



Important things to do if you or your child are going to appear in the Youth Court

Get yourself a solicitor - It is important to get a criminal solicitor to help you at court and it will usually be free. Try and see them before the day you have to go to court.

Try to read all of the paperwork you have been given - Make sure you know the right date and time you are due to appear in court. If you don't arrive at court at the right date and time the court can order that you be arrested. This can mean spending the night in a police station.

Check exactly where the Youth Court is before you go - Attending court can be very stressful. You do not need the added pressure of arriving just on time to the wrong place.

Wear smart clothes - You don't have to go and buy a new suit for court, but it's a good idea to dress smartly. This shouldn't make a difference to how you are dealt with by the magistrates judges, but dressing smartly shows that you know how important the proceedings are. This can have a really good effect on how you are treated by the court.

A parent or guardian should also come to court - If you or your child are under 16 the court will normally want to have a parent or guardian to attend the youth court as well. Even if you or your child are 17 the youth court normally wants a parent or guardian to attend as well.

People you will see in the Youth Court

The Usher - The usher works for the court and checks that all the young people have arrived at court. When everybody is ready, the usher will bring the people involved in a case into court to begin. The usher wears a black robe and often carries a clipboard. When you see an usher you should tell him or her your name and ask where your solicitor is.

Defence Solicitor - Your lawyer is called a defence solicitor. They are independent of the court, the police and the prosecution. That means that they are on your side, not the side of the police or the prosecution. You are your criminal defence solicitor's client. They work for you and nobody else in your case. Your defence solicitor will tell you the things the police say you have done, and then they take down your side of the story and help you decide whether you should plead guilty or not guilty. They will tell you how the court works, and what to expect each time you go. They also speak for you to the judges to help you convince them that you are not guilty, or that you should not get a heavy punishment.

Magistrates - They are ordinary people who are also judges. There are normally three of them. Magistrates make the big decisions about your case. This includes whether to give bail (permission to live at home when you are waiting for your trial). They also decide if you are guilty or innocent and how you will be punished.

District Judge - A District Judge is a full time judge. They are usually qualified lawyers and normally sit on their own without any other judges.

Court Clerk - The clerk is a lawyer who helps the magistrates understand legal problems in court. He or she sits right in front of the magistrates judges.

Prosecutor - The prosecutor is the person normally in charge of deciding whether a case should be started against you at court. They work with the police to make this decision. They work for the Crown Prosecution Service (the CPS). It also their job to get the case ready for court and give all of the information to the magistrates so that they can decide whether the you are guilty or not and how you should be dealt with.

The Youth Offending Team (“YOT”) - YOT’s work for each local council. They work with youth justice services in a local area. They normally have someone in the youth court who helps the court by telling them basic information about the person. They may also help you get bail and may prepare a report which could help the court treat you in the most helpful way. This is called a probation report. If you have a YOT worker, it is a very good idea to get on well with them if you can. They can help you a lot while the court is dealing with you.