



Going to Court as a Victim

You are more than this moment.
Don't let it define you.

United Kingdom

She Voice™

Table of Contents

Reporting the Crime

CPS & Decision to Charge

Waiting for Trial & Special Measures

Pre-Trial Court Visits

What Happens in Court

Who's in the Courtroom

What Happens After the Trial

Real Stories from Survivors

COURT

TIMELINE

STEP 1

REPORT THE CRIME

You speak to the police and make a statement.

STEP 4

THE TRIAL & VERDICT

Evidence is presented.

STEP 2

INVESTIGATION & CPS DECISION

The CPS decides whether to charge the person based on evidence.

STEP 5

VERDICT & OUTCOME

This could be a prison sentence, community service, or the case may end with no conviction.

STEP 3

IF CHARGED

The offender (now the defendant) appears in court.

Crime

REPORTING A CRIME

Reporting a crime can be emotional, confusing, or even overwhelming — but it's an important first step. You can report a crime by calling the police on 101 (or 999 in emergencies), going to a police station, or speaking to a trusted professional who can help you make the report.

Once reported, the police will listen, take your statement, and give you a crime reference number. They will then begin an investigation to gather evidence. Throughout this process, they should treat you with respect, care, and sensitivity.

Once a crime has been reported, Victim Support or another local agency may be automatically informed. You don't need to refer yourself — someone from the support team will usually get in touch with you to offer help.

The police may also refer you to other relevant services depending on your situation and needs.

What Happens Next

THE CPS AND DECISION TO CHARGE

Once the police finish collecting evidence, your case may be passed to the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS).

Their job is to decide two things:

whether there's enough evidence to take the case to court, and whether it's in the public interest to do so.

If the answer is yes, the suspect is formally charged and becomes the defendant. This means the case will move forward to a criminal trial.

Around this time, you'll likely be contacted by Victim Support or the Witness Service. They will help you understand what's happening and support you through each step.

This stage can take time — especially if more evidence is needed or if the case is complex. But you should be kept updated, and you can always ask questions if you're unsure.



TRIAL

Waiting for the Trial

Once the CPS decides to take the case forward, it might be weeks, months or a year before the trial date. This waiting period can feel long and stressful, but it's normal — and you're not forgotten. You should continue to receive updates from the police or support services.

While you're waiting, you'll also be asked how you'd feel most comfortable giving evidence. This is your choice, and you won't have to face the defendant if you don't want to.

Some victims are offered what's called **Special Measures**, which can include:

1. Giving evidence from behind a screen
2. Speaking via video link from another room or building

These options are designed to help reduce stress and protect your emotional wellbeing.

You can talk through these choices with your support worker, and you can always change your mind later if you need to. What matters most is that you feel safe and supported.

Pre-Trial Court Visit

Before the trial begins, you can ask to attend a pre-trial court visit. This visit is completely optional, but many people find it helps reduce stress and answer some of the questions they may be carrying.

You'll be shown around a real courtroom, get to sit in the witness box, and see where everyone will be on the day of the trial. You can also ask as many questions as you like. It's a chance to become familiar with the surroundings, meet the court staff, and take away some of the fear of the unknown.

As one survivor described it: "The courtroom was smaller and calmer than I imagined. That visit really helped me feel less afraid."

This visit can be arranged through Victim Support or the Witness Service, and you can bring someone with you for support if needed.

A black and white close-up photograph of a woman's face, focusing on her right eye and a large hoop earring. The image has a high-contrast, grainy texture. The woman's hair is pulled back, and her expression is serious.

TRIAL

WHAT HAPPENS

During a Trial

A trial is where all the evidence is presented, and a decision is made about whether the defendant is guilty or not guilty. This can sound intimidating, but it's really just a structured process where both sides are heard fairly.

If your case is heard in a Magistrates' Court, it will be decided by a panel of magistrates or a District Judge.

If it's in the Crown Court, a jury of 12 people will hear the case and decide on the verdict. The judge's role is to make sure the trial is fair and follows the law — they don't decide guilt, the jury does.

During the trial, the prosecution and defence take turns presenting evidence and asking questions. You may be asked to give evidence if your statement is important to the case. If so, support will be available throughout, and you'll be told exactly when and how you'll be involved.

Trials can last a few hours, several days, or sometimes longer. You won't need to be there the entire time unless you're asked, and you'll be kept informed about what to expect.

A woman with dark hair tied in a bun, wearing a black blazer over a white collared shirt, is shown in profile, looking towards the left. The background is a soft, out-of-focus light gray.

*EVERY CASE
IS
DIFFERENT
— BUT
YOU’LL
NEVER GO
THROUGH IT
ALONE.*

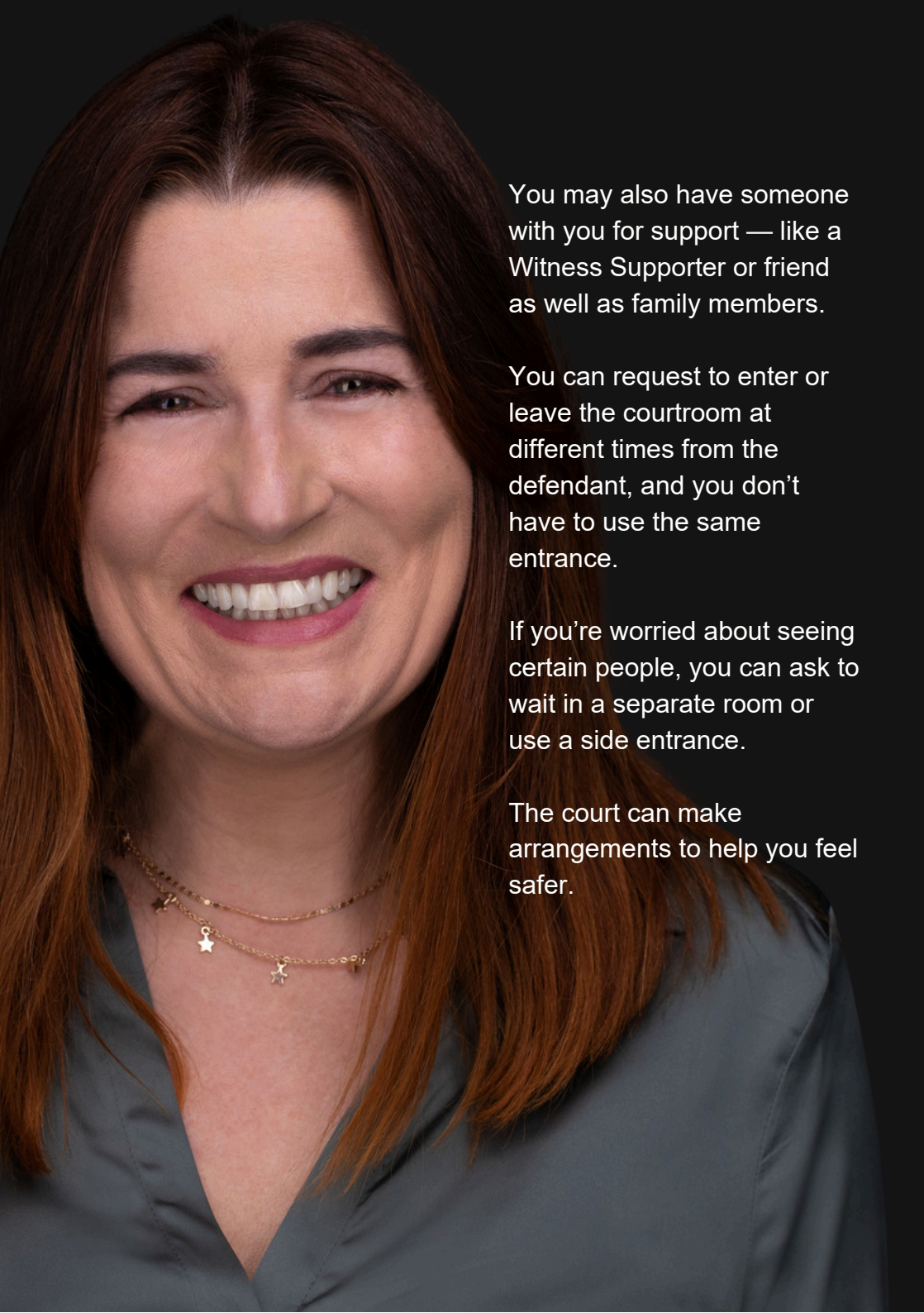
Who Will Be in the Court Room

Walking into a courtroom for the first time can feel intimidating, especially if you don't know who's going to be there.

But understanding who's in the room — and what their role is — can really help take some of the fear away.

Here are some of the people you might see:

- Judge or Magistrates – they oversee the case and make sure the rules are followed.
- Prosecution Barrister – presents the case against the defendant on behalf of the CPS.
- Defence Barrister – represents the defendant and asks questions on their behalf.
- Court Clerk and Ushers – help the court run smoothly and guide people where they need to go.
- The Defendant – the person accused of the crime.
- The Jury – in Crown Court, 12 people who decide if the defendant is guilty or not guilty.
- Witnesses – including you, if you are asked to give evidence.
- Defendant's Family or Friends – they may sit in the public gallery.
- Media – sometimes allowed, but with restrictions to protect privacy.



You may also have someone with you for support — like a Witness Supporter or friend as well as family members.

You can request to enter or leave the courtroom at different times from the defendant, and you don't have to use the same entrance.

If you're worried about seeing certain people, you can ask to wait in a separate room or use a side entrance.

The court can make arrangements to help you feel safer.



Evidence

Once all the evidence has been heard, it's time for the verdict — the decision about whether the defendant is guilty or not guilty.

VERDICT

What Happens after the Trial

The Verdict

Once all the evidence has been heard, it's time for the verdict — the decision about whether the defendant is guilty or not guilty.

- In Crown Court, the jury will go into a private room to discuss the case and reach a verdict together.
- In Magistrates' Court, the magistrates will make this decision as a group.

If the defendant is found guilty, the judge will decide on the sentence. This could include a prison sentence, community service, a fine, or other legal consequences. Before sentencing, you may also be asked if you'd like to provide or update your Victim Personal Statement (VPS) — a way to explain how the crime has affected you.

If the defendant is found not guilty, they will be released and the case ends. This can be difficult to hear, but it doesn't mean you weren't believed. It simply means the evidence didn't meet the legal standard required for a conviction — which is very high.

Whatever the outcome, support is still available. You can talk to someone about how you're feeling, ask questions, and get help processing what happens next.



Real Stories from Survivors

Sarah's Story

I was terrified to speak in court. I kept thinking, what if I froze, or what if he looked straight at me? But the staff were kind — they explained everything step by step and didn't rush me. I was offered something called 'special measures,' which meant I could give evidence from behind a screen so I didn't have to see him.

Before the trial, I went on a pre-trial court visit. The courtroom was smaller and calmer than I'd imagined. I got to see where I'd sit, who would be there, and what would happen. That visit really helped me feel less afraid.

On the day, I waited in a separate room and was supported the whole time. When it was my turn, I took a deep breath and told the truth. I still felt scared — but I also felt protected.

Looking back, I'm proud I did it.

Alex's Story

I couldn't face being in the same building. The police explained that I could give evidence by live video link from another court. It felt strange at first, but I had someone with me the whole time, and I didn't have to see the defendant.

The screen only showed the judge and the barristers, and I was allowed to take breaks when I needed them.

I felt like my voice was heard — and I didn't have to put myself through more trauma to speak.

Priya's Story

I reported the crime but didn't want to go to court. I was still supported through counselling and Victim Support, which really helped me feel less alone.

Instead of testifying, I wrote a Victim Personal Statement. It gave me a voice in the process and allowed me to express how the crime had affected me.

Even though I didn't go to court, I still felt seen and heard.

Where to Get Support

You don't have to face this alone. Whether you're waiting for trial, preparing to give evidence, or trying to process what's happened, there is help available — whenever you need it.

- Victim Support – 0808 168 9111 | victimsupport.org.uk. Free, confidential support 24/7 — emotional help, practical advice, and referrals.
- Witness Service – Provided by Citizens Advice. Offers court support, pre-trial visits, and someone to be with you at court.
- Counselling & Mental Health Support – Available through your GP, local charities, or self-referral services.

Don't be afraid to ask for help — your wellbeing matters.

She Voice

Whether you give evidence or not, your voice matters. This guide is here to help you feel informed, supported, and empowered throughout your journey.

The legal system can feel overwhelming — *but you are not defined by this moment.*

You are more than what happened. *You are more than this case.*

Kulturalism offers free resources and educational materials 24/7. We're always here, and we will get back to you. If we can't help directly, we'll do our best to connect you with someone who can. shevoice@kulturalism.org



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