

Scottish  
Court Service

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# Our promise to you

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**Court User's Charter**

June 2011

## Introduction

Our Court User's Charter sets out our standards of service and our commitments to you.

We recognise that attending court is an unfamiliar experience for many people. We want to provide information that helps you to access our services and understand court proceedings. You should feel confident that we will listen to you, provide you with accurate and relevant information and treat you with courtesy and consideration at all times.

Generally we provide information about court procedures and coming to court. We cannot give legal advice, comment on judicial decisions or, if you have been cited to attend court, the reasons for that citation. If we are unable to provide you with advice, information or a particular service we will explain why.

More information about the Scottish Court Service can be found on our website [www.scotcourts.gov.uk](http://www.scotcourts.gov.uk).

## About the Scottish Court Service

The purpose of the Scottish Court Service is [Supporting Justice](#).

We deliver this by providing the people, buildings and services needed for the work of Scotland's courts; members of the judiciary and the Office of the Public Guardian and Accountant of Court.

In delivering our services we take account of the needs of the judiciary; of people involved in the proceedings of the courts; and of the wider public. We aim to promote public confidence in Scotland's justice system and the efficient administration of justice.

The way we deliver our services is led by our values, which are:

- commitment and professionalism;
- providing a high quality service;
- integrity and impartiality;
- working to improve the justice system; and
- using resources effectively.

We aim to treat everyone fairly irrespective of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation. Further information is available in our "Equality Statement and Outcomes" available on our website.

## Coming to Court

When you come to court, a member of staff will assist you promptly. If you have arranged to meet a member of our staff you can expect to be met on time and no later than 10 minutes after the scheduled appointment time.

Your privacy is important to us and we take our responsibility to look after your personal information very seriously. We will ensure that you are treated in a manner that respects the confidentiality of your enquiry or your proceedings in court.

You can expect to find the following facilities and services in all of our court buildings.

- Reception areas and information points that are clearly marked.
- Clear signs in place to help you find your way around our buildings.
- Information on court business that is easily accessible or prominently displayed.
- Clean and comfortable accommodation.
- Reading material in witness rooms.
- If you have hearing difficulties we can arrange for you to access sound enhancement facilities during court proceedings.
- If you have a physical disability, we have either provided, or will make provision for appropriate access to court proceedings and court buildings.
- If English is not your first language we can speak to you by using our interpreting service, Language Line.
- Some of our documents and leaflets are available on request in other languages, as a recording, large print or Braille.
- Should you have any other personal requirements, not mentioned above, we will consider all reasonable requests and take all practical steps to meet them.

In most court buildings, refreshment facilities are also available.

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**Please let us know if you have  
any needs that we are not  
currently meeting**

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## Telephone Enquiries

We will try to answer all telephone calls promptly during normal office hours. These vary depending on court location and size.

Individual court opening hours are available on our website and displayed within individual court buildings.

If we cannot deal with your enquiry immediately we will call you back at a mutually agreed time.

If you are attending court as a juror or potential juror, that court will operate a messaging service to provide you with relevant information.

## Written Enquiries

You can write to us by e-mail or letter and we will respond within 10 working days of receiving your enquiry.

We will identify the name and the position of the person who is writing to you. Our response will be in plain English and we will provide a clear explanation of any technical or legal jargon.



## Attending Court as a Witness

The citation of witnesses to court and the progress of cases in court is not the responsibility of the Scottish Court Service.

However we understand that coming to court to give evidence can cause anxiety. We want to make the experience as straightforward and as comfortable as possible by providing suitable facilities and timely information about the progress of your case when we can.

- We will try to provide separate areas for prosecution and defence witnesses. If this is not possible we will arrange for you to wait apart from the other side's witnesses.
- We will inform you of the progress of the case at suitable intervals.
- We will explain if court proceedings are delayed for any reason.
- We will let you know as soon as we can if you are no longer required to give evidence and explain why.

## Accessing Information

We want to be as open as possible in providing information about court proceedings and the operations of the Scottish Court Service.

However we must ensure that releasing information will not prejudice legal proceedings or breach our obligations arising from the Data Protection Act 1998. Information contained in court records is exempt information in terms of Section 37 of the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002. Court records are documents, reports and minutes etc that are used, obtained or produced in court for the purpose of court proceedings.

The Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 gives a general right of access to all types of recorded information held by public authorities. If you want to make a request under the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 you should write to our Freedom of Information Officer at the address below.

If you wish to know more about our plans for the future or how we have performed please refer to our website. There you can find our Corporate Plan, Annual Report and Accounts as well as a range of other information and publications about the courts and the Scottish Court Service.

## Your Feedback

We welcome your comments and suggestions which help us improve the service we provide. We regularly carry out court user surveys to make sure that we are meeting your needs.

You will find suggestion boxes and comment cards in every court building.



If you prefer, you can give feedback verbally to any member of staff or you can write to us by post or e-mail at the addresses below.

We want to put things right if they do go wrong and we will always treat complaints seriously and impartially. We would always prefer to try and resolve complaints locally and as early as possible. If you do have a complaint we would ask that you seek to resolve it by contacting local staff or court management at the time of the incident.

However we do appreciate that it is not always possible to resolve matters either locally or at the time and we do have a formal complaint procedure which you can access at our public offices or on our website.

## Contact Us

Full contact details including telephone numbers, addresses, opening hours and directions for all courts are on our website [www.scotcourts.gov.uk](http://www.scotcourts.gov.uk).

You can also write, phone or send an e-mail to us using the following addresses or number:

Scottish Court Service  
1A Parliament Square  
Edinburgh  
EH1 1RF

Email: [enquiries@scotcourts.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@scotcourts.gov.uk)

Telephone: 0131 444 3352

## Finding out more

You will find other useful information, guidance and leaflets on the following websites:

[www.scotcourts.gov.uk](http://www.scotcourts.gov.uk)  
[www.publicguardian-scotland.gov.uk](http://www.publicguardian-scotland.gov.uk)  
[www.scotland-judiciary.org.uk](http://www.scotland-judiciary.org.uk)  
[www.scotland.gov.uk](http://www.scotland.gov.uk)