



Northern Ireland

**Courts and  
Tribunals Service**

[www.courtsni.gov.uk](http://www.courtsni.gov.uk)

# Victim and Witness Policy

*serving the community through the administration of justice*

**Version:** 2.0  
**Date issued:** April 2012  
**Date last updated:** March 2012  
**Document Authors:** Judicial & Customer Services  
Group

**The Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service (NICTS) is committed to providing an efficient, accessible and quality service for all customers by listening and responding to their needs.**

**This policy aims to inform Victims and Witnesses about the support and guidance that is currently available to them.**

All information contained in this policy can be obtained from:

- The Customer Service Officer at any court or tribunal venue
- The NICTS Communications Group
- Via our website [www.courtsni.gov.uk](http://www.courtsni.gov.uk)

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## INTRODUCTION

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NICTS understands that coming to a court or tribunal hearing to give evidence can be a worrying and often traumatic experience.

We aim to try to minimise these concerns as far as possible by providing victims and witnesses with clear information on what they can expect from NICTS before and during their hearing.

As part of the Department of Justice, NICTS has specific commitments to provide information and to try to improve services and facilities available to victims and witnesses within the **criminal justice system**. This document sets out those commitments. However, we recognise that there are many other court and tribunal users with specific requirements. As part of our Customer Service strategy, NICTS has produced information leaflets and sets of standards for groups of court and tribunal users. These are available at our venues and on the NICTS website ([www.courtsni.gov.uk](http://www.courtsni.gov.uk)) and the standards available are discussed briefly in section 1.

## 1. NICTS Customer Service Standards

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As part of our commitment to customer service, NICTS publishes the standards that all customers can expect when they use our services. These General Standards include the level of service you can expect when attending courts or tribunals; the information that is available to you and how to access it; how you will be treated by our staff and also a list of the facilities on site.

How we perform against these standards is published quarterly in our Customer Service Newsletters which are available on our website and in all regional court offices and tribunal centres. **Standards specific to Victims and Witnesses are set out at page 8.**

In addition, the Customer Service Standards for Key Users provides information on specific standards and services for;

- defendants attending court
- jurors
- the legal profession
- victims and witnesses (see below)
- those attending youth court
- small claims applicants
- the civil processing centre
- court interpreters
- fixed penalty recipients
- probate personal applicants
- divorce personal applicants

## 2. Department of Justice's Commitment to Victims and Witnesses

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### Requirements of Victims and Witnesses

Improving the experience of victims and witnesses within the criminal justice system is one of the Department's key priorities. Through engagement with victims and witnesses DoJ has identified some of their most basic requirements:

- To be treated with dignity, fairness and respect by all agencies which interact with them and valued for the fundamental part they play in the process
- To receive timely and appropriate information from a central point of contact about the nature of the justice process, what is expected of them and what they can expect in return, and specific information about the progress and outcome of their case
- Practical help, including protection from further victimisation, and assistance with issues such as applying for compensation for injury, loss or damage and
- information relating to counselling or other independent on-going support

### Action Plans

In order to respond to these needs, and to address similar commitments within the policy document Bridging the Gap 2009 – 2012, DoJ has developed strategic annual action plans which encompass all of the agencies within the criminal justice system. These action plans are overseen by the Victim & Witness Task Force, which includes representatives of the main criminal justice organisations; the Department of Justice, the Police Service of Northern Ireland, the Public Prosecution Service, the Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service, the Northern Ireland Prison Service, the Youth Justice Agency, the Probation Service for Northern Ireland, and also includes the voluntary organisations Victim Support (NI) and the NSPCC.

The Bridging the Gap strategy describes how the criminal justice system envisages future service provision and details work undertaken over a five year period (2007-2012) to achieve its underpinning aims and objectives.

The strategy aims to develop services in 5 key areas:

1. Provide victims and witnesses with easier **access to information** about the operation of the criminal justice system and sources of appropriate advice and support within it
2. Ensure that **specific and timely information** is provided to victims and witnesses in relation to their individual case
3. Continue to **work together** with relevant voluntary agencies, to ensure that victims and witnesses are afforded a consistently high standard of service from all criminal justice agencies
4. Recognise, and be responsive to, victims and witnesses **individual needs**
5. Afford victims and witnesses the **opportunity to make their views known** to those in the criminal justice system responsible for making decisions which impact on them.

On completion of the current strategy in 2012, revised strategic statements about maintaining these commitments are being developed.

Also in the context of inter-agency commitment to victims and witnesses, DOJ has developed a guide to the criminal justice system and a Code of Practice for Victims of Crime (**Annex A**). NICTS recognises that we need to work together with other agencies that also have a responsibility for offering support to victims and witnesses. **Annex B** sets out the commitments of each of the agencies at various stages of the criminal justice process and explains how these commitments are delivered. At present some of the commitments contained within these structures pertain to

prosecution witnesses only, although the principles should apply to defence witnesses also<sup>1</sup>.

### 3. NICTS Victim and Witness Standards (Criminal Courts)

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The aim of these standards is to provide witnesses with clear information on what they can expect from NICTS before and during a court or tribunal hearing.

Some of the standards of service for witnesses include:

- Reception desks, information points and public counters where you can ask for information
- An opportunity to visit the courthouse and view facilities before you come to give evidence
- Information leaflet about the courthouse you are to attend
- Dedicated witness room available in all main courthouses.



The NICTS leaflet 'Attending as a Witness in a Criminal Court' contains useful details on the steps involved when a witness is asked to attend court to give evidence. It includes explanations of the various roles within the courtroom and the support services available.

### 4. Special Measures in Criminal Court Hearings

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Specific standards for vulnerable and intimidated witnesses giving evidence **in court** for the prosecution were drawn up to make them aware of the special measures available if appropriate to their case. A booklet and poster of these standards are available at every court venue and on our website.

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<sup>1</sup> In its report into the care and treatment of victims and witnesses in the criminal justice system in Northern Ireland in December 2011, Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland said that 'Inspectors assessed that the needs of defence witnesses, given their small numbers, are largely adequately met by those who call them. Nevertheless, criminal justice system professionals need to recognise that such witnesses can have the same needs and concerns as other witnesses, and thus need to be given due consideration.[Para 5.9]



If you feel particularly intimidated or vulnerable one or more of the special measures listed below may be available to help you when giving evidence in court. Your needs will be identified by the PSNI and then passed to the PPS before the case comes to court. The prosecutor may make an application to the court at a preliminary hearing. The judge will then decide if your application is granted. In addition to a separate waiting room in all main court venues for vulnerable and intimidated witnesses, some of the special measures that are available in these circumstances are;

- Screening

A screen is placed around the witness box which prevents the witness from seeing the defendant. The witness will be seen by others in the court including the judge, jury, lawyers and barristers and, in some courts, the public gallery.

- Evidence by live link

The witness, while not physically in the courtroom, would be able to see and hear court proceedings while they give evidence and be seen and heard by the court. A member of the Witness Service can be present if required.

- Evidence given in private

The judge will order that members of the public (or those otherwise specified by the judge) are to be excluded from the courtroom while the witness is giving evidence. However, the accused, legal representatives acting in the proceedings, representatives from the press, interpreters or other persons appointed to assist the witness should remain in the courtroom.

- Removal of wigs and gowns

The Judiciary and legal profession can remove their wigs and gowns while the witness is giving evidence to make the proceedings appear less formal.

- Aids to communication

A witness may have an interpreter, use Braille oath cards or the Loop system should they have a requirement to do so.

- Video recorded evidence in chief

This allows you to have your main evidence videotaped and then played in court which means that you do not have to give your main evidence in person. This is available for children and adults in all proceedings. Those under the age of 18 will almost always have their interview videotaped. An 'appropriate adult' will have to be with them during the interview.

- Reporting restrictions

In some cases the law says that certain details cannot be published by the media (for example, to protect the identity of the witness). In other exceptional circumstances, the court may place temporary or permanent restrictions on how the media reports on court proceedings. In each case the judge will order that the media cannot report details of the case. These restrictions apply only to the UK. Any organisation that breaches the court order will be punished.

## 5. Partnership between Voluntary Agencies and NICTS

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Victim Support Northern Ireland (VSNI), the National Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) and the NICTS recognise that each has a role to play in supporting victims and witnesses attending courts. In addition to supporting victims and witnesses at Court, VSNI also supports victims to apply, if eligible, for Criminal Injury Compensation and represent and support victims at tribunal hearings before the Criminal Injuries Compensation Appeals Panel.

The three agencies have been working in partnership for some time to support victims and witnesses in Northern Ireland. Together we have agreed a protocol which defines the nature and scope of the partnership arrangement and addresses the practical aspects of the working relationships. This protocol is available on our internet site at [www.courtsni.gov.uk](http://www.courtsni.gov.uk) . The aim of VSNI and the NSPCC is to help prosecution witnesses and victims, and their families and friends, to deal with the experience of going to court and giving evidence. Trained volunteers and staff from the services provide a free and confidential service including:

- information about court and legal processes;
- emotional support in dealing with the impact and experience of attending court;
- pre-trial visits for witnesses so that they are familiar with the courtroom, the TV link (where appropriate) and the roles of court personnel;
- support on the day of the trial;
- support in the TV link room (where appropriate);
- practical help with completing expenses forms;
- support and information during and following sentencing;
- special support for vulnerable and intimidated witnesses;

- arrangements for defence and prosecution witnesses to be kept separate;
- liaison with other statutory and voluntary agencies;
- referral to Victim Support NI's community service or other services; and
- other arrangements such as baby changing, travel expenses etc.

NICTS and Women's Aid also co-operate to ensure that women who have experienced domestic violence are supported through the justice system. Women's Aid offers a Court Support service to women who have experienced domestic violence and are attending civil courts. The benefits include:

- Confidential support service
- Private waiting room
- Refreshments available
- Court support worker to clarify information during the process
- Someone who is familiar with court
- Pre-court visit if required
- Accompaniment to solicitors' consultations

VSNI and Women's Aid work to an agreed protocol whereby VSNI provide support to victims of domestic violence in criminal courts and Women's Aid provide support to female victims of domestic violence in civil cases.

Victim Support also provides its services to victims of domestic violence including men, while there are other support organisations available such as Men's Advisory

Project NI<sup>2</sup> (<http://www.mapni.co.uk>) and the Rainbow Project<sup>3</sup> (<http://www.rainbow-project.org>).

## 6. Waiting Times at Court

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We recognise that witnesses may have to wait before being called to give their evidence. However, we are working closely with our partners to ensure there is regular communication between the person responsible for asking the witness to attend and the witness themselves to reduce any avoidable delay. NICTS is also supporting the judiciary to improve services to victims and witnesses, reduce unnecessary waiting and increase overall satisfaction levels with the justice system.

Initiatives to improve the experience of victims and witnesses at court include:

- Contested hearings at a number of Magistrates' Courts are given a specific start time where possible
- At some Magistrates' Courts a call-over of cases by the Judge is done at the beginning of the court. An assessment is made of those likely to run and the estimated length of time required for each. With the agreement of the court and prosecution or defence counsel, witnesses may be permitted to leave the building and return at a specified time
- NICTS Case Progression Officers actively support the judiciary in managing Crown and Magistrates' Court lists and work with PPS and PSNI colleagues to ensure that witnesses are available on hearing dates
- The Lord Chief Justice has issued a Practice Direction aimed at avoiding adjournments because of witness unavailability, and governing the listing arrangements and timescales for the listing of Crown Court cases.

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<sup>2</sup> Men's Advisory Project NI (MAP NI) provides a counselling service for men who have experienced domestic violence.

<sup>3</sup> The Rainbow Project has an Advocacy Service providing support and information for gay and bisexual men who have experienced abuse from their partner.

Recognised examples of good practice will be promoted as part of a package to reduce witness and victim waiting times in 2012.

A poster entitled “**Are you waiting to go into Court**” is available at every court office and outlines the steps you should take if you are experiencing a delay on the day of hearing.

## 7. SUMMARY

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What can Victims and Witnesses expect *from NICTS* during the criminal justice process?

### **Before Hearing:**

- If you have any important commitments, the court will, where possible, take account of the dates you are not available. The PPS, police or solicitor will contact you to find out what dates suit you to go to court
- Opportunity to visit the courthouse and view facilities before you come to give evidence
- Contact information for voluntary agencies and support services
- Information about the building in which the case will be heard
- Information about who’s who in the courtroom
- Information about the court process
- Various information leaflets on attending court and tribunals are available under the following categories:
  - Witness
  - Defendant
  - People with Disabilities

- Court Etiquette
- Juror
- Youth Court
- Useful Information Leaflet

NICTS cannot provide legal advice to victims or witnesses.

### **At Hearing:**

- Separate waiting rooms on request if available
- Courteous and sensitive treatment by NICTS staff
- Customer Service Officer at each venue and their contact details in advance
- Reduction in unnecessary formality in the court or tribunal if appropriate
- An interpreter if the **defendant** does not speak English
- Explanation of process
- Clean, comfortable waiting rooms and refreshment facilities
- We will work in conjunction with other agencies to make necessary arrangements to ensure ease of access for wheelchair users, or persons with other disabilities who need assistance in accessing the court to give evidence.

### **Post Hearing:**

- Opportunity to provide feedback on process
- Contact information for other agencies in respect of compensation, probation, debt and other support groups.

## 8. Feedback and Research

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### Customer Surveys

The Bridging the Gap strategy states that customer satisfaction surveys will be conducted by individual agencies on a regular basis in order to identify service delivery improvement objectives. Every 2 years NICTS conducts a comprehensive, statistically valid **Exit Survey** which includes specific questions to address service delivery, timeliness, information, access and delivery of customer service. The survey aims to capture the views of how court and tribunal users including victims and witnesses feel about the process. Action plans are produced if the results indicate that changes are necessary to make the experience of court and tribunal customers better.

Also as part of its Customer Service commitment NICTS targets specific groups of users to ask them about their experiences through the court or tribunal system and use this information to produce a 'journey map'. This is an effective way to plot highs and lows, and very useful exercises have been conducted for victims of domestic violence and users of the Probate Offices for example. More are planned.

### Mystery Shopper

Every other year (in the intervening years when the Exit Survey is not run) we commission a locally based research organisation to conduct a '**Mystery Shopper**' telephone / visit / e-mail based survey. The purpose of this survey of our court and tribunal offices and other related service centres is to:

- assess how well NICTS staff meet core customer standards;
- establish whether NICTS staff are actively trying to meet the needs of customers in whatever capacity (in person / by telephone / in correspondence) and how they responded to their needs;
- establish how well customers are dealt with at first point of contact; and



- assess how we are performing against our organisational values; integrity, openness, professionalism, accountability and fairness.

## Remote Links and Courtroom Technology

NICTS has conducted an evaluation of the existing remote link facilities which allow vulnerable witnesses to give their evidence live via tv links from outside the court building and will consider extending these facilities to additional courthouses. NSPCC have also reviewed the remote link for young witnesses in Londonderry which will also help to inform the way forward for these facilities. Courtroom technology continues to be monitored and upgraded as necessary.

## 9. Complaints and Compliments

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NICTS is committed to improving its quality of service to all court and tribunal users. We recognise that effective complaints handling is an essential aspect of listening and responding to our customers.

Complaints can be logged directly with staff, in writing or online through our website. For further information regarding complaints you can refer to our “Making a complaint about the Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service” leaflet which is available online and at all court and tribunal offices. Comments cards are also available at each venue. Details of complaints received and action taken, as well as compliments received are available in our quarterly customer service newsletters and shared with other agencies where applicable to ensure shared learning.

## 10. Oversight

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The Northern Ireland Assembly’s **Justice Committee** was established to advise and assist the Minister of Justice on matters within his responsibility as Minister. The Committee undertakes a scrutiny, policy development and consultation role with respect to the Department of Justice and plays a key role in the consideration and development of legislation.

The Committee’s Inquiry into the Criminal Justice Services Available To Victims And Witnesses Of Crime In Northern Ireland was commenced in 2011 to identify the

outcomes that the Department of Justice's proposed new strategy for victims and witnesses of crime should deliver. The Inquiry will make recommendations on the priorities and actions that need to be included in the plan to achieve these.

The **Criminal Justice Inspectorate Northern Ireland** (CJINI) is an independent statutory inspectorate with responsibility for inspecting all aspects of the criminal justice system in Northern Ireland apart from the judiciary. CJINI has a programme of inspection which includes NICTS, and has conducted previous inspections on how victims and witnesses are treated within the criminal justice system.

The **Victim and Witness Steering Group** is responsible for monitoring the implementation of the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime and the performance of each of the organisations included to make sure they are meeting their commitments. The steering group is a sub-group of the Criminal Justice Board for Northern Ireland and is chaired by the Department of Justice. The Criminal Justice Board is made up of heads or senior representatives of the main criminal justice organisations in Northern Ireland and the Attorney General's Office.

NICTS has a **Victim's Champion** who is a senior member of the management team committed to ensuring that victims' issues are considered as an intrinsic element in all strategic and business planning.

Finally, as part of its customer service commitment, NICTS is subject to continuous independent assessment against clearly defined standards of customer care including its treatment of victims and witnesses.

## 11. Policy Review

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This Policy will be reviewed every two years from the date of publication, however, if there are any developments which impact upon the arrangements or relationships described in the policy, it may be updated as required.

## ANNEX A

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### **Guide to the Criminal Justice System in Northern Ireland for Victims and Witnesses of Crime**

This guide has been designed to explain each aspect of the system, and the roles and responsibilities of those working within it. It offers advice on procedures and services available to victims and witnesses through the system at all stages; reporting the crime, the investigation stage, going to court and after the outcome of the case.

The guide is available to download from [www.dojni.gov.uk](http://www.dojni.gov.uk) and further information including video clips on attending court are available on the **nidirect** website under Crime, Justice and the Law; [www.nidirect.gov.uk](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk).

### **Code of Practice for Victims of Crime**

The Code of Practice describes in further detail how you can expect to be treated by the criminal justice agencies and voluntary-sector support organisations; Victim Support Northern Ireland (VSNI) and the NSPCC.

The Code of Practice is divided into 13 sections;

- Section 1 identifies the path that you will follow through the criminal justice system and the organisations you will come in contact with.
- Sections 2 to 10 describe the role of each organisation, how you can expect to be treated by them, and how to complain about their service.
- Section 11 describes how the organisations will monitor their performance to make sure they provide a good service to victims.
- Section 12 gives details of independent organisations you can complain to if you are unhappy with services provided by an organisation.

- Section 13 gives contact details for criminal justice agencies and voluntary-sector support organisations this code applies to, along with other support organisations that can help victims.

The code of practice can be accessed at;

[http://www.dojni.gov.uk/index/publications/code\\_of\\_practice\\_for\\_victims\\_of\\_crime.pdf](http://www.dojni.gov.uk/index/publications/code_of_practice_for_victims_of_crime.pdf)

## ANNEX B

### RESPONSIBILITIES FOR VICTIMS AND WITNESSES

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This is a summary of the key responsibilities of criminal justice partners for informing and providing services for victims and witnesses in Northern Ireland. Greater detail on these services is available from the individual organisation with responsibility.

The roles of voluntary sector partners including Victim Support, NSPCC and Women’s Aid in supporting victims and witnesses is also discussed at Chapter 5.

Stage ↓	Delivered by	Commitment and Means of Delivery
Investigation	Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI)	<p>Investigating Officers will leave a Victim Information Card with victims of crime. The card contains the individual crime number, contact number of the Investigating Officer, other contact numbers for PSNI in case the investigating officer is unavailable and the number for Victim Support NI.</p> <p>Investigating Officers will also provide the leaflet, “Information for Victims of Crime”.</p> <p>PSNI will contact the victim within 10 days and update them on the investigation. If it is appropriate further updates will be given at agreed times.</p> <p>If a case involving any witness is to be heard at a <u>Crown Court</u><sup>4</sup> the investigating officer will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) Make contact with the witness to obtain consent to make a referral to the relevant Witness Support Service.</li> <li>(b) Complete a Witness Support Referral Form in respect of each witness, including details of vulnerability/intimidation.</li> <li>(c) Make telephone contact with the relevant Witness Support Service to apprise them of the case. The Witness Support Service will only be available to a witness when it established that they will be required to give evidence.</li> </ul>

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<sup>4</sup> Public Prosecution Service are responsible for managing contact with victims and witnesses in Magistrates and Youth Court cases

(d) If a witness is required to give evidence, and following discussion with the relevant Witness Support Service, the completed referral form will be forwarded to the Witness Support Service.

In cases involving murder, manslaughter or road death, a Family Liaison Officer will be appointed to manage communication between victims and the investigation team and to appraise the victim's family/next of kin of the various support agencies that may be available to them.

Minority Liaison Officers are present in all Districts to monitor hate crime and establish links with minority ethnic organisations and gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender groups.

Specialist Domestic Abuse Officers, within PSNI Public Protection Units, work with all appropriate support agencies to assist and meet the needs of those victims and witnesses affected by domestic abuse.

Specialist Officers will investigate all cases of rape or child abuse. Officers will identify whether victims or witnesses are vulnerable or intimidated and where appropriate will seek early special measure discussions with the Public Prosecution Service. Interpreters will be requested by the police at the outset of the investigation where the victim cannot clearly understand English or where the victim has a hearing impairment.

Before Court

Public Prosecution Service (PPS)

The PPS provides information to victims and witnesses at key stages of the process, including:

- A letter to the victim in indictable cases, notifying them of the receipt by PPS of an indictable case file from police
- A letter notifying a victim of the PPS's decision whether or not to prosecute the case in which they are involved
- If the decision is not to prosecute, then, in certain categories of cases, including serious cases and those with a vulnerable victim, a letter is sent to the victim, setting out an explanation of the reason/s for that decision, and advising them of the availability of a review of the decision
- A letter indicating when the witness is required to attend court to give evidence (their availability having been ascertained in advance)
- A letter notifying a witness of the grant of special measures.

Other letters may be issued depending on the developments in the case.

For Magistrates' and County Court hearings PPS will check witness availability, send out information on practical aspects regarding attendance at court, and including the services offered by VSNI witness service and contact details for support services. PPS will also offer an opt-out if witnesses do not want their contact details to be sent to the witness service. PPS will answer any general queries a witness may have.

(In the Crown Court, service provision is slightly different with the police retaining a key role in witness liaison).

Victim Support Northern Ireland (VSNI) and NSPCC	<p>VSNI offers confidential support to adult prosecution witnesses (and their family, friends and supporters) referred to their Witness Service by PSNI or PPS at all courthouses. Victims and witnesses can also contact VSNI before PSNI make any referral through their National Supportline or local VSNI office.</p> <p>NSPCC provides support for prosecution witnesses who are under 18 and their parents or carers.</p> <p>On receipt of a referral VSNI or NSPCC will write to the witness or telephone them within 5 days and a fully trained volunteer will help them decide what level of support is required and for how long. The Witness Service 'Supporting People going to Court' leaflet may be of help and young witnesses may find the NSPCC's Young Witness Pack helpful. NSPCC also have a video for young witnesses called 'Giving Evidence - What's it really like'. Volunteers and staff from the services provide a free and confidential service including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• having someone to talk to</li> <li>• providing information on court procedures and what to expect on the day</li> <li>• explain and help obtain further information on the case</li> <li>• talk through the case papers in preparation for the questions that may be asked</li> <li>• help to deal with correspondence and keep you updated</li> <li>• practical help in terms of maps, information on transport to and from the hearing</li> <li>• accompaniment to the court and viewing the courtroom (or CICAPNI hearing room) before being called to give evidence</li> <li>• contact details for people who can answer specific legal questions (the witness services do not discuss evidence with witnesses)</li> <li>• If a victim has experienced a violent crime VSNI will also provide a Criminal Injuries specialist advice worker as a point of contact through to and attending the hearing.</li> </ul>
Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service (NICTS)	<p>An information leaflet about the courthouse you are to attend is issued to witnesses by PPS in advance of the hearing and is also available on the NICTS website. It contains location, facilities and transport details, the types of courts at each venue and additional information such as oaths and affirmations if required to give evidence.</p> <p>An opportunity to visit the courthouse and view the facilities before you come to give evidence. This can be arranged directly with the court or through Victim Support/NSPCC.</p>
At Court	<p>NICTS</p> <p>Reception desks, information points and public counters where you can ask for information are at all courts and each courthouse has a Customer Service Officer who can deal with any specific requirements or concerns about facilities or services for those attending court.</p> <p>Child witness rooms and separate waiting areas for prosecution witnesses are available in all main courthouses.</p>

		<p>NICTS will make necessary arrangements to ensure ease of access for wheelchair users, or persons with other disabilities who need assistance in accessing the court to give evidence.</p> <p>NICTS staff will ensure that technology and facilities are adequate to facilitate any special measures which are to be used to assist the giving of evidence.</p> <p>Court lists are displayed at each court containing the cases that are to be heard at each session. A poster entitled “Are you waiting to go into Court” is available at every court office and outlines the steps to be taken if there is a delay in a case being called.</p>
After Court	PPS	The prosecutor will meet the witness and answer any queries. PPS will arrange an interpreter for witnesses giving evidence who do not speak English and in appropriate cases will apply for special measures to assist a witness to give evidence.
	VSNI and NSPCC	VSNI and NSPCC will provide a quiet place to wait before and during the hearing and will offer accompaniment into the courtroom or live TV link room when giving evidence. They will try to answer any questions on the procedure.
		VSNI and NSPCC will offer practical help with things such as expense forms and a chance to talk over the case once it is over, to get more help or information.
	PPS	PPS will notify the victim by letter of the outcome of the case and will pay reasonable expenses for attending court.
	NICTS	<p>NICTS welcomes feedback on facilities, services and procedures. As well as questionnaires and surveys, the views of victims and witnesses are sought through comments cards and other means in order that improvements may be made where necessary.</p> <p>NICTS provides contact details for other agencies in respect of compensation, probation, debt and other support groups.</p>
When an offender has been sentenced to any form of probation supervision	Probation Board for Northern Ireland (PBNI)	<p>PBNI’s Victim Information Scheme offers victims the opportunity to have explained to them the meaning of the requirements of the court sentence imposed on the person who committed an offence. PBNI contacts victims within four days of the victim’s registration on the Victim Information Scheme. Information will be given on the type of supervision the offender will receive, how long the offender will be supervised for, any extra conditions that apply to the sentence and any further sentences relating to the case.</p> <p>It will be explained to the victim how PBNI and other agencies will manage the case including taking the victim’s views into account and the availability of other support organisations.</p> <p>Victims can receive information face-to-face, by phone or in writing.</p>



<p>When an offender has been sentenced to custody</p>	<p>Northern Ireland Prison Service (NIPS)</p>	<p>The Prisoner Release Victim Information Scheme (PRVIS) offers victims the chance to receive and provide information about adult offenders convicted of a crime against them and who have received a sentence of 6 months or more.</p> <p>Victims can receive details of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• periods of temporary release granted to the offender;</li> <li>• the month and year in which the offender is expected to be released from custody;</li> <li>• any conditions of their release; and</li> <li>• breaches of conditions resulting in the offender being returned to custody.</li> </ul> <p>If the victim chooses to receive information about temporary release, they will be given the opportunity to express any concerns. The Home Leave Board will take account of these when considering temporary release.</p>
<p>Where compensation is being sought</p>	<p>Compensation Agency</p>	<p>The Compensation Agency can deal directly with the victim or through Victim Support on the victim's behalf. The Agency has a range of leaflets on the procedures for applying for compensation which it will provide to anyone submitting an application. Staff can assist in the completion of application forms.</p> <p>The Agency outlines its commitments to applicants in its Charter and these include confidentiality when dealing with applicants, to determine cases as quickly as possible and to communicate in plain English.</p> <p>Decisions of the Agency can be reviewed within 90 days or if the applicant is still unhappy they can appeal to the Criminal Injuries Compensation Appeals Panel for Northern Ireland. The Panel provides a clear and detailed guide about the Panel hearing including how to prepare. Decisions are normally made on the day. Appellants will be informed and given written confirmation of this.</p>
	<p>VSNI</p>	<p>VSNI will explain the decision from the Compensation Agency and answer any questions you may have.</p>

## Contact Information for Court and Tribunal Offices

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Each court and tribunal office has a Customer Services Officer. Their role is to improve customer service delivery to all court users.

### Courts:

<p><b>Antrim Court Office</b> The Courthouse 30 Castle Way Antrim BT41 4AQ Phone: 028 9446 2661 <a href="mailto:antrimcourthouse@courtsni.gov.uk">antrimcourthouse@courtsni.gov.uk</a></p>	<p><b>Armagh Court Office</b> The Courthouse The Mall Armagh BT61 9DJ Phone: 028 3752 2816 armaghcourthouse@courtsni.gov.uk</p>
<p><b>Ballymena Court Office</b> The Courthouse Albert Place Ballymena BT43 5BS Phone: 028 2564 9416 ballymenacourthouse@courtsni.gov.uk</p>	<p><b>Bangor Court Office</b> The Courthouse 6 Quay Street Bangor BT20 5EA Phone: 028 91472626 bangorcourthouse@courtsni.gov.uk</p>
<p><b>Belfast Courts</b> Laganside Courts 45 Oxford Street Belfast BT1 3LL Phone: 028 9032 8594 cmslaganside@courtsni.gov.uk</p>	<p><b>Coleraine Court Office</b> The Courthouse 46A Mountsandal Road Coleraine BT52 1NY Phone: 028 7034 3437 colerainecourthouse@courtsni.gov.uk</p>
<p><b>Craigavon Court Office</b> The Courthouse Central Way Craigavon BT64 1AP Phone: 028 3834 1324 craigavoncourthouse@courtsni.gov.uk</p>	<p><b>Downpatrick Court Office</b> The Courthouse English Street Downpatrick BT30 6AD Phone: 028 4461 4621 downpatrickcourthouse@courtsni.gov.uk</p>
<p><b>Dungannon Court Office</b> The Courthouse 46 Killyman Road Dungannon BT71 6FG Phone: 028 8772 2992 <a href="mailto:dungannoncourthouse@courtsni.gov.uk">dungannoncourthouse@courtsni.gov.uk</a></p>	<p><b>Enniskillen Court Office</b> The Courthouse East Bridge Street Enniskillen BT74 7BP Phone: 028 6632 2356 enniskillencourthouse@courtsni.gov.uk</p>

<p><b>Larne Court Office</b>  The Courthouse  Victoria Road  Larne BT40 1RN  Phone: 028 2827 2927  larnecourthouse@courtsni.gov.uk</p>	<p><b>Limavady Court Office</b>  The Courthouse  Main Street  Limavady BT49 0EY  Phone: 028 7772 2688  limavadycourthouse@courtsni.gov.uk</p>
<p><b>Lisburn Court Office</b>  The Courthouse  Railway Street  Lisburn BT28 1XR  Phone: 028 9267 5336  lisburncourthouse@courtsni.gov.uk</p>	<p><b>Londonderry Court Office</b>  The Courthouse  Bishop Street  Londonderry BT48 6PQ  Phone: 028 7136 3448  <a href="mailto:londonderrycourthouse@courtsni.gov.uk">londonderrycourthouse@courtsni.gov.uk</a></p>
<p><b>Magherafelt Court Office</b>  The Courthouse  Hospital Road  Magherafelt BT45 5DG  Phone: 028 7963 2121  magherafeltcourthouse@courtsni.gov.uk</p>	<p><b>Newry Court Office</b>  The Courthouse  23 New Street  Newry BT35 6JD  Phone: 028 3025 2040  newrycourthouse@courtsni.gov.uk</p>
<p><b>Newtownards Court Office</b>  The Courthouse  Regent Street  Newtownards BT23 4LP  Phone: 028 9181 4343  newtownardscourthouse@courtsni.gov.uk</p>	<p><b>Omagh Court Office</b>  The Courthouse  High Street  Omagh BT78 1DU  Phone: 028 8224 2056  omaghcourthouse@courtsni.gov.uk</p>
<p><b>Royal Courts of Justice</b>  Chichester Street  Belfast BT1 3JF  Phone: 028 9072 5910 /028 9072 4661  adminoffice@courtsni.gov.uk</p>	<p><b>Strabane Court Office</b>  The Courthouse  Derry Road  Strabane BT82 8DT  Phone: 028 7138 2544  strabanecourthouse@courtsni.gov.uk</p>
<p><b>Communications Group</b>  Laganside House  23-25 Oxford Street  Belfast BT1 3LA  Phone: 028 9032 8594  communicationsgroup@courtsni.gov.uk</p>	

## Tribunals:

<p><b>The Appeals Service, Belfast</b>          Cleaver House          3 Donegall Square North          Belfast BT1 5GA          Phone: (028) 9051 8518  <a href="mailto:appeals.service.belfast@dndni.gov.uk">appeals.service.belfast@dndni.gov.uk</a></p>	<p><b>The Appeals Service, Omagh</b>          12-14 Dublin Road          Omagh BT78 1ES          Phone: (028) 8224 9595  <a href="mailto:appeals.service.omagh@dndni.gov.uk">appeals.service.omagh@dndni.gov.uk</a></p>
<p><b>The Care Tribunal</b>          3rd Floor          Bedford House          16 – 22 Bedford Street          Belfast BT2 7FD          Phone: 028 9072 8752  <a href="mailto:CAREtribunal@courtsni.gov.uk">CAREtribunal@courtsni.gov.uk</a></p>	<p><b>The Charity Tribunal</b>          Tribunals Hearing Centre          3rd Floor, Bedford House          16-22 Bedford Street          Belfast BT2 7FD          Phone: (028) 90 728732  <a href="mailto:tribunalsunit@courtsni.gov.uk">tribunalsunit@courtsni.gov.uk</a></p>
<p><b>Criminal Injuries Compensation Appeals Panel Northern Ireland</b>          2nd Floor          Corn Exchange Building          31 Gordon Street          Belfast BT1 2LG          Phone: 028 9092 4400  <a href="mailto:cicapni@nics.gov.uk">cicapni@nics.gov.uk</a></p>	<p><b>The Lands Tribunal</b>          Royal Courts of Justice          2nd Floor          Chichester Street          BELFAST BT1 3JJ          Phone: 028 9032 7703  <a href="mailto:lands.tribunal@dfpni.gov.uk">lands.tribunal@dfpni.gov.uk</a></p>
<p><b>The Mental Health Review Tribunal</b>          3rd Floor          Bedford House          16 – 22 Bedford Street          Belfast BT2 7FD          Phone: 028 9072 4843  <a href="mailto:mhrt@courtsni.gov.uk">mhrt@courtsni.gov.uk</a></p>	<p><b>The Northern Ireland Health and Safety Tribunal</b>          3rd Floor          Bedford House          16 – 22 Bedford Street          Belfast BT2 7FD          Phone: 028 9072 8732  <a href="mailto:tribunalsunit@courtsni.gov.uk">tribunalsunit@courtsni.gov.uk</a></p>
<p><b>The Northern Ireland Traffic Penalty Tribunal</b>          3rd Floor          Bedford House          16 – 22 Bedford Street          Belfast BT2 7FD          Phone: 028 9072 8732  <a href="mailto:tribunalsunit@courtsni.gov.uk">tribunalsunit@courtsni.gov.uk</a></p>	<p><b>The Northern Ireland Valuation Tribunal</b>          3rd Floor          Bedford House          16 – 22 Bedford Street          Belfast BT2 7FD          Phone: 028 9072 8732  <a href="mailto:tribunalsunit@courtsni.gov.uk">tribunalsunit@courtsni.gov.uk</a></p>

<p><b>Office of the Social Security Commissioner and Child Support Commissioner</b>  3rd Floor  Bedford House  16 – 22 Bedford Street  Belfast BT2 7FD  Phone: 028 90728731  socialsecuritycommissioners@courtsni.gov.uk</p>	<p><b>Pensions Appeal Commissioners for Northern Ireland</b>  3rd Floor  Bedford House  16 – 22 Bedford Street  Belfast BT2 7FD  Phone: 028 9072 8734  pensionsappealcommissioners@courtsni.gov.uk</p>
<p><b>Rent Assessment Panel</b>  Cleaver House  3 Donegall Square North  Belfast  BT1 5GA  Phone: 028 9051 8518  appeals.service.belfast@dndni.gov.uk</p>	<p><b>Northern Ireland Pensions Appeal Tribunal</b>  3rd Floor  Bedford House  16 – 22 Bedford Street  Belfast BT2 7FD  Phone: 028 9072 8736  pensions@courtsni.gsi.gov.uk</p>
<p><b>The Special Educational Needs and Disability Tribunal</b>  3rd Floor  Bedford House  16 – 22 Bedford Street  Belfast BT2 7FD  Phone: 028 9072 8757  SENDtribunal@courtsni.gov.uk</p>	

## Useful Contacts

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<p><b>Citizens Advice Bureau</b> 11 Upper Crescent Belfast BT7 1NT Phone: 028 9023 1120 E-mail: <a href="mailto:info@citizensadvice.co.uk">info@citizensadvice.co.uk</a> Web: <a href="http://www.citizensadvice.co.uk">www.citizensadvice.co.uk</a></p>	<p><b>The Compensation Agency</b> Royston House 34 Upper Queen Street Belfast BT1 6FD Phone: 028 9024 9944 E-mail: <a href="mailto:comp-agency@nics.gov.uk">comp-agency@nics.gov.uk</a> Web: <a href="http://www.compensationni.gov.uk">www.compensationni.gov.uk</a></p>
<p><b>Executive Council of the Bar</b> Bar Library 91 Chichester Street Belfast BT1 3JQ Phone: 028 9056 2349 E-mail: <a href="mailto:chief.executive@barcouncil-ni.org.uk">chief.executive@barcouncil-ni.org.uk</a></p>	<p><b>The Law Society of N Ireland</b> Law Society House 98 Victoria Street Belfast BT1 3JZ Phone: 028 9023 1614 E-mail: <a href="mailto:info@lawsoc-ni.org">info@lawsoc-ni.org</a> Web: <a href="http://www.lawsoc-ni.org">www.lawsoc-ni.org</a></p>
<p><b>Northern Ireland Prison Service</b> Dundonald House Upper Newtownards Road Belfast BT4 3SU Phone: 028 9052 0700 Web: <a href="http://www.niprisonservice.gov.uk">www.niprisonservice.gov.uk</a></p>	<p><b>NSPCC</b> Block 1 Jennymount Business Park North Derby Street Belfast BT15 3HN Phone: 028 9035 1135 Web: <a href="http://www.nspcc.org.uk">www.nspcc.org.uk</a></p>
<p><b>Police Service for Northern Ireland</b> 65 Knock Road Belfast BT5 6LE Phone: 0845 600 8000 E-mail: <a href="mailto:info@psni.pnn.police.uk">info@psni.pnn.police.uk</a> Web: <a href="http://www.psni.police.uk">www.psni.police.uk</a></p>	<p><b>Probation Board NI</b> Victims Unit Imperial Buildings 72 High Street Belfast BT1 2BE Phone: 028 9032 1972 E-mail: <a href="mailto:victimsunit@pbni.org.uk">victimsunit@pbni.org.uk</a> Web: <a href="http://www.pbni.org.uk/victims">www.pbni.org.uk/victims</a></p>

**Victim Support NI**

3rd Floor

Anns Gate House

70/74 Ann Street

Belfast BT1 4EH

Phone: 028 9024 3133

E-mail: [info@victimsupportni.org.uk](mailto:info@victimsupportni.org.uk)

Web: [www.victimsupportni.co.uk](http://www.victimsupportni.co.uk)

**Youth Justice Agency**

41-43 Waring Street

Belfast BT1 2DY

Phone: 028 9031 6400

E-mail: [info@yjani.gov.uk](mailto:info@yjani.gov.uk) Web:

[www.youthjusticeagencyni.gov.uk](http://www.youthjusticeagencyni.gov.uk)

Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service  
Laganside House  
23-27 Oxford Street  
Belfast  
BT1 3LA  
[www.courtsni.gov.uk](http://www.courtsni.gov.uk)

