Witness Service

Pre-trial visits to court

27 February 2026

Pre-trial visits to court

The thought of going to court and giving evidence can feel overwhelming – especially if you've never been inside a court building before, or you're not familiar with the court process.

Before the date of the trial, the Witness Service can arrange something called a **pre-trial visit**. This is an opportunity to visit the court you'll be attending – this can be an in-person visit or a virtual pre-trial visit.

You'll be able to see the waiting area where you'll wait before giving evidence and go into a courtroom. The courtroom will be empty, but you'll be shown around by a Witness Service supporter who can explain where everyone will be in the room during the trial and answer any questions you may have.

Visiting the court can also help you to think about other things before the day of the trial, such as travel and how you'll get to the court building.

If you have any accessibility requirements, a visit to the court can help reassure you that your access needs will be taken into account. Or if you may need any assistance or adjustments, you can speak to a Witness Service supporter about this.

During a pre-trial visit

When you arrive

- You'll enter the court and go through security, so you'll know what to expect on the day. A Witness Service supporter can give you information on the things you are and are not allowed to bring with you to court.
- If it has been agreed that you can use a separate entrance to enter the court, a Witness Service supporter can show you this.
- They can also show you to the witness waiting area (sometimes called the witness suite) so you can see where you'll sit and wait before you're called into the courtroom to give evidence.

During your visit

- You can go into a courtroom. A Witness Service supporter will show you where different members of the court will stand or sit on the day of the trial. For example, where the magistrates – or the judge and jury – will be, where you'll stand in the witness box, and

where the defendant will be.
- If you'll be using any special measures to help you give your best evidence, a Witness Service supporter can talk you through these if you have any questions.
- If you'll be giving evidence via live video link, a Witness Service supporter can show you the live link room setup and how the technology works.
- You can ask the Witness Service supporter any questions or share any concerns you may have.

Why should I attend a pre-trial visit?

Attending court can feel daunting, especially if you've never been to one before. It's normal to feel nervous, but pre-trial visits can help you feel more familiar with the court environment and the court process, and more confident about giving evidence on the day. Visits are informal, and you can bring a friend or family member with you for support.

You can ask the Witness Service supporter questions about anything you're not sure about or anything that's making you nervous about the trial, **but they will not discuss details of the case with you**.

Virtual pre-trial visits

If you cannot visit the court in person, we can also offer you a virtual pre-trial visit. This can be done by video call or phone call, depending on what best suits your needs.

You can ask your Witness Care Unit officer to request a virtual pre-trial visit for you, or you can contact us at the Witness Service directly to request one. The Witness Service will inform you of days and slots available for a virtual pre-trial visit.

- Video calls will typically take place over Zoom. You'll be sent a link to access at the time of your appointment. During the video call, the Witness Service supporter will share their screen and explain the court process to you.
- They'll show you a walk-through of a generic courtroom. Although it will not look exactly like the courtroom you'll attend, it will include the same people, and the Witness Service supporter can talk you through who will be where in court. They can also talk to you about any concerns you may have.
- If you choose to have a phone call, the Witness Service supporter can give you a verbal explanation of the court process.

In-person pre-trial visits

You can have more than one pre-trial visit if you feel you need it. For example, if you still have any concerns or your circumstances have changed. Or if you've had a virtual pre-trial

visit but feel you would also benefit from an in-person visit.

In-person pre-trial visits – in most instances – take place at the same court building witnesses will give evidence at. It's rare for a pre-trial visit to be held at a different court, but it can happen. For example, if there's a court near your place of work that would be easier for you to attend.

If the court was to change, the Witness Service would offer you another pre-trial visit at the new court.

If you're a vulnerable or intimidated witness and you'll be giving evidence by live video link at a remote site, we can also conduct a visit there as well as a visit to the court building.

How do I arrange a visit?

To arrange an in-person pre-trial visit or a virtual pre-trial visit, please complete our online referral form.

If you have already been referred, please contact your Witness Service supporter.