

## **The Witness Charter – raising standards of service for witnesses**

The Witness Charter, which provides a commitment from the Criminal Justice System (CJS) to offer a minimum standard of service to all non-expert witnesses, will be rolled out across the capital by the London Criminal Justice Board (CJB).

The Charter consists of 34 standards that set out the level of service that witnesses should receive at each stage of the criminal justice process. It covers the period of engagement from when they report a crime or incident through to court and post-trial support. It brings together, for the first time, standards that already exist through the *No Witness No Justice* programme and the Policing Pledge, to ensure every witness gets a level of service tailored to their needs.

The standards of care in the Witness Charter include:

- Where a serious offence is involved, witnesses will be offered the opportunity to be updated with the progress of the investigation on a monthly basis
- tailored support for witnesses based on an assessment of their needs e.g. language or communication requirements, religious or cultural needs
- the opportunity to visit the court building ahead of the trial
- minimising unnecessary attendance and waiting times in court
- emotional and practical support at court before, during and after the trial, particularly in the cases of vulnerable or intimidated witnesses
- action against intimidation at court and in the community.

London's criminal justice agencies are already meeting many of the levels of service in the Charter, but there are still some areas of work that need to be improved to ensure we deliver services that meet the standards. The London CJB is planning a four stage roll out across London with a target go live date of March 2010:

- Stage one – local gap analysis
- Stage two – workbook readiness action plan and updates
- Stage three – ‘go live’ sign off
- Stage four – post implementation reviews.

Stage one of the roll out is currently underway. Working under the guidance of the delivery officer and the local borough victim and witness champion, Local Implementation Teams (LIT) will begin completion of the workbook readiness criteria in time for the go live date.

Supporting guidance has been produced to help agencies implement the Charter, and communication materials such as posters, postcards and leaflets can be viewed and ordered through the [Frontline Matters website](#).

Andrew Morley, Chief Executive of the London CJB, said: “Witnesses play a vital role in helping the police to solve crimes and deliver justice. The criminal justice system cannot work without them. A witness who feels listened to and valued is more likely to attend court and give evidence. Providing a better quality of service for witnesses is the right thing to do and the more likely it is that justice will be done.

“The Charter has been produced so that witnesses understand how they should be treated by the police if they witness a crime or incident and by other criminal justice agencies and lawyers if they are asked to give evidence for the prosecution or defence in a criminal court. The Charter is an important part of our work to further improve the support that victims and witnesses receive from criminal justice agencies.”

**Further information:**

- More background on the Witness Charter, including guidance and promotional material can be found on the [Frontline Matters website](#)
- A copy of the Witness Charter and more information is available on the [CJS website](#)

For further information on the issues discussed in this briefing please contact London CJB Senior Communications Officer Sarah Chan by phoning: 020 7796 8038 or by email: [sarah.chan@cps.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:sarah.chan@cps.gsi.gov.uk).