Witness Service

Crown

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Crown Court

Crown Courts handle the most serious criminal cases, such as rape, murder and manslaughter. They also hear appeals against decisions made in magistrates' courts and deal with any case a magistrate sends to the Crown Court for trial or for sentencing.

What happens in a Crown Court?

Crown Courts have a judge and a jury. The role of the jury is to decide whether the defendant is guilty or not guilty. The role of the judge is to decide the sentence or punishment if the defendant is found guilty.

The jury

Juries are made up of 12 people. These are members of the public who have been called up for jury service and they are not legal professionals. The role of a jury is to listen to the evidence presented from both the defence and prosecution then decide whether the defendant is guilty or not guilty.

Court usually requires a unanimous verdict from all 12 jurors. A unanimous verdict means all members of the jury agree on the same decision. However, sometimes jury members may not agree, and if this happens then a judge may ask them to pass a majority verdict. If this happens, at least 10 of them need to agree. If 10 jury members cannot agree, this is known as a hung jury. The prosecution will pass the case back to the Crown Prosecution Service and they will decide whether there is enough evidence to have a retrial with a new jury.

The judge

A judge oversees a Crown Court hearing and it is their responsibility to ensure the defendant gets a fair trial. In cases where a jury find a defendant guilty, the judge will pass the sentence.

Find a Crown Court

You can find contact details and more information on courts and tribunals in England and Wales at the GOV.UK website.

Inside a Crown Court

This interactive courtroom provides more detailed information about who is who and what expect in a Crown Court. Click the button below to explore the courtroom.

Explore Courtroom