

Adult

Children's Hearing

Virtual Tour of Court

Many people will never have been in a court before. Sometimes the court deals with cases when someone is accused of breaking the law and sometimes Children hearings are referred to the court.

Don't worry about going to court or being a witness ... as there are lots of people who can provide you with advice or assistance.

Show your citation to the person at reception who will direct you to the appropriate witness room.

Some courts have security procedures including metal detectors and bag searches - to make sure that nobody is carrying weapons or anything that is not allowed in court. This includes cameras – you must not take any photographs in a court, and mobile phones must be switched off

This might be your first ever visit to a court and you may be anxious. The children's reporter or the lawyer who asked you to be a witness will be able to help you.

You will be asked to wait in the witness waiting room until it's your turn to give evidence.

The people who have come with you, can also wait with you

If the court has agreed for you to have a supporter, they will be able to sit with you when it's your time to give your evidence.

Not all courtrooms look exactly the same but let us take you on a tour to find out who will normally be involved in a children's hearing court case – who they are and what they do.

First the sheriff – in a children's hearing court case the sheriff will decide what has been proven, whether grounds have been established and whether the case should be returned to the children's hearing for disposal.

I am the sheriff, I'm sitting up here on the bench but for children's hearings I usually sit at the table. Before becoming a sheriff I spent a long time as a lawyer. I make sure that everything is done fairly and that the court rules are followed. I will listen carefully to the evidence from all the witnesses and write it down. Then I will make my decision.

To help you give you evidence people in the court room will ask you questions.

I am the children's reporter. In court I will ask witnesses questions so that they can tell the court what they know. Sometimes there is a safeguarder who may ask questions too.

There may also be a lawyer in the courtroom who may ask you questions.

I am the lawyer. Like the children's reporter I will ask the witnesses questions too, sometimes there is more than one lawyer.

A safeguarder is an independent person who may have been appointed to look after the best interests of the child - they may also be in the courtroom.

I am a safeguarder, I may also be in courtroom.

The clerk of the court helps the court run smoothly and sits near the sheriff

I am the clerk of the court. I help make sure that everything in the court runs smoothly, it's my job to keep the court records and papers in order.

The court officer also makes sure the court runs smoothly.

I am the court officer; I help the sheriff and other people in the court. I will let witnesses know when it is their turn to give evidence.

Although children's hearing court proceedings are normally closed to the public - family members or other relevant people directly involved in the case may be in the courtroom.

This is the public gallery where members of the public normally sit, but members of the public are not allowed in when the court is dealing with a children's hearing court case.

The court needs witnesses to give evidence so that they can build up a picture of what happened. Witnesses in a children's hearing court case may give their evidence from the witness box or they may give their evidence at the table in front of the sheriff's bench.

I am a witness, I wait in the witness waiting room until it is my turn to give evidence. When the court officer tells me, I go into the courtroom to give my evidence.

Some witnesses may be particularly vulnerable. A person may be classed as a vulnerable witness, where there is a significant risk that the quality of their evidence may be affected because of mental disorder or through fear or distress in connection with giving evidence. There are a number of special measures available to help vulnerable adult witnesses give their evidence to the court – however these are only available by a special application to the court for their approval.

One of the special measures that might be available is using a screen in the courtroom.

If the Children's reporter or the lawyer who asked me to be a witness considers that I might be a vulnerable witness and that the quality of my evidence may be affected by seeing someone in the courtroom, the court may be asked to consider a special application for me to have a screen put up in the courtroom so that I can't see that person when I am giving my evidence. It will be the court who decides whether this is possible based on the information contained in the application.

Another special measure which may be available for vulnerable witnesses is giving your evidence using a TV link from another room outwith the courtroom.

If I am a vulnerable witness and feel unable to give my evidence in the courtroom, the court may be asked to consider allowing me to give my evidence from another room using a live TV link.

The questions are relayed to me from the courtroom – and everyone back in the courtroom can see and hear my answers.