

**We support witnesses
to give their best
evidence.**

**citizens
advice**

Witness Service
www.citizensadvice.org.uk/witness
@Witness_Service

Our mission

The Witness Service provides practical help, emotional support and information to witnesses so that they feel valued, respected and informed and able to give their best evidence in court.

Our Service is free, confidential and impartial.

The logo for Citizens Advice, featuring the text "citizens advice" in white lowercase letters inside a dark blue speech bubble shape.

**citizens
advice**

Our key outcomes are that witnesses:

- Understand the role of the Witness Service and the support it can provide and to which they are entitled
- Feel informed about the court process
- Feel less anxious and distressed and better able to cope with giving evidence
- Feel able to contact other agencies where they are better placed to provide support
- Feel that they have been respectfully and fairly treated by the service
- Feel safe at court

Our service in numbers



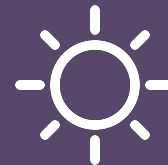
178,320
witnesses
supported to
give their best
evidence every
year



2,800
volunteers give
up their time
every week to
support
witnesses



93%
of witnesses
using our service
are satisfied or
very satisfied



80%
of witnesses we
support felt less
worried and
better able to
give evidence

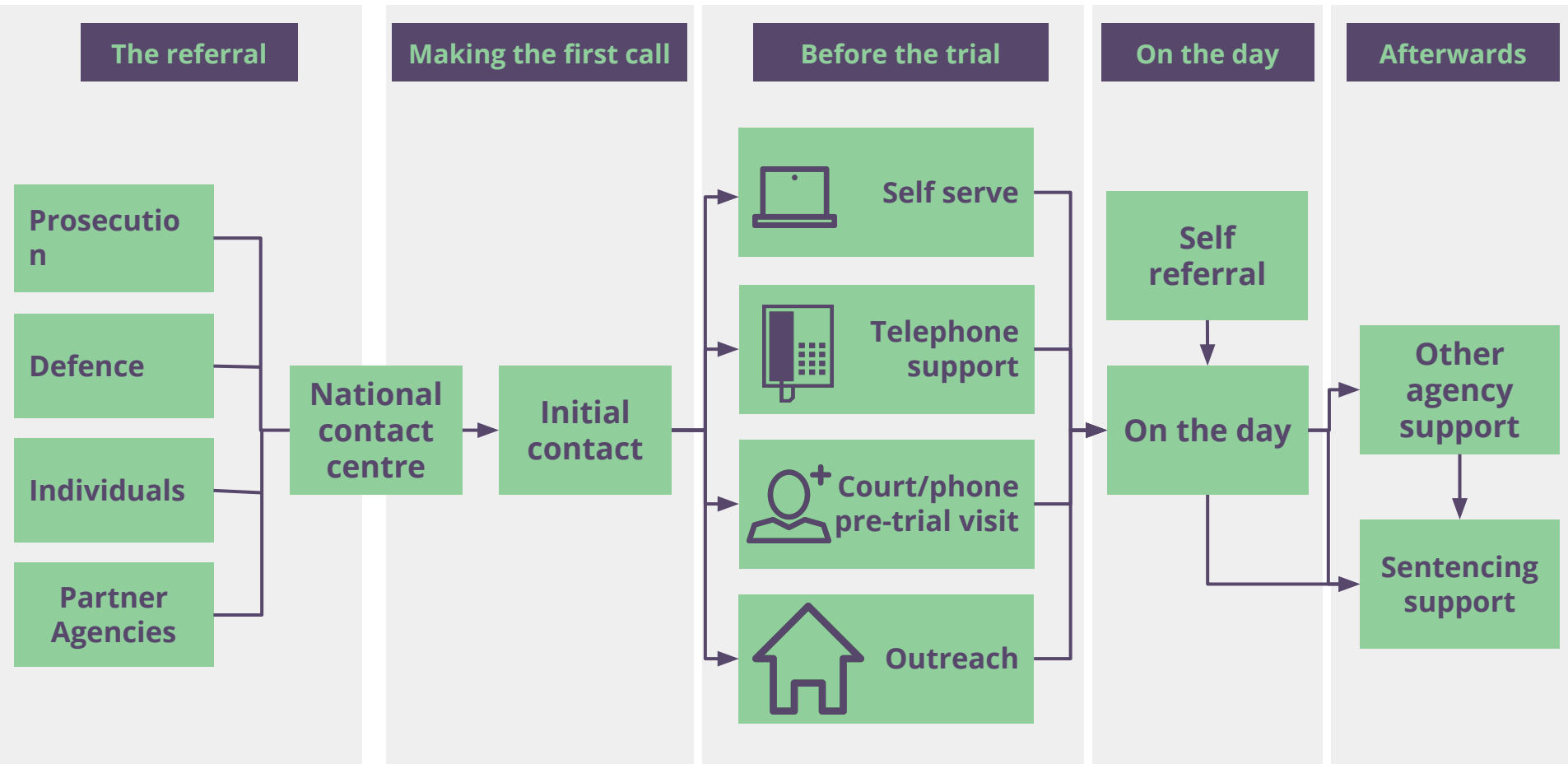
Our volunteers

We have over 280 staff running our service across 275 courts in England and Wales but it is our 2,800 volunteers who give the support to witnesses.

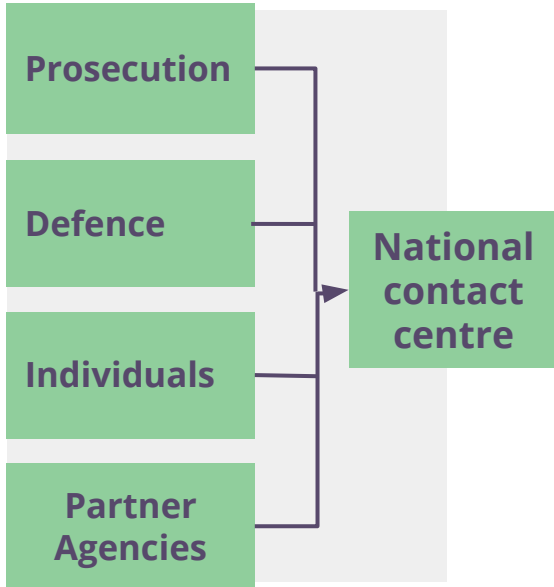
They undertake extensive training and have to become accredited before supporting witnesses alone.



The witness journey...



The referral



- Our national contact centre receives referrals from defence and prosecution agencies as well as from witnesses themselves.
- Referrals can be made via our [online form](#).
- The referral form is quick and easy to complete.
- We ask for certain pieces of information so that we can safely contact witnesses to offer them our support.
- We have a dedicated phone number for partners to speak to our contact centre staff.



www.citizensadvice.org.uk/witness



Partner number: 0300 330 1161



Witness number: 0300 33 21 000

Making the first call

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graph LR; A[National contact centre] --> B[Initial contact];
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National
contact
centre

Initial
contact

- **Following a referral our team will contact the witness.**
- **We conduct our own needs assessment to help inform the level of support we offer them.**
- **We will agree the best form of support with the witness and book them in for this support.**
- **We send them a follow up email to confirm our discussions.**
- **We're able to contact witnesses in English or Welsh depending on their preference.**
- **We'll send witnesses a text to remind them of their appointments with us.**

Before the trial



Self serve

Witnesses can choose to access information about being a witness by themselves. Our online content guides witnesses through the court process.



Telephone support

If witnesses can't make a pre-trial visit in person one of our team can talk them through what will happen over the phone and talk about things they may be worried about.



Court pre-trial visit

We can show witnesses around the court before the day of trial, explaining who they will see, what will happen and address any concerns. We also explain special measures where they've been granted.



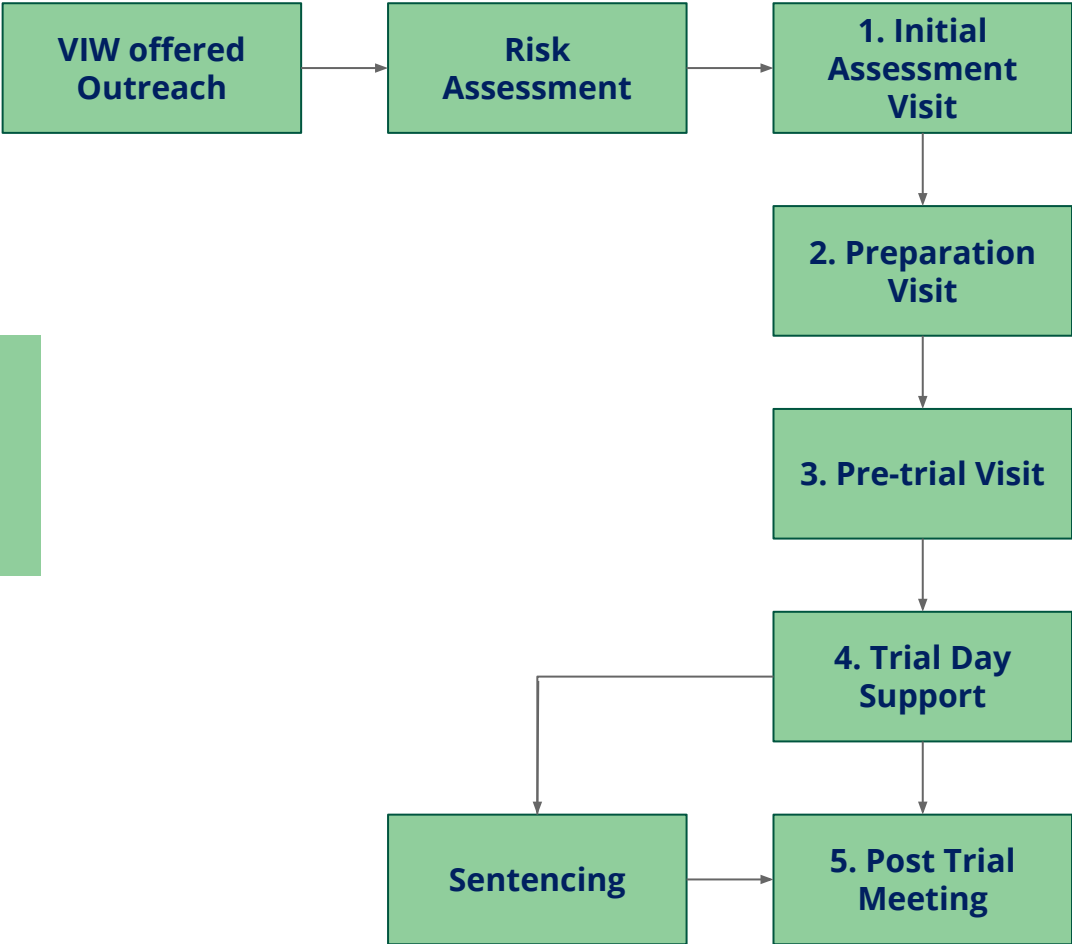
Outreach

We offer vulnerable or intimidated witnesses additional support away from the court, in their home, school or community centre before the trial.



Outreach

- Available to Vulnerable and Intimidated witnesses as defined by section 16 and 17 Youth Justice and Criminal Evidence Act.
- Delivers enhanced support and preparation to witnesses so that they can give their best evidence.
- Offered in their home or other community setting away from court
- The service does not in any way pressure witnesses into giving evidence but ensures that they are both prepared for the experience and are supported through it.



Outreach
The 5 Step Approach

Initial Assessment Visit

- Introduce themselves, the Witness Service and the 5 step framework of support
- Start to build a relationship with the witness
- Start to make an assessment of needs and begin the thinking on how best to prepare the witness for court
- Discuss initial/immediate practical concerns/issues
- Assess the suitability of the venue for future preparation sessions

Preparation Sessions

Use tools and technique to prepare witnesses for court. Cover elements such as:

- Their rights as a victim or a witness
- Who the people in court are
- They need to be truthful
- What special measures mean and how they work
- What happens when the witness is questioned and cross questioned
- Other issues such as the oath, they can ask for a break, they can request to sit down in the witness box, special requirements such as the need to take medication
- The practicalities of attending court such as becoming familiar with the layout of the court, seeing where they will give their evidence, discussing the best means of getting to court

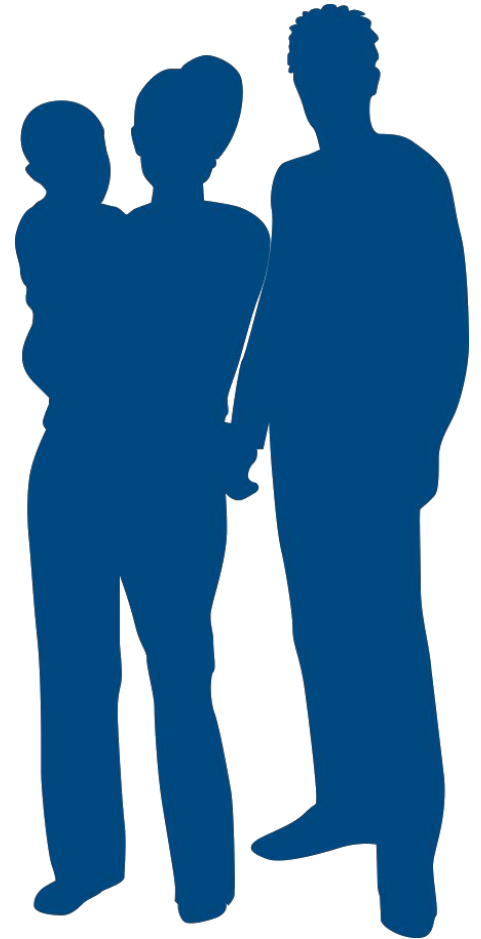
Pre-trial Visit

On a pre-trial visit volunteers explain:

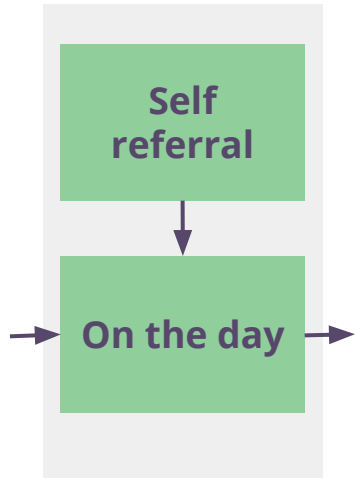
- what the Witness Service is there for
- about confidentiality and disclosure
- court facilities and emergency evacuation procedures.
- court processes and trial procedures
- individual's roles in the court
- special measures that have been granted and demonstrate their use

Witnesses are also given a tour of the court and courtroom, including:

- a visit to the live link room
- observation of a working courtroom

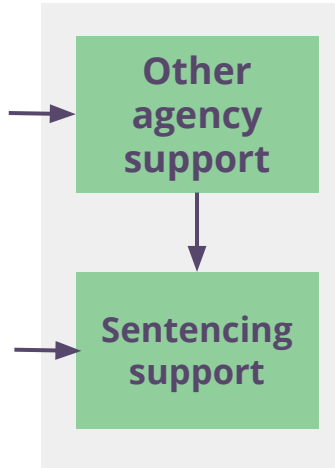


On the day



- We meet and greet witnesses, including those who have not previously been referred.
- We notify our relevant partners that witnesses have arrived.
- We continue our needs assessment, adapting our support as needed.
- We attend multi-agency morning stand ups to raise any relevant witness needs.
- We liaise with the CPS and defence to make sure the witnesses are kept up to date on timings and progress.
- We check that agreed special measures are in place.
- We explain the court process to witnesses who didn't have any pre-trial support.
- We provide emotional support.
- We accompany witnesses into court or live link if appropriate.

Afterwards



- We can be there to talk to about how it went.
- Refer or signpost witnesses to other partners for support with other issues affecting their lives.
- Be there to support witnesses and bereaved families on the day of sentencing.
- Hold a final visit with witnesses who have had outreach support.

We want people to be able to leave court feeling that they've been able to give their best evidence.

More information

- Webpage: www.citizensadvice.org.uk/witness
- Twitter: @Witness_Service
- Best Evidence e-newsletter: subscribe at wsnewslester@citizensadvice.org.uk
- Your speaker today: Emilia Cozma (Team Leader Volunteer Development - Beds, Cambs & Herts)
emilia.cozma@citizensadvice.org.uk

Thank you for your time today.

Any Questions?

