



# No Witness, No Justice...

An update on the ongoing programme to improve  
victim and witness care in the CJS

SURREY  
CRIMINAL JUSTICE BOARD

Criminal Justice System: working together for the public





# No Witness, No Justice

## The way ahead for Surrey Criminal Justice System

'No Witness, No Justice' is a multi-agency project to improve the criminal justice system by being better equipped to identify and understand the needs of victims and witnesses and be more responsive to their individual needs.

An enhanced service to victims and witnesses supporting prosecution cases will ensure they feel more confident in circumstances that can be challenging and stressful.

Pilot schemes for No Witness, No Justice were established in five criminal justice areas in England and Wales. Development began in July 2003 and an evaluation of the projects has helped us to

develop a programme for Surrey. Surrey CJS is determined to improve and transform the experiences of victims and witnesses.

In February 2005 the county will see the opening of its Witness Care Unit. It aims to care for the needs of victims and witnesses by giving them one single point of contact for any concerns they may have during the case. The Witness Care Officer will be their main contact and will be able to offer assistance and information at any point. This will ensure the witness is able to attend court, support a successful prosecution and in turn bring more offenders to justice.

"I am delighted that we are helping to ensure that victims and witnesses feel looked after and get the right support at the right time."

Baroness Scotland  
*Minister for Criminal Justice*

In the rolling year December 2003 to November 2004 there were 103 ineffective trials in Surrey due to prosecution witnesses failing to attend.





“Victims and witnesses have not always received the support they need from the criminal justice system. That must change. The criminal justice system has a responsibility to ensure victims and witnesses feel safe and able to give evidence.”

Lord Goldsmith QC,  
*Attorney General*

## The Witness Care Unit

The Witness Care Unit is a joint CPS and Surrey police scheme and has 12 staff purely dedicated to the needs of victims and witnesses.

Surrey Police and the CPS have appointed Witness Care Officers who are the key deliverers of the programme. Each member of staff in the unit will handle a case through from beginning to end and as a result victims and witnesses will receive much more information about the progress of their case and provide support throughout.

Evidence from pilot schemes showed that this improved witness attendance rates at court. This in turn has a positive impact on reducing the number of ineffective trials. The Witness Care Officer can help with the following:

- Arranging transport to and from court
- Helping to arrange childcare with registered childminders
- Language difficulties
- People with disabilities

**21% of witnesses felt intimidated by the process of giving evidence or by the court environment.**

- Assisting with particular difficulties such as fear of intimidation by the accused
- Helping witnesses to overcome any fear they have about attending court – this can be eased by arranging for the witness to make a visit to court prior to the trial, facilitated by our key partners, The Witness Service, part of the National Victim Support Scheme. This will help build familiarity and confidence.

The Witness Care Officer will undertake a detailed assessment of the needs of each individual witness. It is important to identify the needs of each individual so they can deal with their requirements. They can provide tailored support to victims and witnesses and help build confidence in the system.

As well as the Witness Care Officers Victim Support and the Witness Service will also provide vital support and practical help.





## The aims of No Witness, No Justice and the Witness Care Unit

By working together the witness care unit should provide a high quality service which puts victims and witnesses at the heart of the process.

The outcomes from this are:

- Increased satisfaction
- Improved public confidence
- Better performance at bringing more offences to justice
- Preventing money being wasted on ineffective trials

With all the support from the Witness Care Team the Witness will be better informed and it will encourage them to attend court on the day to give their evidence. It also means they will be confident witnesses in any future cases.

**At least 22,000 cases were abandoned in 2002/03 because of prosecution witness issues.**

### For further information

If you would like more information on the No Witness, No Justice Project or Surrey's Witness Care Unit please contact:

**Paul Sacha, project leader  
on 0845 125 2222.**