

## **Children**

### **Children's Hearing Court**

#### **Virtual Tour of Court**

Many people will never have been in a court before... Sometimes the courts deal with cases when someone is accused of breaking the law and sometimes children's hearings are referred to the sheriff court.

Try not to worry about going to court or being a witness because there are lots of people who can help you.

You should bring the letter you received telling you what date and time you should come to court. When you arrive, show this to the person at reception. They will show you where you should go

In some courts, you may have to walk through metal detectors, security guards may check peoples' bags to make sure that nobody is carrying 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 court, but some people come here everyday – this is where they work.

You will sit in a witness waiting room until it's your turn to give your evidence.

The people who have come with you can also wait in the witness waiting room.

The court officer will come and tell you when it's your turn to give evidence. Your support person, if you have one, will go into the courtroom, or the TV link room with you.

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

First the sheriff, they sit up on the bench

I am the sheriff. I'm sitting up here on the bench but for children's court 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 your evidence, people in the courtroom 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 a young person, they may also be in the courtroom,

I am a safeguarder, I sit 'round the table with the reporter and lawyers

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

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

The court officer also helps to make sure that 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.

Members of the public are not allowed in court during a children's hearing court case, however family members or other relevant people involved in the case may be in the courtroom. They may be allowed to sit in the public gallery.

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 tell the court what they know so that they can build up a picture of what may have happened.

Witnesses usually give their evidence from the witness box or in a children hearing court case, sometimes witnesses may give their evidence sitting at the table beside the children's reporter and the lawyers.

I am a witness, I wait in the witness room until it is my turn to give evidence. Then I come into the courtroom to answer questions and tell the court what I know.

As a witness, it's important that I tell the court the truth.

Some young witnesses get worried about being asked questions and giving their evidence. But there are different ways to help you tell the court what you know. These are called special measures. One of the standard special measures available is using a screen in the courtroom

In some cases I might not want to see someone in the courtroom, so the court will put up a screen so I don't have to look at that person. But I will still be able to see everyone else.

Another standard special measure you can use to help you give your evidence is using a TV link from another room.

Going into the courtroom can be worrying for some people. In some cases, a young witness like me can tell the court what I know from another room using a TV link. Everyone in the courtroom can see and hear me when I give my answers.

You can also have a support person to sit with you when you give your evidence when giving your evidence using a screen in the courtroom or a live TV Link from another room.

All children and young people are expected to use these special measures to help them give their evidence – it's important that you think carefully about this and tell people how

you feel. There are lots of people you can talk to and they can help you decide what would be best for you.