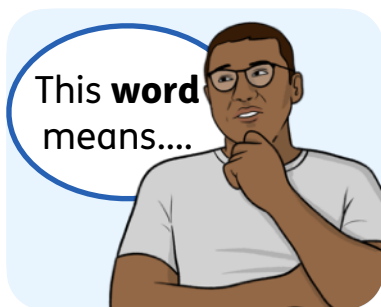
This is an Easy Read version of some information. It may not include all of the information but it will tell you about the important parts.



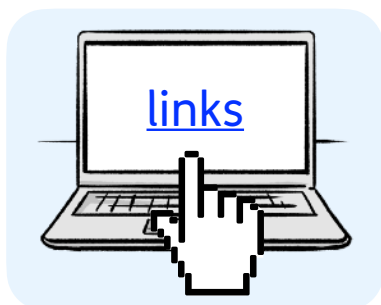
This Easy Read booklet uses easier words and pictures. Some people may still want help to read it.



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. There is a list of these words and what they mean at the end of the booklet.

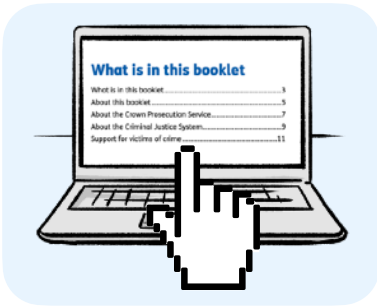


[Blue and underlined](#) words show links to websites and email addresses. You can click on these links on a computer.

What is in this booklet

What is in this booklet.....	3
About this booklet	5
About the Crown Prosecution Service.....	7
About the Criminal Justice System.....	9
Support for victims of crime	11
If you report a crime.....	15
Victim Impact Statement	18
How a decision is made	20
If the case is more serious.....	21
After we make a decision.....	25
Going to court	28
The first hearing	30
Plea hearings.....	32
If the defendant pleads guilty	33
If the defendant pleads guilty to some charges	35
If the defendant pleads not guilty	35
Before the trial	36
Getting to court	39
The trial.....	42
Support for you as a witness in court.....	43
The first day.....	47
What happens at the trial.....	50
Start of the trial	52
Giving evidence.....	53
After you give evidence	56
The verdict	57

After the trial.....61
 Defendants and appeals62
Find out more64
Important words and what they mean65



You can click on these titles to go straight to that part of the booklet.

About this booklet



The **Crown Prosecution Service (CPS)** is the organisation which takes criminal cases to court.



We want to make sure that **victims** of crime get **justice**.

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

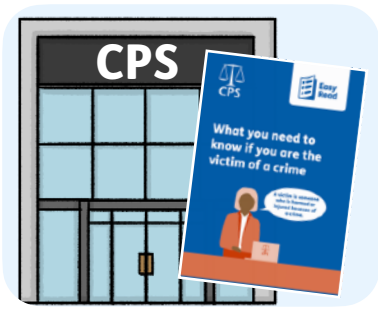


Justice is fairness. It means making a decision that is fair to everyone.



The CPS is an independent organisation.

This means it is not part of the government or the police.



This booklet will tell you more about the CPS.



It will also tell you what will happen if you tell the police that you have been the victim of a crime.



We know that this booklet is long. You can take as long as you need to read it.



You could read it in parts and take breaks if you need to.

About the Crown Prosecution Service

The job of the CPS is to:



- Decide which cases should be **prosecuted**.

Prosecuted means taken to court.



- Decide which law someone has broken and whether they should be **charged** with that crime.



- Give advice to the police when they start to look at what happened.



Being **charged** is when the police officially **accuse** someone of committing a crime.

Accuse means telling someone that you think a person has done something wrong.

The job of the CPS is also to:



- Explain in court why they think someone has done a crime.



- Help victims and **witnesses** who are asked to go to court by the CPS or police.

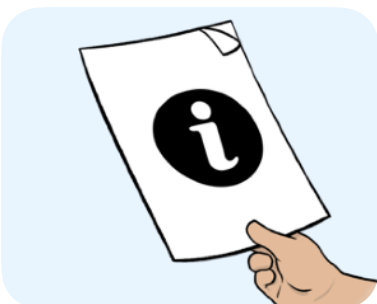
Witnesses are people who tell the court what they know about the crime, like:



- What they saw.



- What they heard.



- Other information about what happened.

About the Criminal Justice System

The Criminal Justice System is the organisations that work together to:



- Keep people safe.



- Deal with people who break the law.

The CPS is one of those organisations, and so are:



- The police, who **investigate** crimes and arrest people.

Investigate means to look into the crime to find out what happened and who did it.

The Criminal Justice System also includes:



- The courts, who decide if someone has done the crime and what should happen next.



- Prisons, where people are locked up for committing crime.

Support for victims of crime



You have **rights** if you are a victim of a crime.

Rights are things that every person should have by law. Like the right to be able to understand and to be understood.



You can find out more about your rights as a victim on the government website, here:

[gov.uk/victims-code](https://www.gov.uk/victims-code)



There is an Easy Read version of the information.



There are services to support victims.



You can contact them yourself, or ask the police to contact them for you.



You can find out more on the government's website, here: [victimandwitnessinformation.org.uk/](https://www.victimandwitnessinformation.org.uk/)

If you need help in an emergency, you should call 999 to speak to:



- The police.



- The ambulance service.



- The fire service.



If you want to talk to someone about what happened to you, you can ask for counselling from the NHS. You can find out more here:

www.nhs.uk/service-search/mental-health/find-an-nhs-talking-therapies-service



There is a Witness Service to help you understand what will happen at court.

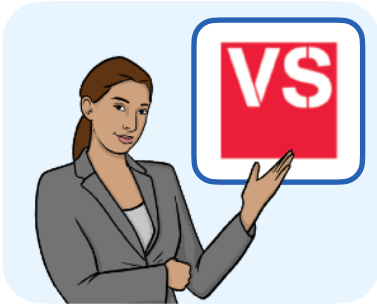


They can also come into court with you if you want them to.



You can find out more on their website here:

citizensadvice.org.uk/witness

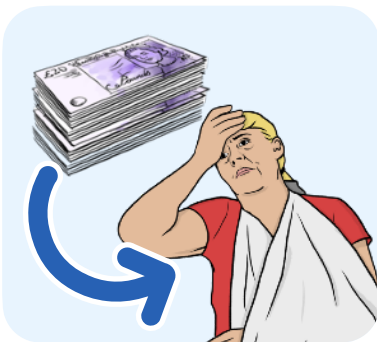


If you are in London, you can get help from Victim Support.



You can find out more on their website here:

victimsupport.org.uk



If you have been injured or lost money because of a crime, you might be able to get **compensation**.

Compensation is usually an amount of money.



You can find out more here:

gov.uk/guidance/criminal-injuries-compensation-a-guide

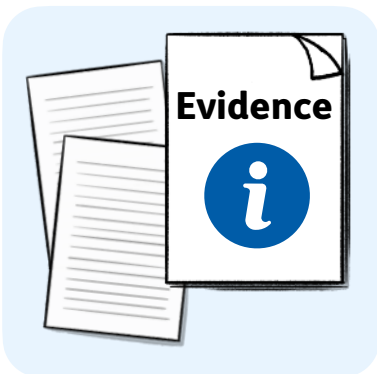
If you report a crime



If a crime happens, you should tell the police.



The police will decide if they are going to investigate the crime.



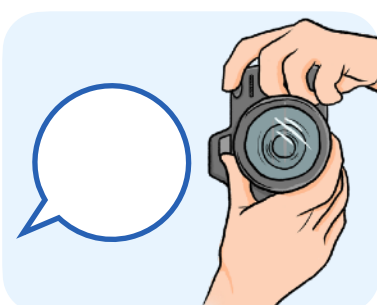
The police will look for **evidence**.

Evidence can be facts (including what you say or other people say about what happened), objects or documents that the police use to show what happened.



The police will ask you what happened and may write down what you say.

This is called your **witness statement**.



They may also take a video recording of what you say which could be played at court.

The police will also:



- Talk to other people about what happened. They will ask them about what they saw and anything else they know.



- Talk to anyone they think might have committed the crime. They are called **suspects**.

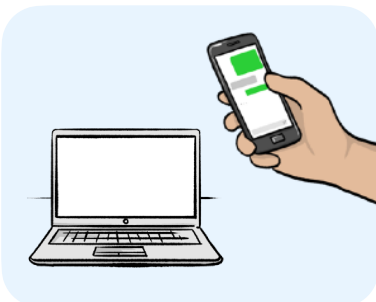
The police will look for other evidence, like:



- Evidence from any cameras in the street.



- Fingerprints.



- Evidence from computers or text messages.



The police might ask to look at your phone or computer if they think there might be important evidence there.

It is your choice whether to do this or not.



They might ask other people for evidence, like a doctor.



If they do ask other people for evidence, they can only ask for exactly the information they need.

Victim Impact Statement



If you want to, you have the right to give a Victim Impact Statement, as well as your witness statement.

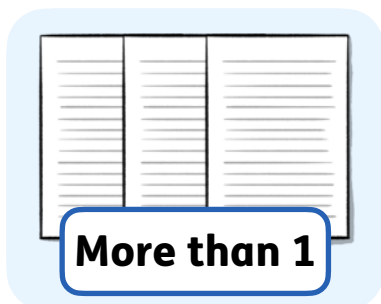


In the Victim Impact Statement you can explain how the crime has affected you.



You can write a Victim Impact Statement at any time until the **defendant** is sentenced.

After the police charge a suspect, they are called a **defendant**.



You can make more than one Victim Impact Statement.



Your Victim Impact Statement is evidence, so we will show it to the court and the **defence team**.

The **defence team** are the people who help the suspect, like their lawyer.

How a decision is made



In some cases, like traffic offences or shoplifting, the police will decide if they have enough evidence to take the suspect to court and charge them.



If the police do not think they have enough evidence, they will not charge the case.



If the police do not charge the case, you can ask them to take another look at it.

This is called the **Victims' Right to Review (VRR)**.



The police will tell you what is happening at each stage of the case, and how to contact them if you have any questions or worries.

If the case is more serious



If the police think that the case is more serious and they have enough evidence, they will hand the case over to us to deal with.

More serious cases include these crimes:

- **Hate crime.**



Hate crime is being targeted or attacked because other people think you are different from them and do not like that you are different. For example, because of your disability.



- **Domestic abuse.**

Domestic abuse is when you are harmed by a family member or someone you live with or have lived with.



More serious cases also include any crimes which carry a **sentence** of more than 6 months in prison.



A **sentence** is the punishment someone has to do if a court decides they are **guilty** of a crime, and how long they have to do it for.

Guilty means they did the crime.



In more serious cases, we will look at the evidence to check that we agree with the police's decision before we go ahead with a prosecution.



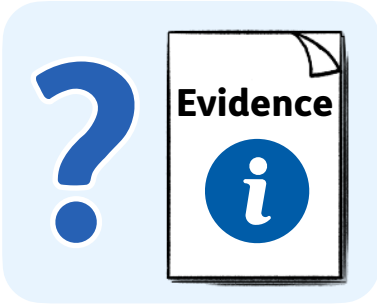
If we decide there isn't enough evidence to prosecute we will tell you why.



If you do not agree with our decision and our reasons why, you can ask us to look at the case again under the Victims' Right to Review (VRR).



When we make our decision, we think about 2 different questions.



First we decide if there is enough evidence in the case. There is enough evidence if it is more likely than not that the suspect will be found guilty in court.



Then we think about whether it is in the **public interest** for the case to go to court.

The **public interest** means what is good for everyone in the local community and the whole country.

To decide what is in the public interest we will think about:



- How serious the crime was and the harm caused to the victim.



- How the crime has affected local people.



You can find out more about how we make our decision on our website, here:

www.cps.gov.uk/publication/code-crown-prosecutors



There is an Easy Read version of the information.

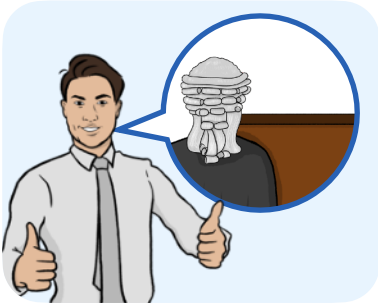


We will make our decision as quickly as we can.



The police officer on your case will tell you what the suspect might be charged with.

After we make a decision



If we decide that the case should go to court, we tell the police.

The police will then charge the suspect.



Remember, after the police charge a suspect, they are called a **defendant**.



Sometimes a defendant will have to be **remanded in custody** until they go to court.

Remanded in custody means being locked up, by an organisation like the police or in prison.



Sometimes a defendant will be released on **bail**.

Bail means that the defendant does not have to be locked up, but will have to go to court when they are told to. If they do not go to court at that time and date they are committing a crime.

If they are released on bail, they might have to follow some rules, like:



- Giving their passport to the police.



- Not contacting you.



They may also not be allowed to go near where you live or work.



If they break any of the rules, you should tell the police and they might be sent to prison.

The police will tell you:



- That the defendant has been charged.



- What they have been charged with.



- If they have been remanded in custody.



The police will also tell you about any rules they must follow if they are released on bail.



If you are unhappy with any part of our service to you, you can make a complaint on our website:

[contact.cps.gov.uk/](https://www.contact.cps.gov.uk/)

Going to court



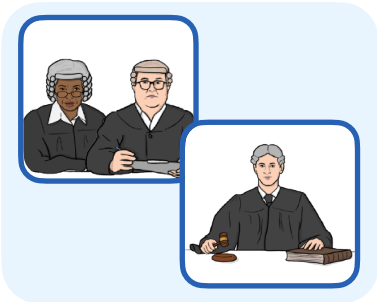
After a defendant has been charged, they will have to go to court.

There are different types of court, like:

1. **Magistrates'** court, where a group of magistrates usually make decisions.



A **magistrate** is like a **judge**. A **judge** is the person in charge of a courtroom.



In court, there are usually either:

- 2 or 3 magistrates who work together.
- 1 district judge.



They listen to all the evidence and make decisions, including:

- Whether the defendant is guilty or not guilty.
- What the sentence should be if the defendant is found guilty.



2. Crown Court.

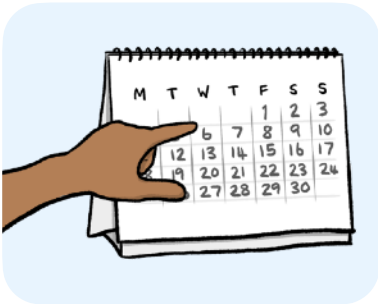
In the Crown Court, a **jury** decides if the person is guilty or not guilty.

A **jury** is 12 people who have been chosen to make decisions in a case.



There is also a judge in the Crown Court.

The judge makes sure that the case is dealt with fairly.

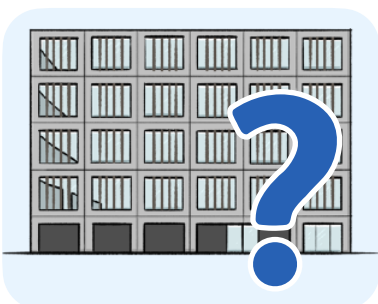


The judge will also decide:

- When each part of the case will happen.



- How you will be best supported to give evidence.



- What the sentence should be if the defendant is found guilty.

The first hearing



The first hearing will be in a magistrates' court.



The magistrates might have to decide which court the full case should be heard in.



A magistrates' court can give sentences of up to 6 months in prison.



So less serious crimes are **tried** in a magistrates' court.

Tried means a court listens to all the evidence in a case and makes a decision.



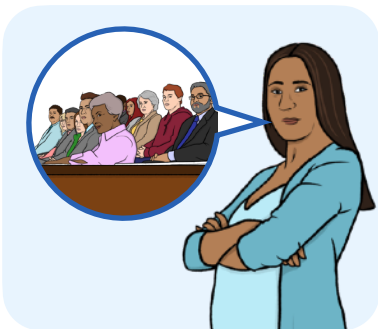
Serious crimes are tried in a Crown Court.



If it is not clear if the crime is serious or not, the magistrates' court will decide which court the case should be heard in.



This is called an “either way” case.



The defendant can ask to have a **trial** in front of a jury in a Crown Court.

A **trial** is where a judge or jury listens to all the evidence in a case and makes a decision.



The magistrates' court will also decide if the defendant can be released on bail or will remain in custody.

Plea hearings

The next hearing is called the plea hearing. The plea hearing is where:



- Someone from the court reads out the charges.



- The defendant says if they are guilty or not guilty of each charge.



The plea hearing can be at the magistrates' court or the Crown Court.

The defendant might:



- **Plead guilty** to all the charges.
Plead guilty means they say they did the crimes.



- Plead guilty to some of the charges.



- Plead not guilty to all of the charges.

If the defendant pleads guilty



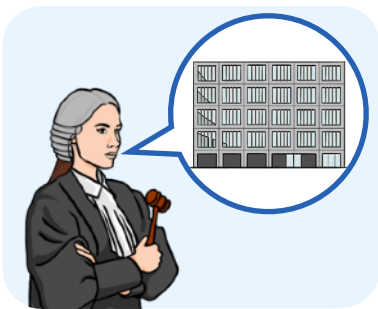
If the defendant pleads guilty, the court will get your Victim Impact Statement.



You can read your Victim Impact Statement to the court if you want to, and if the judge says you can.



Your Victim Impact Statement will help the judge or magistrate understand how the crime affected you.



The judge or magistrate will:

- Sentence the defendant, or



- Ask for more time to decide the sentence.



The judge or magistrate in the magistrates' court might decide to send the case to the Crown Court for a bigger sentence.

If the defendant pleads guilty to some charges

If the defendant pleads guilty to some of the charges, we will decide:



- If we accept the guilty pleas.



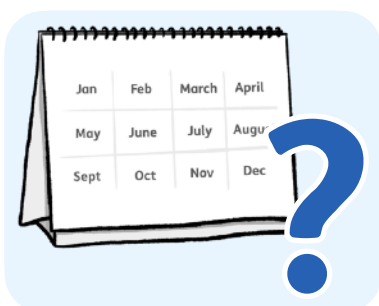
- What to do about the other charges.

If the defendant pleads not guilty

If the defendant pleads not guilty to any of the charges, the judge or magistrate will decide:



- Where the trial will be.



- When the trial will be.

Before the trial



We have to tell the defence team about the evidence we have.



We will make sure we do not share any of your personal information with them that they do not need to know.

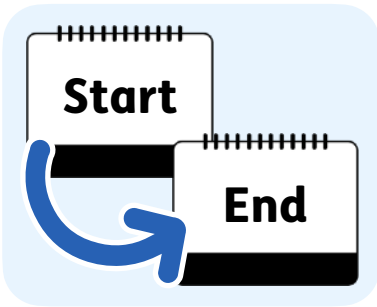


We might have to ask the court if we can use some of the evidence, like if we can show evidence to the court that the defendant was guilty of doing similar crimes in the past.



The police will tell you what is happening with the case before the trial.

The police will also tell you:



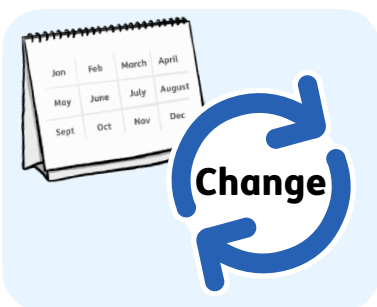
- When the trial should start and end.



- If you need to give evidence.



- What time you need to get to court.

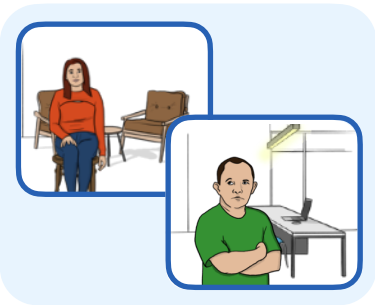


- If the date of the trial changes.

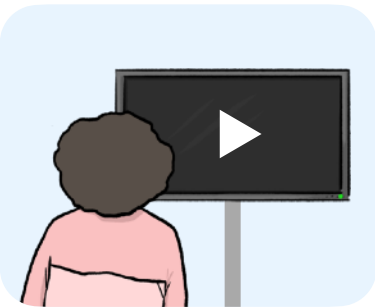
Witness Services can:



- Organise for you to visit the court before the trial.



- Help you stay away from the defendant, or their family and friends, in court if you want to.



If you have made a video of your evidence for us to show the court, the police will let you watch it again before the trial.



If you have given any evidence in writing, we will give it to you when you get to court so you can look through it again before the trial.

Getting to court



You need to plan how you will get to court.



The **Witness Care Unit** can help you with this.

The **Witness Care Unit** is a service that supports and helps people who have to go to court.

You should tell the police if:



- You need to use a taxi, train or plane to get to the court, or



- You live so far away that you have to stay overnight near the court to make sure you can get to the court on time.



We will pay for you to get to court and home again.

You can also ask us to pay for:



- Someone to look after your children, if you have them.



- Money you lose because you cannot work while you are in court.



You will be told how to ask us to pay for any of these things.



You can find out more on our website, here:

<https://www.cps.gov.uk/publication/witness-expenses-and-allowances>



If you have any questions about travel or what we pay for, please let your police contact know.

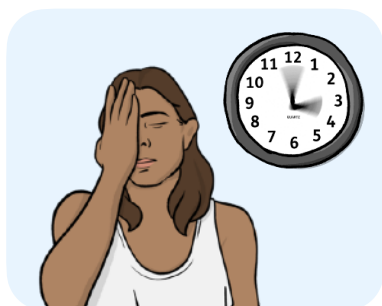
The trial



The trial will happen as soon as possible after the defendant has been charged.



But this might still be a long time.



We know it might be difficult to wait.



You can get support at any time.

Support for you as a witness in court



You will have to give evidence at the trial.

This means you will have to:



- Tell the court about what happened.



- Answer questions about what happened from the defence and prosecution teams.



You might be able to get support to give evidence if you want, called **Special Measures**.

You can ask for Special Measures if any of these apply to you:



- You are under 18.



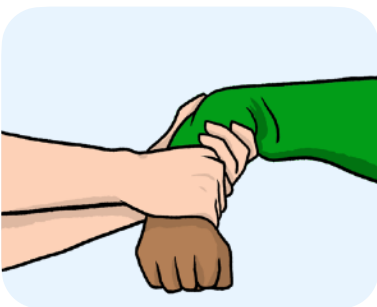
- You have a disability that would affect your evidence in court.



- You are frightened about giving evidence.



- You are a victim of domestic abuse, rape or sexual assault.



- You are a victim of modern slavery.



You can also get Special Measures if you are a victim or witness of crimes with guns or knives.

You might be able to:



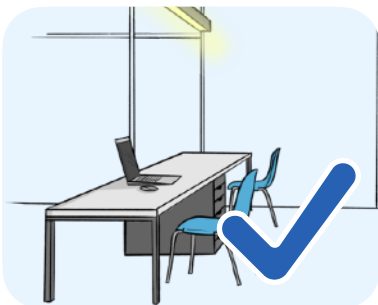
- Record your evidence on video.



- Answer questions about your evidence on video.



- Give evidence behind a screen so you cannot see the defendant.

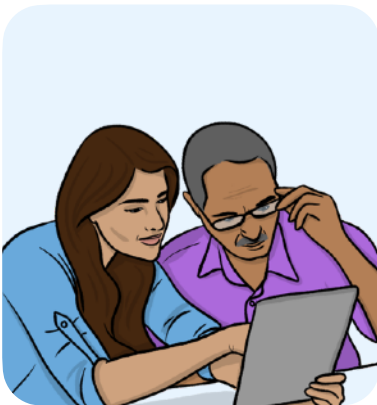


- Give evidence by a video link from somewhere outside the court room.

You might also be able to:



- Give evidence in private. This means only the people who need to be in court would be allowed in.



- Have support from an **intermediary**. This is a person who will help you understand the questions.

They will have had training about how to best support people with disabilities or needs.



- Have help to answer the questions, like using sign language or **technology**.

Technology is gadgets and equipment that help people.



If it helps, you can ask the judge and lawyers to take off their wigs and gowns.



The police will tell us if you need Special Measures.



We will ask the court if you can get Special Measures by doing an application.



The police will tell you what the court decides.

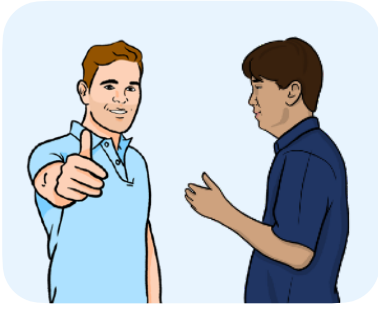
The first day



When you get to court, the security guards will show you the way to the Witness Service waiting room.



If you are giving your evidence from somewhere outside of the court room, you should do what the Witness Service or police have told you.

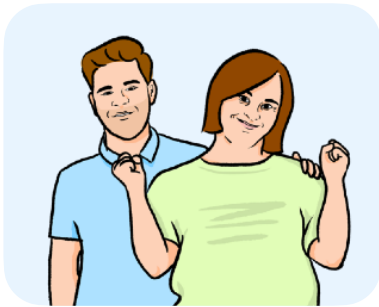


The Witness Service will tell you what is happening during the day.



If you are worried about seeing the witnesses from the defence side, you should tell:

- Your police contact



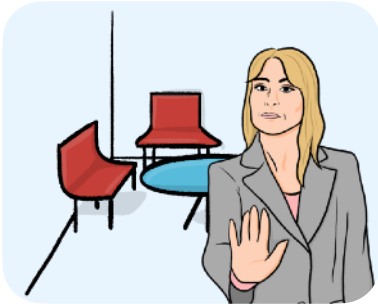
- Witness Services.



Before the trial starts, someone from the CPS will talk to you about what will happen during the day.



They will also talk to you about what the defence lawyer's case might be.



If you are giving evidence in court, you will have to stay in the waiting room until it is your turn.



If you are not giving evidence, or after you have finished giving evidence, you can watch the trial.



You can find out more about who will be in a magistrates' court here:
www.gov.uk/guidance/hmcts-whos-who-magistrates-court



You can find out more about who will be in a Crown Court here:
<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/hmcts-whos-who-crown-court>

What happens at the trial

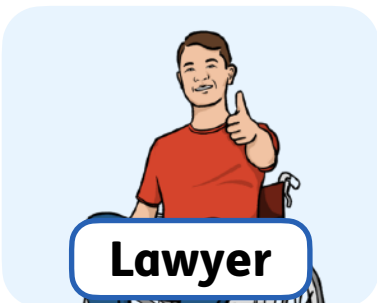


Barristers and lawyers usually tell the court about the case.

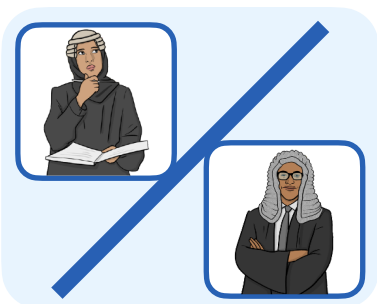
A **barrister** is a type of lawyer who speaks in a Crown Court.



Lawyers speak in a magistrates' court.



In this booklet, we use the word 'lawyer' to mean both lawyer and barrister.



The lawyers on each team have different jobs.



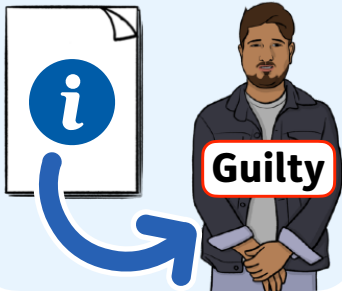
Prosecution

1 lawyer is called the prosecution lawyer, or the prosecutor. They are part of the prosecution team.



Defence

1 lawyer is called the defence lawyer. They are part of the defence team.



The prosecution lawyer has to tell the court how the evidence shows that the defendant is guilty.

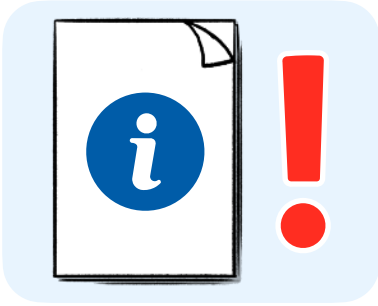


But the defence lawyer does not need to show that the defendant is innocent.

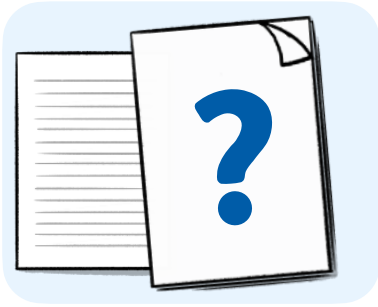


They have to show that the court cannot be sure that the defendant is guilty.

To do that they talk about:



- Problems with the evidence.



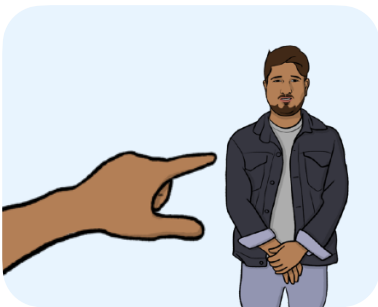
- Missing parts of the evidence.

Start of the trial



The prosecution lawyer will start the trial.

The lawyer will tell the court:



- About the charges against the defendant.



- The facts of the case.

Giving evidence

First



Because you are the victim, you will usually be the main witness in the case.

So you will probably give your evidence first.



If the court has said you can use Special Measures, they will be ready for you.



If you have not answered the questions from the defence's lawyer by video, you will need to answer them in court.

When answering questions you should:



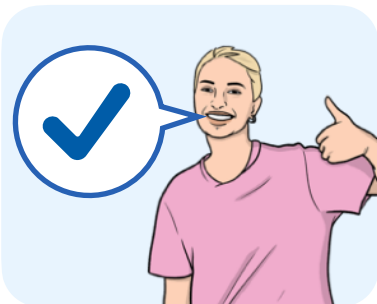
- Listen to the question carefully.



- Ask someone to repeat the question if you need to.



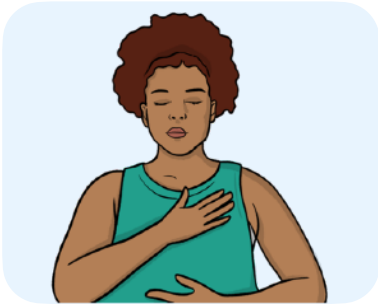
- Ask someone to ask the question in a different way if you do not understand.



- Tell the truth.



- Say you do not know the answer or you cannot remember if you need to.



You can ask for a break when you need one.



The judge or magistrate may stop the defence or prosecution lawyers from asking a question if they think it is not right.



The defence or prosecution lawyers might **object** to some questions being asked if they are not right.

In court, to **object** is when someone disagrees with a question being asked.

After you give evidence



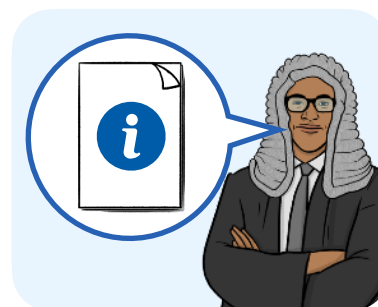
After you have given your evidence, other witnesses will give their evidence.



What the defendant said to the police about what happened will be read out at the trial.



The defendant may choose not to give evidence or be asked questions by the prosecution lawyers.



When all the witnesses have given evidence, the lawyers will make speeches about the evidence.



In a magistrates' court, the magistrates will go into a separate room to make their decision.



In the Crown Court, the judge will talk to the jury and then the jury will go and talk about the case and make their decision.

The verdict

**Guilty
or
not guilty**

The **verdict** is when the magistrate or jury decides if a person is guilty or not guilty.

**I want
to know**

You have the right to know what they decide.



You can go to court to hear the verdict if you want to.



We never know how long a jury or magistrates will take to make a decision.



Not guilty

If they decide the defendant is not guilty, they are free to go.



If they are found not guilty, it does not mean that the court did not believe you.

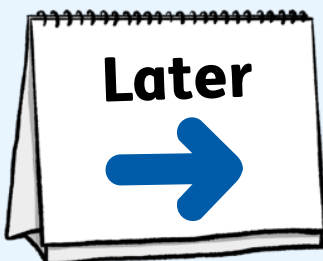


It means that they could not be sure that the defendant was guilty.



If the defendant is found guilty, the magistrates or judge can:

- Sentence them straight away, or



- Move the sentencing to later, to give them time to get more information.



They might want to know more about the defendant.



You can also go to the **sentencing**. This is where the magistrates or judge decide how someone will be punished if they are guilty.



If you do not want to go to the sentencing, your police contact will tell you what they decided.



You can read your Victim Impact Statement at the sentencing.

If you read out your Victim Impact Statement at the sentencing, you will:



- Get the same Special Measures as when you went to court.

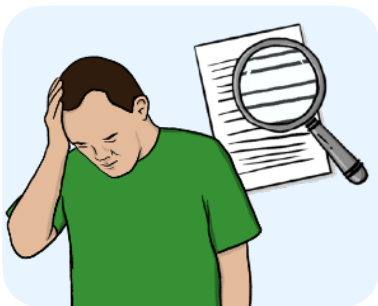


- Get money back if you have to travel to court for the sentencing.

After the trial



For some crimes, if anyone thinks the sentence is too short, they can **appeal** it.



An **appeal** is when you do not agree with a decision and ask for the case to be looked at again.



This appeal will go to the **Attorney General's Office**.

The **Attorney General's Office** is part of the government. It is their job to look at sentences that someone thinks are too short.

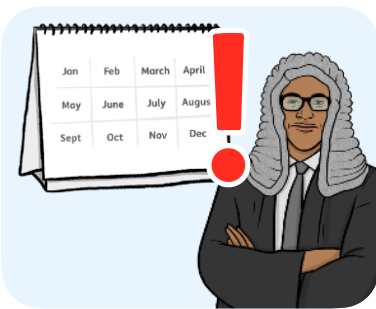


If the Attorney General's Office thinks the sentence is too short, they will ask the Court of Appeal to look at the case.



If the Court of Appeal decides to look at the case, they can keep the sentence the same or make it longer.

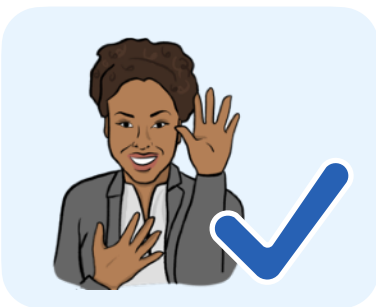
Defendants and appeals



The defendant and their lawyers can also appeal if they think that the sentence given to the defendant is too long.



If the defendant and their lawyers are appealing a sentence from the magistrates' court, the Crown Court will look at the appeal.



If the defendant and their lawyers are appealing a sentence from the Crown Court, the Court of Appeal will look at the appeal.



If the Court of Appeal decides to look at the case, they can keep the sentence the same or make it shorter.



You can find out more about asking for sentences to be looked at again here:

www.gov.uk/ask-crown-court-sentence-review

Find out more



You can look at our website here:

www.cps.gov.uk



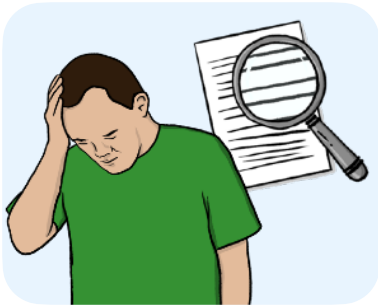
You can contact us by:

- Post:
102 Petty France
London
SW1H 9EA

Important words and what they mean



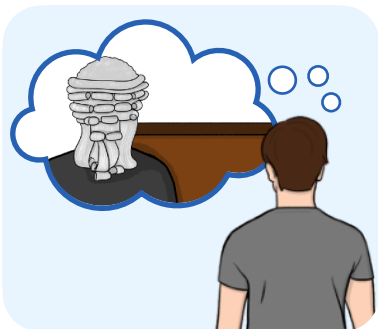
Accuse means telling someone that you think someone has done something wrong.



An **appeal** is when you do not agree with a decision and ask for the case to be looked at again.



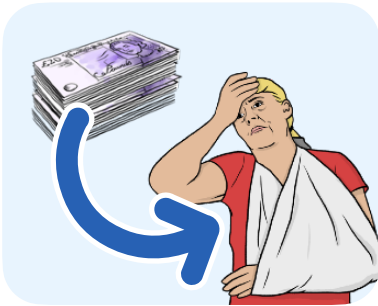
The **Attorney General's Office** is part of the government. It is their job to look at sentences that someone thinks are too short.



Bail means that they do not have to be locked up, but will have to go to court when they are told to. If they do not go to court at that time and date they are committing a crime.



A **barrister** is a type of lawyer who speaks for people in court.



People may get **compensation** if they are injured or have lost money because of a crime. It is usually an amount of money.



Being **charged** is when the police officially accuse someone of committing a crime.



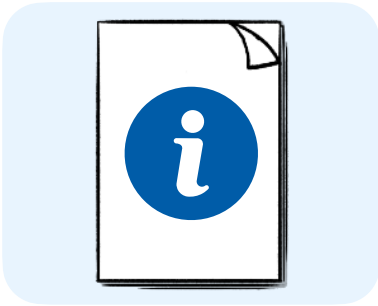
The **defence team** are the people who help the suspect, like their lawyer.



After the police charge a suspect, they are called a **defendant**.



Domestic abuse is when you are harmed by a family member or someone you live with or have lived with.



Evidence can be facts, objects or documents that the police use to show what happened.



If someone is **guilty**, it means they did the crime.



Hate crime is being targeted or attacked because other people think you are different from them and do not like that you are different.

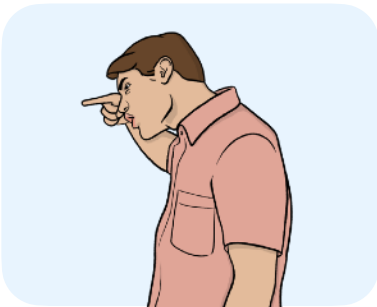


This can be because of your disability, race, religion, sexual orientation, or transgender identity.

Here are some ways hate crimes can happen:



- Hurting another person.



- Making threats - this means someone says they will do something bad to a person.



- Saying bad things to someone - this is called verbal abuse.



- Bullying - this is when 1 person or a group of people treats you in a bad way over and over again.



- Breaking items that belong to someone else.



Investigate means to look into the crime to find out what happened and who did it.



A **judge** is the person in charge of a courtroom.



A **jury** is 12 people who have been chosen to make decisions in a case.



Justice is fairness. It means making a decision that is fair to everyone.



A **magistrate** is like a judge. In court, there are usually either:

- 2 or 3 magistrates who work together.
- 1 district judge.



They listen to all the evidence and make decisions, including:

- Whether the defendant is guilty or not guilty.
- What the sentence should be if the defendant is found guilty.



In court, to **object** is when someone disagrees with a question being asked.



Plead guilty means the defendant says they did the crimes.



The **plea hearing** is where:

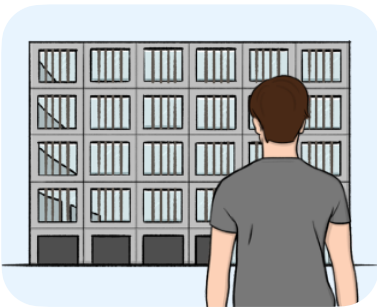
- Someone from the court reads out the different charges.
- The defendant says if they are guilty or not guilty of each charge.



The **public interest** means what is good for everyone in the local community and the whole country.



Prosecuted means taken to court.



Remanded in custody means being locked up, by an organisation like the police or in prison.



Rights are things that every person should have by law, like the right to be able to understand and to be understood.



A **sentence** is the punishment someone has to do if a court decides they are guilty of a crime, and how long they have to do it for.



The **sentencing** is where the magistrates or judge decide how someone will be punished, if they are guilty.



Suspects are people the police think might have committed a crime.



Tried means a court listens to all the evidence in a case and makes a decision.



The **verdict** is when the magistrate or jury decide if a person is guilty or not guilty.

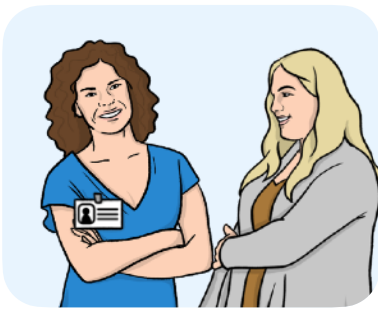


A **victim** is someone who is harmed or injured because of a crime.



Witnesses are people who tell the court what they know about the crime, like:

- What they saw.
- What they heard.
- Other information about what happened.



The **Witness Care Unit** is a service that supports and helps people who have to go to court.