

## **Children**

### **Criminal Court**

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

Many people have never been in a court before. Sometimes the courts deal with cases when someone is accused of breaking the law. These are called criminal cases. 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 at the court building, show this to the person at the reception. They will show you where you should wait.

In some courts, you may have to walk through metal detectors, and security guards may check 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 is your turn to give your evidence to the court.

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 the courtroom and what they do

First, the judge or sheriff, they sit on the bench, they do not know what has happened you need to tell them what you know

I am the judge, in some courts I am known as the Sheriff. I usually sit here on the bench. Before becoming a Judge, I spent a long time as a lawyer. I make sure that everything is done fairly and that the court rules are followed. Often I wear a wig and a gown – judges have worn these for a long time - it's like a traditional uniform but some young people might find the wig strange, so sometimes judges will take their wig off when young people are giving evidence. I will listen carefully to the evidence from all the witnesses, and afterwards, if there is no jury, I'll decide whether the law has been broken and what should happen to the person who has committed the crime.

The person who may have committed a crime is called the accused – they may be in court

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

I am the procurator fiscal– after the police have investigated a possible crime, they give all the information to me and I decide whether the case should go to court. In court I will ask

witnesses questions so that they can tell the court what they know. It's my job to give the court enough evidence so that the judge or the jury can decide if the accused has broken the law.

The defence lawyer will also ask you questions.

I am the defence lawyer. Like the procurator fiscal I will ask the witnesses some questions too. I work with the accused person and I want to check what the procurator fiscal says and what the witnesses say. I may want to tell the court that they don't have enough strong evidence to say that the person has broken the law.

Some criminal cases have a jury and they sit in the jury box – they listen to all the evidence from all the witnesses

I am a member of the jury. There are 15 of us and we sit in the jury box. Almost everybody in Scotland can be asked to be on a jury at some time in their life. We don't know anything about the case before it starts, and we don't know anybody who is involved in the case. We listen carefully to all the evidence, from all the witnesses. Some of us may write down notes. Afterwards we go to a room, called the jury room to decide if the law has been broken. Not every court case has a jury, sometimes it's the judge or sheriff who decides whether the law has been broken.

The Clerk of the court helps the court run smoothly and sits near the Judge

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 papers and records in order.

The Court Officer also helps the court run smoothly

I am the Court Officer, In some courts I'm called a Macer. I help the judge and other people in the courtroom. I will let each witness know when it's their turn to give evidence. If the procurator fiscal or any of the lawyers ask me, I will also show witnesses pieces of evidence, like clothes or photographs – often this evidence is in bags to protect it.

The public gallery is usually located at the back of the courtroom

This is the public gallery and I am a member of the public. Sometimes people can sit here in the public gallery to watch what happens in court. They must be over 14, and must stay quiet. You're not allowed to eat, drink and you must make sure that mobile phones are switched off. Sometimes the judge or sheriff may order that the court room is closed to the public and the public will have to leave. This might happen when a child is giving evidence

Everyone in the court needs witnesses to tell the court what they know so that they can build up a picture of what happened. Witnesses give their evidence from the witness box.

I am a witness, I wait in the witness waiting 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. Usually I stand up when I'm giving my evidence because it makes it easier for the people in court to hear what I say. If I need to sit down, I will ask the judge.

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, young witnesses 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 using a screen in the courtroom or a TV link from another room.

All children and young people are expected to use these special measures – it's important that you think carefully about the special measures and tell people how you feel. There are lots of people you can talk to.

They can help you decide what would be best for you.

A police officer or a security officer may also be in the courtroom

In some courts there may also be security officers or police officers like me. It's our job to make sure that everyone in the courtroom is safe and well behaved.