

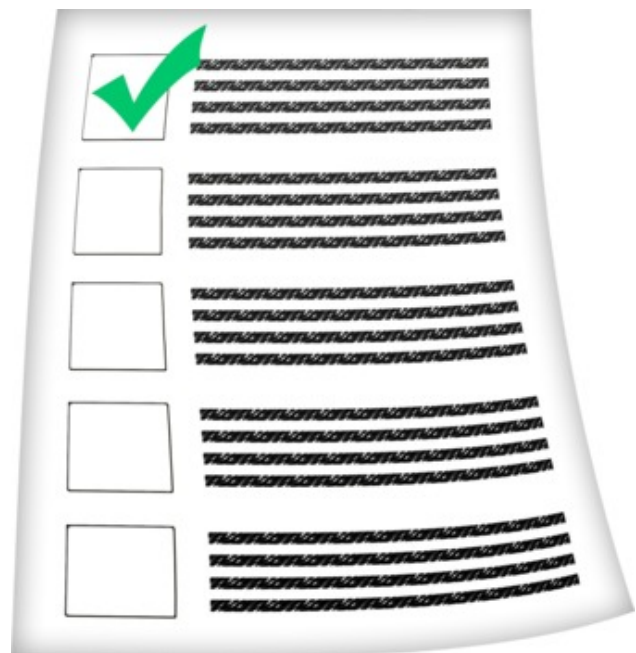


Department of
Justice
www.justice-ni.gov.uk

Witness Charter

A Charter for witnesses of crime

Your rights and the support you can get if you see a crime happen



What is this booklet about?

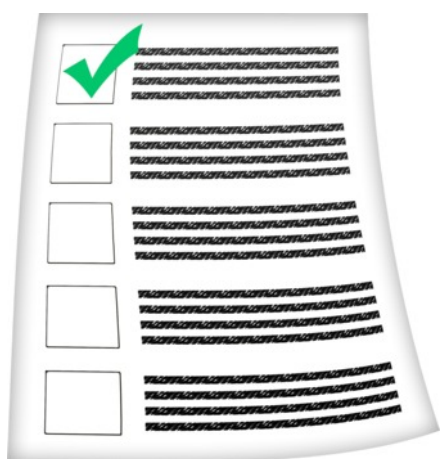


This booklet can help you if you see a crime happen in Northern Ireland.

If you see a crime happen you are called a **witness**.



This booklet tells you about your rights and the support you may be able to get if you are a witness.



It tells you the main things that the **Witness Charter** says.

The Witness Charter is a document.

It tells you what will happen if you have to go to court to talk about what you saw.

It tells you what information you will get.

What will happen if you are a witness?



You may have to talk to the police or a court if you:

- saw a crime happen
- know a person who may have done a crime



You will tell them what you know about the crime or the person.

This is called giving **evidence**.



This will help the court decide if someone did a crime or not.

This means if they are guilty or not guilty.

There are 2 sides in court.

They are:



- The people who think someone did the crime. They are called **the prosecution**

- The people who think someone did **not** do the crime. They are called **the defence**

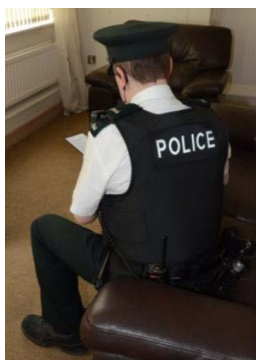


You may have to speak for the prosecution or defence in court.

You can get support when you speak up for any of these people.

People you may meet

You may talk with lots of people if you are a witness.



For example:

- the police



- staff in the courts



- the Public Prosecution Service

They decide if someone should go to court



- lawyers for the defence

They speak up for the person who may have done the crime

They try to show the person is not guilty



- the Victim and Witness Care Unit
- Victim Support NI or the NSPCC Young Witness Service



The people you speak to about the crime should:

- be polite and treat you fairly



- give you information in a way you understand if they can

This could be in another language if you need it



- ask you if you need support to tell the police or court what happened

You can usually take someone with you to support you as well

The people you speak to about the crime should:



- tell you about the support you may be able to get

This support should be free



- try to help you get the right support, if possible



- tell you what you need to do
- explain any decisions that are made about the crime if you ask them to

Telling the police or defence lawyer what you saw



You can tell the police if you see a crime. Or ask someone else to.

Call 101. If the crime is really bad call 999.



You will need to tell the Police what happened if you saw a crime.



You may also talk to a defence lawyer about what you saw.

They speak up for the person who may have done the crime.



The police or defence lawyer should only ask you questions when they need to.

You can usually take someone with you.



The police should:

- help you get any support you need to tell them and the court what happened
- tell you what may happen next



Going to court

You may need to go to court if you see a crime happen.

You will be told about this.



You may have to tell the court what happened and answer some questions.

You will get information about this if it happens.

If you are speaking for the prosecution

They are the people who think the person did the crime.



You can get help from people called:

- the Victim and Witness Care Unit
- Victim Support NI or
- the NSPCC Young Witness Service

They will tell you:

- what is happening and when
- what you need to do
- what decisions are made about the crime if you ask them to
- if you can get any money back that you spent going to court





You can ask them questions.

You can tell them what support you need.



You can ask to:

- have someone to support you

They can meet you at court when you get there



- go into court through a different door from the person you think did the crime



- be kept away from the person you think did the crime if possible

If you are speaking for the defence

They try to show that the person is not guilty.



The defence lawyer will tell you:

- what is happening and when
- what you need to do
- what decisions are made about the crime if you ask them to

If you are speaking for the prosecution or the defence

If you have to go to court to talk about what you saw you can:



- watch a video about what happens in court



- visit the court first to see what it is like

You may also be able to get extra help from the court.

This help is known as special measures.



If the judge says it is OK you can:



- sit behind a screen so you don't have to see the person you think did the crime



- tell the court what happened by video

This means you don't have to go into the courtroom



- get someone to help you answer questions if you find it hard to talk



- ask the judge and other people in court to take off their wigs and gowns

These are things some people wear in court.

Support if you feel upset or worried about the crime



There are people who can help if you feel upset, worried or need information.

They can also tell you about other support you can get.

If you are speaking for the prosecution

They are the people who think the person did the crime.

You can get in touch with:

Victim Support NI

Phone 028 9024 3133 or 0845 3030900





For children and young people you can get in touch with:

NSPCC Northern Ireland
Phone 028 9035 1135

NSPCC Young Witness Service
Phone 028 9448 7533

The police or the Victim and Witness Care Unit can help you get this support.



If you are speaking for the defence

They try to show that the person is not guilty.

Their lawyers can try to get you help to tell the court what you saw.

If you are not happy with the support you get



Tell the people you talked to about the crime.

Like the police, the courts, the defence lawyer or other people.



They should tell you how to say you are not happy.

This is called making a complaint.