

Public Prosecution Service for Northern Ireland

Victim and Witness Policy



Independent, Fair and Effective



This document is available in a range of alternative formats

FURTHER INFORMATION

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The document can also be made available in an alternative format, such as large print, paper copy, Audio CD/MP3, Braille, Computer Disk and other languages.

Victim and Witness Policy

Contents

1.	Introduction	3
1.1	PPS commitment to victims and witnesses	3
1.2	The Public Prosecution Service	4
1.3	The Victim and Witness Care Unit	5
1.4	Guide to annexes	6
2.	Victim policy	7
2.1	About this policy	7
2.2	Receipt of investigation file	7
2.3	Support pre-decision	8
2.4	When a decision is taken	9
2.5	Early court proceedings	13
2.6	Attending court	17
2.7	Trial outcome, sentencing and appeals	19
3.	Witness Policy	22
3.1	About this policy	22
3.2	Preparing for court	22
3.3	Attending court	26
3.4	After court	27
4.	Additional victim and witness services	28
4.1	Court witness expenses	28
4.2	Complaints	30
	Annex A: Summary of terms used in this policy	32
	Annex B: Contact information for service providers	38
	Annex C: Summary of the main process stages for victims and witnesses	41

1. Introduction

1.1 PPS commitment to victims and witnesses

The purpose of this policy is to explain the standards of service that victims and witnesses can expect from the Public Prosecution Service (PPS). The PPS recognises that the provision of services and support for victims and witnesses, and ensuring their needs are met, is essential to the overall effectiveness of the criminal justice system.

Being the subject of, or witnessing a crime, is often a traumatic experience. Engagement with the criminal justice system can add to the stresses created by this experience. It is vital, therefore, that victims and witnesses are given the support, information and services they need to minimise the disruption and upset caused to them, while enabling them to give the best possible evidence.

At every stage the PPS is committed to ensuring that:

- victims and witnesses are recognised and treated in a courteous, dignified, respectful, sensitive, professional and non-discriminatory way;
- appropriate measures are taken to help victims and witnesses understand the information provided by the PPS and to make sure that staff understand what victims are telling them;
- the appropriate information is provided at various key stages;
- every effort is made to identify any specific needs and to ensure that appropriate actions are taken to meet these; and
- if a victim or witness cannot understand English, they have access to free translation or interpretation at the key stages of their case, if such facilities have been requested.

Victim and Witness Charters

The rights of victims and witnesses in Northern Ireland are set out in detail in two separate documents, the Victim Charter and the Witness Charter.

The purpose of the Victim and Witness Charters is to ensure that victims and witnesses receive appropriate information, support and protection and are able to participate in criminal proceedings. The Charters set out the entitlements and the standards of service you can expect to receive.¹

¹ The various standards set out in the Victim Charter specify that a range of services and information (for example, notification of a prosecution decision or the outcome of a case) must be provided 'without unnecessary delay'. Within the Charter unnecessary delay means five working days.

The Charters cover the services to be provided by a range of service providers across the criminal justice system in Northern Ireland, including the PPS and police. This Victim and Witness Policy reflects all of the PPS's requirements in respect of the Charters.

Copies of the Victim and Witness Charters are available via the PPS website at www.ppsni.gov.uk.

1.2 The Public Prosecution Service

The PPS, which is headed by the Director of Public Prosecutions, is the principal prosecuting authority in Northern Ireland. In addition to taking decisions as to prosecution in cases investigated by the police, it also considers cases investigated by other statutory authorities, such as HM Revenue and Customs.

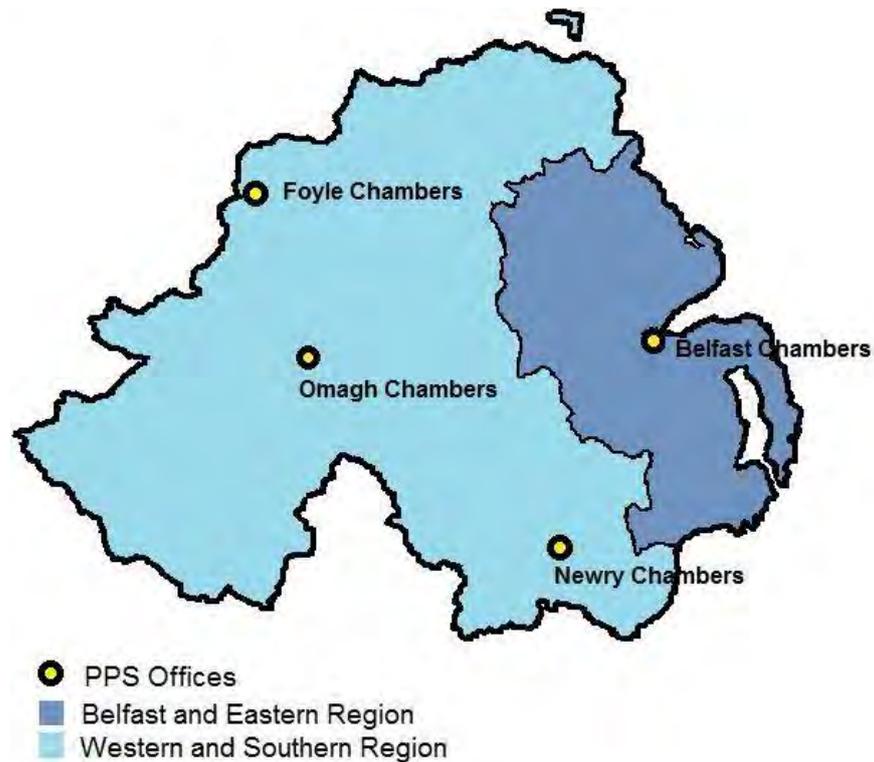
While the PPS works closely with the police and other agencies, it is wholly independent; its decisions are impartial, based on an independent and professional assessment of the available evidence and the public interest. The PPS vision is to be recognised as providing a first class prosecution service for the people of Northern Ireland.

The PPS is a regionally based organisation (see map, below). There are two regions, both headed by an Assistant Director. The Assistant Director has overall responsibility for decisions as to prosecution and for the conduct of all prosecutions in that region, with the exception of those cases which are considered by Prosecutors at Headquarters in Belfast.

There are also a number of other sections within the Service, each headed by an Assistant Director, which deal with specialised areas of work. These include High Court and International, Fraud and Departmental, Central Casework and the Serious Crime Unit.

Corporate Services is responsible for the organisation's support services, such as Policy and Information, Finance, ICT and Communication.

PPS Regional Office Locations



1.3 The Victim and Witness Care Unit

The Victim and Witness Care Unit (VWCU) was developed by the PPS in partnership with police and other agencies. The VWCU is a dedicated Unit, made up of specially trained staff from the PPS and the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI). The Unit's staff are based in the PPS's Belfast and Foyle Offices.

The purpose of the VWCU is to improve the experience of victims and witnesses and it is central to the provision of services. It allows for a single point of contact (via a VWCU Case Officer) within the criminal justice system. Its primary role is to keep victims and witnesses fully informed of the progress of their case throughout the criminal justice process. The VWCU can also make referrals to other service providers if additional support is required, including Victim Support NI (VSNI) and the NSPCC.

The VWCU's Case Officers also conduct individual needs assessments which are aimed at trying to identify and address any needs that the victim or witness may have, and to assist them in giving their best evidence. An initial assessment is conducted in respect of the victim when a decision is taken to prosecute by the PPS. A further assessment is carried out where victims or witnesses have to attend court

to give evidence. Additional assessments may be carried out as circumstances require.

Further details of the services provided by the VWCU are set out throughout this document.

1.4 Guide to annexes

A number of annexes to this document provide useful information for victims and witnesses:

- **Annex A** includes a summary of the terms used in this document or in routine correspondence.
- **Annex B** provides contact details for the PPS (including the VWCU), the PSNI, VSNI and NSPCC.
- **Annex C** provides an overview of the stages in the criminal justice process as a prosecution case progresses.

2. Victim policy

2.1 About this policy

Any individual who is a victim of crime may come into contact with the PPS. As outlined at section 1 above, the purpose of this policy is to explain the standards of service that victims can expect from the PPS throughout their dealings with the Service.

This policy explains the various stages of the process as a case progresses through the criminal justice system. Each stage is explained in detail and the services available to victims are outlined.

Whilst the PPS will undertake to provide the information and services needed, it is important to note that the PPS is not the victim's legal representative. This is often very difficult for victims to understand, as the defendant in the case will most likely have access to their own legal representation, while the victim will not. The reason for this is that the PPS has an obligation to be independent in the exercise of its functions, and this cannot be achieved if the Prosecutor acts as the victim's lawyer. The PPS does, however, recognise its duty to victims. This policy outlines exactly what that duty involves and how it will be discharged.

2.2 Receipt of investigation file

Once a crime has been reported, an investigating authority, usually the PSNI, will investigate it. Following this, they may forward an investigation file containing evidence to the PPS. Once a case is received by the PPS, a named VWCU Case Officer will be appointed and will act as the single point of contact for the victim from this point through to the final outcome of the case.

Through the VWCU, the PPS is committed to providing the following information:

- contact details for the PPS, the VWCU and VSNI;
- notification when the PPS receives the investigation file;
- an explanation of what happens when all the evidence is received from the investigating authority; and
- an outline of the role of the PPS.

VWCU works closely with VSNI. VSNI representatives are based within the VWCU and can provide immediate advice and emotional support by telephone. They can also make a referral to a VSNI Community Office for further help. VWCU also works

with NSPCC's Young Witness Service who can provide services to young victims and witnesses who are required to attend court to give evidence.

Information and support for bereaved families

The PPS has a separate process for providing information and support to bereaved families. This is in recognition of the particular distress that is experienced by the families of a deceased person who has died as a consequence of a criminal act.

Upon receipt of such a case, the VWCU Case Officer will contact the family either directly or via the PSNI Family Liaison Officer. This is to ascertain who the family would wish to nominate as the family representative. The PPS acknowledge and accept that, in some circumstances, it may be appropriate to have more than one nominated family member.

An Assistant Director of the PPS will then write to the nominated representative(s) within 10 days of a suspect being charged by police, or within 10 days of the investigating authority submitting a file. This letter will provide information on the role of the PPS, the judicial process, information about requesting a meeting and the details of the relevant support agencies.

A bereaved family's nominated representative has the same entitlements to meetings with the PPS as a victim. In addition, they are entitled to ask for a meeting with a prosecution representative at any other point.

In the event of a trial, the nominated representative will receive notification of court dates and will be eligible to claim expenses for the days they wish to attend.

The PPS is also committed to providing the appropriate services to those bereaved families in cases where the victim has died, but where the cause of death is not related to the criminal act in question, for example, through illness or accident.

2.3 Support pre-decision

The PPS is committed to ensuring that the interests of victims are considered at every stage of the criminal justice process.

Before taking a decision, a Prosecutor will consider all of the available evidence, following the guidance set out in the PPS's Code for Prosecutors and other related policies. A key element in the Code is the Test for Prosecution. Prosecutions are commenced, or continued, only where the Prosecutor is satisfied that the Test for Prosecution is met. The Test is met if:

- the evidence which can be adduced in court is sufficient to provide a reasonable prospect of conviction – the Evidential Test; and
- prosecution is required in the public interest – the Public Interest Test.

If the Evidential Test is met, the Prosecutor must then decide if a prosecution is required in the public interest. In doing so, the Prosecutor will take into account the interests of the victim, along with other relevant factors.

In addition, a victim is entitled to ask for their specific views to be taken into account as part of the decision-making process. Should a victim choose to do so, their views will be given careful consideration by the Prosecutor before they make a decision. The views of the victim will be provided by the police in a report for the file which is prepared for the PPS.

In cases where the Prosecutor is considering offering an alternative to prosecution (for example, a caution or informed warning), the victim will be informed of this where possible and given an opportunity to tell the PPS their views on this potential course of action. The views of victims are important and, whilst the Prosecutor will not always be able to act in accordance with these wishes, they will be carefully considered before a decision is reached.

Victims can request updates on the decision-making process by contacting their VWCU Case Officer. The Case Officer will then liaise with the Prosecutor in order to provide as much detail as possible on the process, including timelines.

2.4 When a decision is taken

Once the Prosecutor has taken a decision, the victim will be notified by the VWCU within five days of the decision by letter. This letter will include the name of the VWCU Case Officer and their direct telephone number.

The next step will depend on the type of decision taken; that is, whether it is a decision to prosecute or not to prosecute (see below).

Cases where a prosecution decision is made

In cases where there is a decision to prosecute, the VWCU Case Officer will conduct an *initial* needs assessment. This is usually conducted by telephone, or by correspondence, after the letter informing the victim of the decision has been sent out. The assessment will attempt to identify and address any needs the victim may have in order to assist them to give their best evidence. During this assessment, the Case Officer will:

- establish a preferred means of contact; that is, by letter, email, telephone, etc. and a preferred time of day for contact, where possible;
- provide information about the VWCU and the services that it provides;
- provide an opportunity to ask questions about the processes and any documents received;
- establish if any specific needs or vulnerabilities need to be addressed if the victim is required to attend court. This includes:
 - any medical or health conditions (including mental health), disabilities or learning difficulties; and
 - other support, for example, any translation services required and childcare or employment issues.
- consider whether special measures are required where the victim is vulnerable or intimidated (see later section on special measures);
- consider the specific needs and entitlements of children or young people under 18, as set out at paragraphs 50 – 51 of the Victim Charter. In cases where the victim is a child or young person under 18, the initial needs assessment will be conducted with their parent or guardian as identified by the investigating authority;
- provide information on other support services that may be available;
- invite the victim to make contact at any stage should they require anything further in relation to the case;
- provide information on making a victim personal statement (see below); and
- have regard to obligations towards children and young people, as set out in paragraphs 50 and 51 of the Victim Charter.

Following this, the VWCU Case Officer will make contact when the defendant in the case enters a plea. Entering a plea involves the defendant informing the court that they are pleading either guilty or not guilty.

Cases where a no prosecution decision is made

If there is insufficient evidence, or it is not in the public interest to prosecute an individual, a 'no prosecution' decision will be issued. This is often very difficult for victims to hear. It does not mean that the Prosecutor does not believe the victim. It is simply that there is not enough evidence to meet the very high standard of proof that the law requires for the offence to be proved, or that it is not in the public interest to prosecute this particular case.

The victim will be informed of this decision by letter from their VWCU Case Officer. Reasons for this decision will also be provided. In most cases, the reasons will be provided in general terms. This will indicate if the case failed to meet the Test for Prosecution due to insufficient evidence or on public interest grounds.

In the event that the victim disagrees with the decision not to prosecute, the PPS will consider the following upon request:

- Detailed reasons

Victims are entitled to request more detailed reasons for the no prosecution decision. The VWCU Case Officer will provide information on how these can be requested and will offer any assistance necessary. Where detailed reasons are requested, the PPS will consider what information about the decision may be provided, taking into account the interests of all parties and the facts and circumstances of the case.

- Meetings

Where detailed reasons have been provided, but further explanation is required, the victim is entitled to ask for a meeting with the PPS to discuss the decision. Whilst the PPS will try to accommodate this request, it may not always be possible. The VWCU Case Officer will explain how to make such a request and will offer any assistance necessary.

It should be noted that in a wide range of cases which might be classified as more serious, either due to the nature of the offence or the vulnerability of the victim, detailed reasons will automatically be given for the decision not to prosecute and a meeting will be offered

Review of decisions not to prosecute

Victims are also entitled to ask for a review of the decision not to prosecute after detailed reasons have been requested and/or received. Such requests should be made in writing within three months of the date the decision letter is received. If there are any difficulties with this, the VWCU Case Officer should be contacted. Once received, the PPS will conduct a review of the decision.

If there is additional evidence or information, the original Prosecutor will reconsider the case. If there is no new evidence or information, a different Prosecutor will conduct the review. Further details on this process are set out at Paragraphs 4.59 – 4.65 of the Code for Prosecutors. Detailed guidance, 'Victims of Crime: Requesting a Review of a Decision Not to Prosecute', is also available on the PPS website.

Victim Personal Statements

These are statements that allow a victim to say, in their own words, how a crime has affected them or continues to affect them. The following people may make a victim personal statement:

- direct victims (including a child taking account of their age and maturity);
- a parent of a child victim (instead of, or in addition to, the child or young person);
- a close family member, or representative, of a deceased victim; or
- a representative of a person who is unable to make a statement due to their physical or mental state.

Victim personal statements can only be used after the defendant is convicted. The Prosecutor will give the statement to the Judge before they sentence the defendant so they are aware of your views. The Judge may ask questions about the content. The defendant and their legal representative will also see it and may also ask questions about the content.

A victim does not have to make a victim personal statement - it is entirely their choice. If a victim decides not to make one, no one will assume that they have been unaffected by the crime.

If a victim decides to make a victim personal statement, they should contact a victim support service provider or their family liaison officer (for a family member bereaved through murder, manslaughter or a driving offence resulting in death) after they have been told about the decision to prosecute someone, typically when they have received the date for trial.

Views should not be given on the defendant, any alleged offences, or on any potential punishment to be given. This is because these views are not admissible in court. The Prosecutor will have to remove any information that should not be in the statement before it is given to the court.

Sometimes it may not be possible for a victim personal statement to be considered if the case is dealt with very quickly by the courts - for example, if the defendant pleads guilty at a very early stage, before there is an opportunity to make one.

2.5 Early court proceedings

This section covers the information, support and help available as a case progresses through the early stages at court.

The VWCU Case Officer is responsible for providing updates on the progress of the case at key stages including any arraignments, pleas, sentencing hearings, trials or appeals.

They will also advise on the following issues if they arise:

- **Bail:** If the defendant in the case is in custody, the VWCU Case Officer will inform the victim, without unnecessary delay, if they are granted bail and released from custody and will outline any relevant bail conditions which they are subject to. Equally, if the defendant is already on bail, the VWCU Case Officer will inform the victim if there are any significant changes to the relevant bail conditions imposed on them. Relevant bail conditions are those conditions which are likely to impact on the victim.
- **Warrants:** The victim will be informed of the outcome of a hearing if the defendant is re-arrested on foot of an arrest warrant.
- **Delay:** The VWCU Case Officer will inform the victim of any delay in the proceedings of any arraignments, sentencing hearings, trials or appeals where applicable. Where possible, this will be done in advance, although circumstances may not always permit this.
- **Changes to Charges:** There are times when a decision is made to change the original decision or take a plea to a less serious offence. When considering whether this should be done, the Prosecutor will, whenever possible, explain to the victim why this is being considered and listen to their views. In many cases this may not always be possible, for example, if issues have to be dealt with quickly at court. Where a decision is taken by the PPS to substantially alter a charge, to discontinue all proceedings, or to offer no evidence, the victim will be informed of this decision and given reasons for the decision where requested. Victims are also entitled to ask for a meeting to discuss this decision, and the VWCU Case Officer will explain how to make such a request. Whilst the PPS will try to accommodate meeting requests, this may not always be possible.

The VWCU Case Officer will make contact with the victim when the defendant enters a guilty or not guilty plea. In cases where the defendant has pleaded guilty, the victim is unlikely to have to attend court to give evidence. The VWCU Case Officer will inform the victim of this and advise of the sentence. Where the sentencing hearing

has been adjourned to another date, the victim will be informed of this date. The VWCU Case Officer will also provide assistance to help the victim attend this hearing, should they require it.

If the defendant pleads not guilty, the VWCU Case Officer will make contact with the victim to explain that they will probably be required to attend court to give evidence. In preparation for this, the Case Officer will carry out an *enhanced* needs assessment. This is usually conducted over the telephone and will involve them asking a number of questions to see what, if any, needs should be catered for. The victim should take this opportunity to inform the Case Officer of any matters that may prevent them from giving evidence.

The purpose of the enhanced needs assessment is to ensure that any specific needs are addressed before attending court.

Special Measures

Special measures are a range of provisions that can be put in place if the Judge is satisfied that a victim is either vulnerable or intimidated and, if so, whether special measures would be likely to improve the quality of their evidence. The aim is to help the victim to maximise the quality of their evidence by putting in place certain facilities that will assist in addressing some of the difficulties they may have with giving evidence in court.

Special measures include:

- screens or curtains which can be used in the courtroom so the victim does not have to see the defendant and, in some cases, the public gallery;
- a live television link ('live link') allowing the victim to give evidence away from the courtroom. In some courts, this facility may be provided by remote live link so that the victim is not required to enter the court building. The victim may also have a supporter (whose role is to provide emotional support) with them when they give evidence from the live link room. This is normally a member of the NI Witness Service or NSPCC's Young Witness Service;
- giving evidence in private - the public gallery can be cleared in cases involving a sexual offence, trafficking, or slavery, or where the court is satisfied that someone other than the defendant may seek to intimidate the victim;
- removal of wigs and gowns by Judges and by the defence and prosecution teams;
- video recorded statements - these allow the use of a pre-recorded video statement as the victim's main evidence;
- assistance from a registered intermediary to assist those persons with significant communication difficulties; and

- using communication aids - these are devices, such as alphabet boards, which help victims to understand questions and give their answers.

The Judge may grant one or more of these measures.

How are special measures obtained?

If a victim is under 18 at the time of the application, they are automatically eligible to apply for special measures. Such applications will be made at the point the Prosecutor takes a decision on the file. If the victim expresses a view that they do not wish to have the benefit of any special measure, that view will be a relevant factor to be considered by the Prosecutor in the case when he or she is considering the issue of special measures.

Victims over 18 are not automatically eligible to apply for special measures, unless the complaint relates to a sexual offence, human trafficking or slavery. Regardless of age, however, if a victim believes they may be vulnerable or intimidated, they should inform their VWCU Case Officer as soon as possible so that consideration may be given to making an application for special measures.

Vulnerable victims

Whilst the PPS understand that victims may be vulnerable or intimidated in some capacity, the law has been developed to provide very specific definitions.

The law states that a victim may be treated as a vulnerable victim if:

- They are under 18 years of age at the time of the hearing of the special measures application (see above).

OR

- The quality of their evidence is likely to be reduced because they have:
 - a mental disorder;
 - a significant impairment of intelligence and social functioning;
 - a physical disability or a physical disorder.

Evidence of the above will be required to support an application that the victim is a vulnerable witness.

Intimidated victims

The law states that a victim may be treated as an intimidated witness if the quality of their evidence is likely to be reduced because of fear or distress in relation to giving evidence at court. When deciding whether a victim is intimidated, the court must take into account different factors including:

- The nature and alleged circumstances of the offence;
- The victim's age; and, if relevant, their:
 - Social, cultural and ethnic background.
 - Domestic and employment circumstances.
 - Religious beliefs or political opinions.
- Any behaviour towards the victim by:
 - The accused.
 - Members of the accused's family or associates.
 - People who are likely to be an accused or a witness in proceedings.
- Any views expressed by the victim.

Individuals will automatically fall into this category if they are the victim of a sexual offence, trafficking or slavery.

In order to receive special measures, an application will have to be made to the court. The victim will most likely have to provide the Investigating Officer in their case with an additional statement and they may also be required to provide medical evidence.

Evidence to support these applications will be required before the Judge will consider granting the special measures. Such evidence MAY include that the victim:

- has experienced domestic violence;
- is a victim of a hate crime;
- has been harassed, bullied or victimised;
- neglect or harms themselves;
- is a frail and older person;
- is a victim of exploitation;
- is making allegations against professionals or carers;
- is a victim of organised crime;
- is a victim of terrorism.

Applying for Special Measures

Once the Prosecutor dealing with the case receives the victim's statement and any other evidence, they will decide whether an application can be made to the court. If an application is made, the defence will usually be given a copy of this statement and the other evidence. The Prosecutor will then present the application to the court and the defendant's lawyers will be given an opportunity to object. The Judge will then make the final decision. The victim does not have to attend court for these hearings and the VWCU Case Officer will inform them of the outcome.

Other measures the PPS may also consider include the following:

- removing the address of a victim from the papers to be disclosed to the defence where that address is not legally relevant to the case; and/or
- seeking to agree witness statements with the defence so that the victim need not attend in person. It should be noted, however, that the defence cannot be made to agree the evidence of any witness.

These matters are normally dealt with by the Prosecutor prior to the trial so as to ease any concerns of the victim in advance.

Where special measures have been granted, the PPS will ask the court to give the case priority.

Fixing a trial date

As part of the enhanced needs assessment, the VWCU Case Officer will also help to identify dates that suit the victim to attend to give evidence. This information will then be given to the court before a date is set for the trial. Every effort will be made to accommodate availability. The Judge will, however, make the final decision on the trial date. Once the Judge has fixed a date for trial, the VWCU Case Officer will send the victim an invitation to attend court. This will include the date, time and location of the trial and a referral to Victim Support or NSPCC Young Witness Service.

2.6 Attending court

For many victims, attending court to give evidence is the most daunting part of the criminal justice process. The PPS is committed to trying to alleviate any concerns and making attendance at court as stress-free as possible. This section outlines the measures (other than special measures) that can be arranged to counter the concern and anxiety suffered by victims when they are preparing for, and attending, court.

When the trial date is set the VWCU Case Officer can make arrangements, on request, for the following supports to be put in place which may help to make attendance at court less stressful:

- Trained staff from Victim Support (for adults) or NSPCC's Young Witness Service (for those under 18) can provide a tour of the court building in advance of the trial date and explain the court process. Arrangements can also be made for the victim, or witness, to arrive early on the day of trial (that is, before the scheduled start time for the trial).
- For young witnesses, NSPCC can provide pre-trial home visits and complete preparation work in advance of the trial to relieve anxiety. NSPCC support workers may also accompany young witnesses when they are giving their evidence by live link.
- The PPS will ensure that all appropriate arrangements are in place if the victim has a disability in order to allow access a court building and to provide their evidence at trial.
- An interpreter will be present at court to help if English is not the victim's first language.
- The PPS will ensure that the victim is provided with a copy of their statement prior to giving evidence or an opportunity to view their recorded evidence.
- Trained staff from Victim Support (for adults) and NSPCC's Young Witness Service (for those under 18) can be available at court to provide support and to help reduce any anxiety.
- If there are concerns about meeting the defendant, it may be possible to arrange for the victim to enter and leave the court building through an entrance other than the main entrance.
- Designated witness waiting areas at court, which are separate from the public waiting areas, may be used.
- The PPS will provide information about claiming for expenses incurred in attending court (see Section 4.1).

On the day of trial itself, the main points of contact will be the Prosecutor and representatives from VSNI or the NSPCC's Young Witness Service, if requested. Normally the victim will meet the Prosecutor for the first time at court, however, in certain cases this may happen in advance of the trial date. Victims are welcome to bring someone along with them to provide emotional support during the trial or to meetings with the PPS.

The PPS recognises that a change of Prosecutor (including independent barristers), which can sometimes happen where there are multiple hearings in a case, can be a challenging issue for victims. The PPS tries to ensure that the same Prosecutor is used for the duration of proceedings. However this may not always be possible, for

example, where a case is adjourned and diary commitments do not permit the attendance of a particular Prosecutor on any new date.

The Prosecutor will make every effort to make themselves or another representative available to answer any questions and to provide updates on the progress of the trial. Victims are entitled to ask for clarification from the Prosecutor of any matter discussed. The Prosecutor will also indicate how long the victim may have to wait before giving evidence. Where there is any delay, or if the case cannot proceed, they will provide this information as soon as possible, together with an explanation. When giving evidence, the Prosecutor will treat victims respectfully and, where appropriate, will seek the court's intervention where they consider that the questioning by the defence is not appropriate or aggressive.

Defence practitioners are obliged to conduct themselves in accordance with their professional codes of conduct. Where they fail to do so, a complaint may be made to the Bar Library of Northern Ireland (where the defence practitioner was a barrister) or to the Law Society of Northern Ireland (where the defence practitioner was a solicitor).

The Prosecutor will do everything possible to make the process of giving evidence as easy as possible. However, it is a matter for the court and the Judge to make sure that the trial is conducted in a fair and just manner.

2.7 Trial Outcome, sentencing and appeals

If a case has been prosecuted at court and the victim was not present, they will understandably want to know the outcome. The PPS is committed to ensuring that they are made aware of the result in the case through the VWCU Case Officer. If the victim was present at court for the sentencing process, the Prosecutor will provide the relevant information.

If the defendant in the case was acquitted or convicted of a less serious charge, victims are entitled to ask for reasons and/or a meeting to discuss this outcome. The PPS will endeavour to provide reasons where possible. It should be noted that no reasons can be given in cases involving a jury, as they decide if the defendant is guilty or not guilty; the deliberations of the jury are confidential and are not provided to the court. Whilst we will try to accommodate any request for a meeting, this may not always be possible. This can be arranged by the VWCU Case Officer.

Sentencing

Upon conviction, the Prosecutor will:

- provide the Judge with a copy of the victim personal statement if one is made;
- apply for any ancillary orders that may be necessary, including compensation orders, sexual offences prevention orders and restraining orders;
- remind the Judge whether a finding was made that the matter was ‘aggravated by hostility’, in accordance with the Criminal Justice (No 2) (Northern Ireland) Order 2004. If required, the Prosecutor will also remind the Judge of their enhanced sentencing powers under the Criminal Justice (No 2) (Northern Ireland) Order 2004; and
- explain this outcome, the meaning and effect of the sentence to the victim, if present at court. In addition, the VWCU Case Officer will ensure that these details are provided to the victim in writing.

In all cases, regardless of the outcome, the PPS can (upon request) provide a referral to support services that may be availed of following the trial.

Unduly lenient sentences

The law provides that, in very specific circumstances, the Director of Public Prosecutions can apply to the court for leave to refer a sentence to the Court of Appeal where he thinks the sentence has been unduly lenient.

This power can only be used in cases involving certain types of more serious offences that were tried and sentenced in the Crown Court.

Referrals to the Court of Appeal must be made within 28 days of the sentence being imposed. As such, any concerns should be brought to the attention of the Director as soon as possible. This can be done by writing to the Director or through a legal or public representative.

Appeals

All defendants have a right to lodge an appeal. If this occurs, the VWCU Case Officer will make contact with the victim to explain this and whether the appeal is against conviction and/or the sentence.

Victims will be informed of the dates, times and locations for any appeals. If it is an appeal against conviction, they may have to attend court again to give evidence. A further needs assessment may be conducted to ensure that up to date information is obtained regarding specific needs and to ensure that adequate support services and other measures are put in place at court.

The VWCU Case Officer will inform the victim of the outcome of any appeal, including any changes to the original sentence following the completion of the

appeal. If the victim is present at court for the appeal, the Prosecutor will also explain the outcome and the effect of the sentence.

3. Witness Policy

3.1 About this policy

The PPS recognises the significant role that witnesses play in the operation of the criminal justice system. This recognition is embodied in our commitment to providing witnesses with a high quality service that is tailored to individual needs.

Engagement with the PPS will be triggered in the event that any witness is required to attend court to give evidence. This policy explains the various stages of the process as a case progresses through the criminal justice system. Each stage is explained in detail and the services available to witnesses are outlined.

3.2 Preparing for court

A witness in a case will only be contacted by the PPS if they are required to attend court to give evidence. In most cases, this is because the defendant in the case has pleaded not guilty.

The PPS will make first contact through a VWCU Case Officer. The Case Officer will conduct a needs assessment which is aimed at trying to identify and address any needs that the witness may have to assist them in giving their best evidence. This is usually conducted by telephone. During this assessment, the Case Officer will:

- establish a preferred means of contact; that is, by letter, email, telephone, etc. and a preferred time of day for contact, where possible;
- provide information about the VWCU and the services that it provides;
- provide an opportunity to ask questions about the processes and any documents received;
- establish if any specific needs or vulnerabilities need to be addressed if the victim is required to attend court. This includes:
 - any medical or health conditions (including mental health), disabilities or learning difficulties; and
 - other support, for example, any translation services required and childcare or employment issues.
- consider whether special measures are required where the witness is vulnerable or intimidated (see later section on special measures);
- consider the needs and entitlements of children or young people under 18. In cases where the witness is a child or young person under 18, the needs assessment will be conducted with their parent or guardian as identified by the investigating authority;

- provide information on other support services that may be available; and
- invite the witness to make contact at any stage, should they require anything further in relation to the case.

In addition, the VWCU Case Officer will also help to identify dates that suit the witness to attend court to give evidence. This information will then be given to the court before a date is set for the trial. Every effort will be made to accommodate availability. The Judge will, however, make the final decision on the trial date.

Once a trial date has been set, the VWCU Case Officer will contact the witness to make them aware of the date, time and location of the trial. If there are any changes to these details, the VWCU Case Officer or the Investigating Officer will provide an update to the witness.

Special measures

Special measures are a range of provisions that can be put in place if the Judge is satisfied that a witness is either vulnerable or intimidated and, if so, whether special measures would be likely to improve the quality of their evidence. The aim is to help the witness to maximise the quality of their evidence by putting in place certain facilities that will assist in addressing some of the difficulties they may have with giving evidence in court.

Special measures include:

- screens or curtains in the courtroom so the witness does not have to see the defendant and, in some cases, the public gallery;
- a live television link ('live link') which allows the witness to give evidence away from the courtroom. In some courts, this facility may be provided by remote live link so that the witness is not required to enter the court building. The witness may have a supporter (whose role is to provide emotional support) with them when they give evidence from the live link room. This is normally a member of the VSNI Witness Service or NSPCC's Young Witness Service;
- giving evidence in private - the public gallery can be cleared in cases involving a sexual offence, trafficking or slavery, or where the court is satisfied that someone other than the defendant may seek to intimidate the witness;
- removal of wigs and gowns by Judges and by the defence and prosecution teams;
- video recorded statements - these allow the use of a pre-recorded video statement as the witness's main evidence;
- assistance from a registered intermediary to assist those persons with significant communication difficulties; and

- using communication aids - these are devices, such as alphabet boards, which help victims to understand questions and give their answers.

The Judge may grant one or more of these measures.

How are special measures obtained?

Witnesses under 18 at the time of the application are automatically eligible to apply for special measures, and such applications will be made at the point of directing on the file. If a witness expresses a view that they do not wish to have the benefit of any special measure, then that view will be a relevant factor to be considered by the Prosecutor in the case when he or she is considering the issue of special measures.

Witnesses over 18 are not automatically eligible to apply for special measures. However, regardless of age, if the witness believes they may be vulnerable or intimidated, they should inform their VWCU Case Officer as soon as possible so that consideration may be given to making an application for special measures.

Vulnerable witnesses

Whilst the PPS understand that witnesses may be vulnerable or intimidated in some capacity, the law has been developed to provide very specific definitions.

The law states that a witness may be treated as a vulnerable witness if:

- They are under 18 years of age at the time of the hearing of the special measures application (see above).

OR

- The quality of their evidence is likely to be reduced because they have:
 - A mental disorder;
 - A significant impairment of intelligence and social functioning;
 - A physical disability or a physical disorder.

Evidence of the above will be required to support an application that a witness is a vulnerable witness.

Intimidated witnesses

The law states that a witness may be treated as an intimidated witness if the quality of their evidence is likely to be reduced because of their fear or distress in relation to

giving evidence at court. When deciding whether a witness is intimidated, the court must take into account different factors including:

- The nature and alleged circumstances of the offence;
- Their age; and, if relevant, their:
 - Social, cultural and ethnic background.
 - Domestic and employment circumstances.
 - Religious beliefs or political opinions.

- Any behaviour towards the witness by:
 - The accused.
 - Members of the accused's family or associates.
 - People who are likely to be an accused or a witness in proceedings.

- Any views expressed by the witness.

Evidence to support these applications will be required before the Judge will consider granting them. A witness will most likely have to provide the Investigating Officer in the case with an additional statement and they may also be required to provide medical evidence.

Applying for special measures

Once the Prosecutor dealing with the case receives a witness's statement and any other evidence, they will decide whether an application can be made to the court. If an application is made, the defence will usually be given a copy of the witness's statement and the other evidence. The Prosecutor will then present the application to the court and the defendant's lawyers will be given an opportunity to object. The Judge will then make the final decision. The witness does not have to attend court for these hearings and their VWCU Case Officer will inform them of the outcome.

In addition to special measures, the PPS may also consider the following:

- removing the address of a witness from the papers to be disclosed to the defence where that address is not material to an issue in the case; and/or
- seeking to agree witness statements with the defence so that the witness need not attend in person. It should be noted, however, that the defence cannot be made to agree the evidence of any witness.

These matters are normally dealt with by the Prosecutor prior to the trial so as to ease any concerns of the witness in advance.

Where special measures have been granted, the PPS will ask the court to give the case priority.

3.3 Attending court

For most witnesses, attending court to give evidence is very daunting. The PPS is committed to trying to alleviate any concerns and to make attendance at court as stress-free as possible. This section outlines the measures (other than special measures) that can be arranged to counter the concern and anxiety suffered by witnesses when they attend court.

When the trial date is set, the VWCU Case Officer can make arrangements, on request, for the following supports to be put in place which may help to make attendance at court less stressful:

- The PPS will ensure that all appropriate arrangements are in place if a witness has a disability in order to allow them to access a court building and to provide their evidence at trial.
- The PPS will arrange for an interpreter to be present at court to assist if English is not the witness's first language.
- The PPS will ensure that the witness is provided with a copy of their statement prior to giving evidence, or an opportunity to view their recorded evidence.
- Trained staff from Victim Support (for adults) and NSPCC's Young Witness Service (for those under 18) can be made available at court to provide support and to help reduce any anxiety.
- Trained staff from Victim Support (for adults) or NSPCC's Young Witness Service (for those under 18) can provide a tour of the court building in advance of the trial date and explain the court process. Arrangements can also be made for the witness to arrive early on the day of trial (that is, before the scheduled start time for the trial).
- If there are concerns about meeting the defendant, it may be possible to arrange for the witness to enter and leave the court building through an entrance other than the main entrance.
- Arrangements can be made to make use of the designated witness waiting areas at court which are separate from the public waiting areas.
- Information will be provided about claiming for expenses incurred in attending court (see Section 4.1).

On the day of the trial itself, the main point of contact will be the Prosecutor. Normally the witness will see the Prosecutor for the first time at court, however, in certain cases this may happen in advance of the trial date.

The PPS recognises that a change of Prosecutor (including independent barristers), which can sometimes happen where there are multiple hearings in a case, can be a challenging issue for witnesses. The PPS tries to ensure that the same Prosecutor is used for the duration of proceedings. However this may not always be possible, for example, where a case is adjourned and diary commitments do not permit the attendance of a particular Prosecutor on any new date.

The Prosecutor will make every effort to make themselves or another representative available to answer any questions and provide updates on the progress of the trial. The Prosecutor will also indicate how long the witness may have to wait before giving evidence. Where there is any delay, or if the case cannot proceed, they will provide this information as soon as possible and an explanation for this.

When giving evidence, the Prosecutor will treat witnesses respectfully and, where appropriate, seek the court's intervention where they consider that the questioning by the defence is not appropriate or is aggressive. The Prosecutor will do everything possible to make the process of giving evidence as easy as possible. However, it is a matter for the court and the Judge to make sure that the trial is conducted in a fair and just manner.

Once the trial is over, the Prosecutor will explain the outcome of the case to the witness if they have remained in court. Otherwise, the witness is entitled to contact the Victim and Witness Care Unit or the court to request the result of the case and any sentence imposed. This information is not provided automatically.

3.4 After court

All defendants have a right to lodge an appeal. If this occurs and a witness is required to give evidence, their VWCU Case Officer will make contact to explain this.

The VWCU Case Officer will also provide information on the dates, times and locations for any appeals. The VWCU Case Officer will conduct another needs assessment to ensure that all specific needs are addressed and adequate support services and other measures are put in place at court.

If a witness is not present at court when the appeal is completed, they can contact their VWCU Case Officer for the outcome of the appeal.

4. Additional victim and witness services

4.1 Court witness expenses

The PPS is committed to alleviating any financial concerns experienced by victims and witnesses by reimbursing them for the expenses incurred in order to attend court.

Claiming expenses

The PPS will reimburse any expenses upon completion of a claim form. This will be forwarded from the VWCU Case Officer at the same time as the invitation to attend court to give evidence. It is important that claim forms are brought to court so that prosecution staff or a member of the PSNI can sign it to confirm attendance. If this is not possible, it will not prevent a claim from being paid as the PPS can use alternative means of verification, however, it may delay payment.

If unsure about any aspect of the claim form, victims or witnesses can access the court witness helpdesk on 0845 300 5770 or, alternatively, their VWCU Case Officer.

What expenses are covered?

PPS will pay expenses to attend consultations and required court attendances.

The VWCU Case Officer can book travel arrangements (flights, hotels etc.) on behalf of the victim or witness to save them from incurring these costs and having to reclaim them. They can also give approval for alternative arrangements for court attendance (e.g. to accommodate a vulnerable witness).

PPS will generally pay expenses only for the days on which a victim or witness is requested to attend court. Payment will be made whether or not they are actually required to give evidence. Should a victim or witness attend court and refuse to give evidence, their claim for expenses will not be paid.

The specific rates of expenses are available from the PPS Court Witness Expense Guidance, which is available from the PPS website at www.ppsni.gov.uk.

Vulnerable and intimidated Victims and Witnesses

Where a victim or witness has additional difficulties in relation to giving evidence and has been deemed by the PPS to be vulnerable or intimidated, any additional support

which the PPS can provide to attend court will be agreed and documented by their VWCU Case Officer. The PPS will then pay these expenses on the agreed basis. This may also include payment for the expenses of an accompanying adult to attend court when deemed appropriate. When the Invitation to Attend is issued, a witness claim form will also be generated for the accompanying adult and they will be entitled to receive expenses on the same basis as the victim or witness.

If the victim or witness is under the age of 18 or has a physical disability, additional support is available:

- An individual under the age of 18

Where a victim or witness is under 18, they are required to be accompanied by an adult. This will generally be their parent or guardian, as identified by the investigating authority. This appropriate adult is entitled to receive expenses on the same basis as the minor. A claim form for both persons will be issued at the same time as the invitation to attend court.

- An individual who has a physical disability

Generally the PPS will only reimburse witnesses for the public transport costs of attending court, where a route is available.

If the victim or witness has a physical disability or mobility issue (whether through illness, age or other reason), which makes it difficult to attend court and give evidence, their VWCU Case Officer may approve travel arrangements other than public transport.

Alternately, or additionally, their VWCU Case Officer may agree and record that an appropriate adult should attend as support. The PPS will then pay the expenses of this person to attend court or any consultations.

Nominated Representative

Where the victim of the crime is deceased, either as a result of the crime or subsequently, the VWCU Case Officer will request the bereaved family to choose a Nominated Representative as a point of contact. This may be done in consultation with the Police Family Liaison Officer, where one has been appointed.

Where a family is unable to nominate a sole party, the PPS will be willing to appoint a maximum of two representatives who will be responsible for communicating to the remainder of the family.

4.2 Complaints

The PPS is committed to providing a high standard of service at all times. Comments from victims and witnesses are important as the information provided helps us to put things right if they have gone wrong and to improve the overall standard of our service.

If a victim or witness is not satisfied with the service provided by the PPS, they are entitled to make a complaint. A complaint can be made directly or through a nominated representative, for example, a family member, solicitor, support group or public representative.

The PPS commits to deal with all complaints fairly and impartially, in a timely and consistent manner.

There are a number of ways in which to make a complaint:

By letter to:

Policy and Information Unit
Public Prosecution Service
Belfast Chambers
93 Chichester Street
Belfast BT1 3JR

Using the PPS Website:

Details of your complaint can be submitted using the complaints 'web form' which can be accessed via the PPS website at www.ppsni.gov.uk/complaints.

By email:

Please send the details of the complaint to: complaints@ppsni.gsi.gov.uk.

Deaf/Hard of hearing (SMS)

A SMS text service is available on 07795 675528.

By Telephone:

Please contact the PPS Victim and Witness Care Unit (VWCU), which is located in the PPS's Belfast and Foyle offices. The telephone numbers are as follows:

Belfast (028) 9054 4797

For complaints concerning Belfast and Eastern Region or any PPS Headquarters function.

Foyle (028) 7134 0632

For complaints concerning Western and Southern Region (Foyle, Newry and Omagh offices).

The PPS will acknowledge receipt of any complaint, via the individual's preferred method of contact, within 5 working days. A full response will normally be made within 20 working days.

Some individuals who are dissatisfied with the service provided by the PPS will simply want someone to review their concerns as quickly as possible – without the need to lodge a formal complaint. The initial step is to contact the PPS in order that the matter might be resolved informally. If interested in an informal resolution, the PPS should be contacted either by telephone (02890 897100) or by email to info@ppsni.gsi.gov.uk.

Anyone wishing to discuss a complaint in person with a PPS representative can make an appointment to visit one of the regional offices by calling the VWCU for their area. The VWCU will also record an initial outline of the complaint. The PPS will then contact the complainant to arrange an appointment with an appropriate member of staff. Normally this should happen within 2 to 3 working days.

Full details of the PPS's complaint handling arrangements are set out in the guidance booklet "How to Make a Complaint about the Public Prosecution Service". A copy of this guidance will be provided on request, or can be accessed via the PPS website.

ANNEX A: Summary of terms used in this policy

Acquittal

The decision of a court following a verdict, or direction, that the accused person is not guilty or where the case has been dismissed.

Adjournment

The deferment of legal proceedings to a later date, by order of the court.

Alternative to prosecution

If the Test for Prosecution is met, the Public Prosecutor will decide the most appropriate way of disposing of the case, other than by prosecution at court. The diversionary options available to the Prosecutor are:

- **Informed Warning** - an Informed Warning is a formal reprimand by Police and, although not a conviction, is recorded on a person's criminal record for a period of 12 months.
- **Caution** - a Caution is a formal reprimand by Police and, although not a conviction, is recorded on a person's criminal record for a period of 30 months for youths and 5 years for adults.
- **Youth Conference** - a Youth Conference is a formal process and, although not a conviction, is recorded on a person's criminal record for a period of 30 months.

Appeal

An application to a higher court for a review of a decision (such as a conviction and/or a sentence) taken by a lower court, for example a conviction made in a Magistrates' Court will be appealed to the County Court or, if on a point of law, to the Court of Appeal. The higher court may overturn or uphold the lower court's decision. Sometimes, permission is required for an appeal to occur.

Arraignment

The procedure whereby the Clerk of the Crown Court reads the criminal charges to the defendant and asks the defendant whether he pleads 'guilty' or 'not guilty'.

Arrest warrant / warrant

A document issued by a court authorising a person's arrest.

Bail

The release of a person from custody by a law officer or a court on condition that he or she will return to custody on a specified day.

Barrister

A lawyer who appears before a court as an advocate. A barrister speaks in court and presents the case before a Judge or jury. Barristers are sometimes referred to as 'counsel'. They may also be engaged to prosecute on behalf of the PPS.

Charge

A method of ensuring a defendant comes before the court - e.g. 'charged with an offence to appear in court'.

Child

A person below 18 years of age.

Code for Prosecutors

The Code outlines the general principles to be applied by the PPS in directing on cases. It provides general guidelines for the conduct of criminal prosecutions and defines the standards of conduct and practice that the PPS expects from its barristers and solicitors.

Compensation Order

An order of the court that an offender should pay compensation for injury, loss, or damage resulting from a crime that they have committed. This can be instead of, or as well as, a fine.

Conviction

A finding of guilt in any criminal proceedings that a person has committed an offence.

Court

A body of people presided over by a Judge and acting as a tribunal in civil and criminal cases. There are different types of court in Northern Ireland. All criminal cases, even the most serious such as murder, begin in the Magistrates' Court.

Court of Appeal

A court which hears an appeal against the decision of a lower court.

Crown Court

The court in which trials in more serious (indictable) cases take place. Such criminal proceedings are usually heard before a Judge and a jury.

Defence

The solicitor and/or barrister representing a defendant.

Defendant

A person who is accused in court of having committed a criminal offence.

Discontinue proceedings

The PPS may wish to discontinue a prosecution before or during a trial. This might arise where, for example, it is clear that there is no longer a realistic prospect of obtaining a conviction.

Evidence

Written or other material which is considered by a court when reaching a decision.

Evidential Test

A test carried out by Prosecutors to determine whether there is sufficient admissible evidence to provide a reasonable prospect of conviction.

Family Liaison Officer

A police officer trained to work with bereaved families, to provide support and information.

Guilty

A plea entered by the defendant that he or she has committed the offence. The court may also find the defendant guilty after hearing the evidence in the case.

Hate crime

Any criminal offence that is motivated by hostility or prejudice based on the victim's (actual or perceived) disability, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation or transgender identity.

Inadmissible evidence

Evidence which cannot be used in court.

Judge

A legally qualified person who administers the law and who has the authority to hear and try cases in a Court of Law.

Jury

A group of 12 people who have been selected for the trial of a criminal case, to try the defendant(s) and reach a verdict on matters of fact, according to the evidence presented in court.

Needs assessment

An evaluation carried out by the VWCU to determine the kind of support that a victim may need following a crime. This process is used to identify any additional support, special measures or protection that a victim might need if they are going to be giving

evidence in court and to help them do so. Once a defendant pleads not guilty, the VWCU will carry out a further needs assessment.

Not guilty

The plea the defendant enters when they do not accept that they committed the offence. The court may also find the defendant not guilty after hearing the evidence in the case.

NSPCC

National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children.

Offence

Any act contrary to criminal law or statute.

Plea

The defendant's formal response to the charge that they have committed an offence.

Prosecution

The term used when criminal legal proceedings are taken against someone. In Northern Ireland, that role is performed by the Public Prosecution Service, who are sometimes referred to as 'the Prosecution'.

Prosecutor

A lawyer (a solicitor or barrister), employed by the Public Prosecution Service, who takes prosecution decisions and/or conducts criminal prosecutions on behalf of the Director of Public Prosecutions.

Registered Intermediary

Registered Intermediaries (RIs) are communication specialists used to assist vulnerable prosecution and defence witnesses (including victims, suspects and defendants) to communicate effectively during evidence given in police investigations, and in any subsequent contested hearings in the Magistrates' Court or trials in the Crown Court.

RIs come from a number of professional backgrounds (for example, speech and language therapists or social workers) involving specialist experience in dealing with those with communication needs. This could involve working with those with an autism spectrum disorder, dementia, learning disabilities, mental health issues, mutism, voice disorders, brain injuries, etc.

Restraining Order

A protection order of the court which prohibits the violent person from further violence or threats of violence.

Sentence

A punishment or penalty given to a person found guilty by a court of an offence.

Sexual Offences Prevention Order

An order to protect the public from sexual harm from a defendant.

Solicitor

Member of the legal profession who advises clients and prepares their cases.

Special measures

The various measures that a court can order to assist vulnerable or intimidated witnesses to give their best evidence in court, as set out under the Criminal Evidence (Northern Ireland) Order 1999. These measures can include live video links, video recorded evidence, screens around the witness box and assistance with communication, including the use of an intermediary.

Statement

A written or video account of the facts and details of a crime or an incident.

Test for Prosecution

Prosecutions are initiated by the PPS only where it is satisfied that the Test for Prosecution is met. The Test for Prosecution is met if:

- (i) the evidence which can be presented in court is sufficient to provide a reasonable prospect of conviction – the Evidential Test.
- (ii) prosecution is required in the public interest – the Public Interest Test.

The Public Interest Test

A test carried out by the PPS to consider, in cases where the Evidential Test is met, whether a prosecution is required in the public interest.

‘Track my Crime’

Information is available to victims and witnesses via an online ‘Track my Crime’ Portal. Victims and witnesses are able to log on securely to the Portal to obtain details of their case, such as forthcoming court dates.

Information regarding the Portal is included in correspondence issued to victims and witnesses.

Trial

The process in which the evidence in a case is presented in court so that a Judge or jury can decide whether or not someone who is accused of a crime is guilty or not guilty.

Unduly Lenient Sentence

The Criminal Justice Act 1988 (as amended) gives the Director of Public Prosecutions the power to apply for leave to refer a sentence that he considers to be unduly lenient to the Court of Appeal. This Act restricts the use of that power to some of the more serious offences tried and sentenced in the Crown Court. The Court of Appeal has held that an unduly lenient sentence is one that falls *outside* the range of sentence that a Judge, taking into consideration all relevant factors, and having regard to sentencing guidance, could reasonably consider appropriate.

Victim and Witness Care Unit

The Victim and Witness Care Unit (VWCU) was set up to provide information and support to victims and witnesses in cases progressing through the criminal justice system. It is staffed by specially trained PPS / PSNI employees.

A VWCU Case Officer is appointed by the VWCU to act as a single point of contact from the receipt of the investigation file through to the final outcome of the case.

Victim Personal Statement

These are statements that allow a victim to say in their own words how a crime has affected them.

Victim Support NI

An organisation providing emotional and practical support services to victims of crime.

Witness

A person who is called to give evidence in court because they saw or heard something relevant to the case.

Young Person

A person below 18 years of age.

Annex B: Contact information for service providers

Public Prosecution Service

Policy and Information Unit

Policy and Information Unit
Public Prosecution Service
Belfast Chambers
93 Chichester Street
Belfast BT1 3JR

Telephone: (028) 9089 7100
Deaf/Hard of hearing (SMS): 07795 675528
Email: info@ppsni.gsi.gov.uk (for general enquiries)
complaints@ppsni.gsi.gov.uk (for complaints)
reviews@ppsni.gsi.gov.uk (for reviews)

Website: www.ppsni.gov.uk

Victim and Witness Care Unit

VWCU - Belfast Office (for Belfast and Eastern Region)
Belfast Chambers
93 Chichester Street
Belfast BT1 3JR

Telephone: (028) 9026 4690
Deaf/Hard of Hearing (SMS): 07825 118389
Email: vw cubelfast@ppsni.gsi.gov.uk

VWCU - Foyle Office (for Western and Southern Region)
35 Limavady Road
Londonderry
BT47 6LP

Telephone: (028) 7134 0632
Deaf/Hard of Hearing (SMS): 07825 118416
Email: vwcufoyle@ppsni.gsi.gov.uk

Belfast and Eastern Region / Headquarters Sections

Belfast Chambers

93 Chichester Street
Belfast BT1 3JR

Telephone: (028) 9054 2444
Deaf/Hard of hearing (SMS): 07795 673927

Western and Southern Region

Foyle Chambers

35 Limavady Road
Londonderry BT47 6LP

Telephone: (028) 7134 0648
Deaf/Hard of Hearing (SMS): 07795 675338

Omagh Chambers

2 Townhall Square
High Street
Omagh BT78 1BL

Telephone: (028) 8224 4319
Deaf/Hard of Hearing (SMS): 07795 831188

Newry Chambers

1 Downshire Close
Newry BT34 1FD

Telephone: (028) 3083 2500
Deaf/Hard of Hearing (SMS): 07795 810114

NSPCC Northern Ireland

Lanyon Building, Block 1 Unit 7
Jennymount Business Park
North Derby Street
York Road
Belfast BT1 3HN

Email: help@nspcc.org.uk
Website: www.nspcc.org.uk

Victim Support Northern Ireland

3rd Floor
Annsgate House
70-74 Ann Street
Belfast BT1 4EH

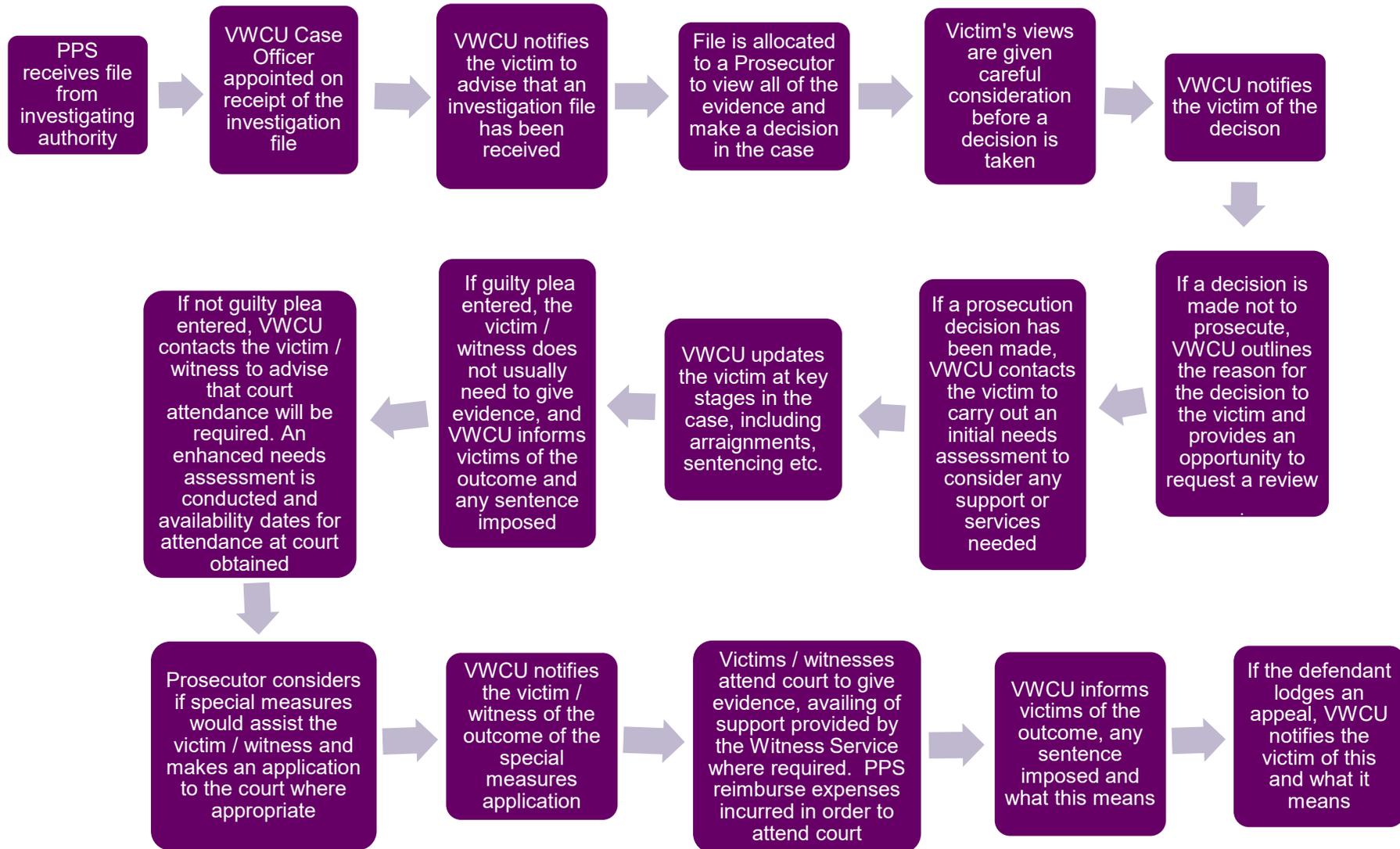
Telephone: (028) 9024 3133
Supportline: 0845 3030900
Email: info@victimsupportni.org.uk
Website: www.victimsupportni.co.uk

Police Service of Northern Ireland

65 Knock Road
Belfast BT5 6LE

Telephone: 028 9065 0222 or 0845 600 800
Crimestoppers: 0800 555 111
Website: www.psni.police.uk

Annex C: Summary of the main process stages for victims and witnesses



Contact Us

If you require any further information about the PPS, or a copy of this document in an alternative format, please contact:

**Policy and Information Unit
Public Prosecution Service
Belfast Chambers
93 Chichester Street
Belfast BT1 3JR**

Tel: (028) 9089 7100

Deaf/Hard of hearing (SMS): 07795 675528

Fax: (028) 9089 7030

Email: info@ppsni.gsi.gov.uk

Website: www.ppsni.gov.uk

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