Witness Service

The verdict and sentencing

3 March 2026

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Many witnesses choose to leave the court building once they've given their evidence and so do not hear the outcome of the trial immediately.

If you do leave court without knowing the verdict, you'll usually be informed by the officer in the case or the Witness Care Unit if you're a prosecution witness. If you're a defence witness, you can ask the defence lawyer for the outcome.

The defendant will either have been found guilty or not guilty, or there may be a hung jury.

Hung jury: this can happen in a Crown Court trial when the jury cannot reach a verdict – either unanimously (all 12 jurors agree) or by majority (at least 10 jurors agree). If they're unable to agree, the judge will discharge the jury. The trial ends without the defendant being found guilty or not guilty. After this, the CPS decides whether to hold a retrial.

Not guilty verdict: a not guilty verdict is called an acquittal. The defendant will not serve a sentence and is free to go. The criminal justice process is now concluded in the eyes of the law.

Guilty verdict: once a guilty verdict has been made, the offender will be sentenced. Sometimes this takes place immediately, but often a sentencing hearing is set for days, weeks or even months later. This allows the judge or magistrate to have all the information they need to appropriately sentence the offender.

There's more information on how offenders are sentenced in this video from the Sentencing Council:

Video Description: An overview of how sentencing works in England and Wales, the types of sentence offenders can get and how judges and magistrates go about working out what sentence to give someone convicted of a criminal offence.

The Unduly Lenient Sentence scheme

This scheme allows anyone to ask for Crown Court sentences in certain types of cases to be reviewed by the Attorney General's Office if they believe the sentence is too lenient. You do not have to be connected to the case to do this.

The request must be sent to the Attorney General's Office (AGO) for them to decide whether to send it to the Court of Appeal to review the sentence.

A request must be made as soon as possible. The latest the AGO can send the case to the Court of Appeal is 5pm on the last working day within 28 calendar days of the sentencing.

You can find out more information about the scheme and the specific types of cases that can be reviewed on the GOV.UK website.