

Scottish Courts  
and Tribunals Service

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# Our promise to you

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**Sheriff Court & Justice of the Peace Court  
Users' Charter**

June 2019

## Introduction

Our Sheriff Court & Justice of the Peace Court Users' Charter sets out our standards of service in sheriff courts and justice of the peace courts 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.

We provide information about court procedures and coming to court (including jury citations and guidance). We cannot give legal advice or comment on judicial decisions. If we are unable to provide you with advice, information or a particular service we will explain why.

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

## About the Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service

The Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service is an independent body corporate established by the Judiciary and Courts (Scotland) Act 2008. Its purpose is Supporting Justice.

Its function is to provide administrative support and the people, buildings and services needed to support Scottish courts and tribunals, the judiciary, and the Office of the Public Guardian and Accountant of Court.<sup>1</sup>

In delivering our services we take account of the needs of the judiciary, people involved in the proceedings of the courts, and 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 we observe and seek to promote in others:

- Respect,
- Service, and
- Excellence.

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.

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**When you attend at court, or at one of our offices, we ask that you please treat our staff with courtesy**

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<sup>1</sup> The High Court and Court of Session (collectively known as the Supreme Courts), the Scottish Tribunals and the Office of the Public Guardian and Accountant of Court have their own User or Customer Charters.

## Visiting a Sheriff Court or Justice of the Peace Court

When you visit a sheriff court or justice of the peace court, a member of staff will be available to assist you. 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

and there may be reading material available in some witness rooms.

If you are due to attend at court and have a hearing or sight impairment, or have other accessibility or support requirements, please contact the court as soon as possible to discuss the arrangements we can make for you. Most courthouses facilitate access for those with a mobility impairment.

Information documents are available, on request, in a wide range of formats and in other languages.

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

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## Attending Court as a Witness

The Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service does not cite witnesses to attend at court, this being the responsibility of the main parties to the particular court case.

However we understand that coming to court to give evidence can cause anxiety. If you are required to attend, 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. To this end:

- We will provide separate waiting rooms for prosecution and defence witnesses and access to refreshments,
- We will update you on the progress of the court case at least once per hour and advise you when you can leave the court,
- If you are entitled to give your evidence to court by live TV link, we will meet you on the day and explain the process for giving your evidence to court,
- We will respond to requests received on behalf of witnesses, for court familiarisation visits, within three working days of receipt, and
- If you want to know what support is available to you when you arrive at court, we will direct you to the Witness Service or other support services which are present in the court building.

Standards to the above effect are set out in a cross justice agency publication “Standards of Service for Victims and Witnesses” which may be found 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, send an e-mail or phone us using the following address or number:

Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service

Saughton House

Broomhouse Drive

Edinburgh

EH11 3XD

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

Telephone: 0131 444 3352

## Accessible contact

If you want to contact us using text relay please follow the guidance at this link – [the Next Generation Text Service](#).

If you require the support of an interpreter when you contact a court by phone, or attend in person, a telephone interpretation service is available. To access this service, ask for telephone interpreting and state the language required. This service is NOT available during actual court proceedings.

If you use British Sign Language (BSL) and wish to phone us using a sign language interpreter, you can use the online video relay interpreting service. For more information see the contactSCOTLAND website [www.contactscotland-bsl.org](http://www.contactscotland-bsl.org).

## Telephone Enquiries

We aim to answer all telephone calls (or recorded messages) received during normal office hours, which 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 ten 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.



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**Please let us know how we can assist you**

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## Accessing Information

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



However we must ensure that releasing information will not prejudice legal proceedings or breach our obligations arising from data protection law. The Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 gives a general right of access to all types of recorded information held by public authorities, subject to certain exemptions. Information contained in court records is exempt information in terms of Section 37 of the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 for a period of 15 years. Court records are documents, reports and minutes, etc., that are used, obtained or produced in court for the purpose of court proceedings. 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 [foi@scotcourts.gov.uk](mailto:foi@scotcourts.gov.uk).

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 guide to information available through the SCTS Publication Scheme which includes our Corporate Plan, Annual Report & Accounts and a range of other information and publications about the courts and the Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service.

## Your Feedback

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



You may find suggestion boxes and comment cards in the court building. If you prefer, you can give feedback verbally to local staff or court management or you can write to the court by post or e-mail at the address shown on our website.

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 quickly 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 complaints procedure which follows the model procedure of the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman and which you can access at our public offices or on our [website](#).

## Finding out more

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

Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service:	<a href="http://www.scotcourts.gov.uk">www.scotcourts.gov.uk</a>
Office of the Public Guardian:	<a href="http://www.publicguardian-scotland.gov.uk">www.publicguardian-scotland.gov.uk</a>
Judiciary of Scotland:	<a href="http://www.scotland-judiciary.org.uk">www.scotland-judiciary.org.uk</a>
Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service:	<a href="http://www.crownoffice.gov.uk">www.crownoffice.gov.uk</a>
Scottish Government:	<a href="http://www.gov.scot">www.gov.scot</a>

Further copies of this document can be made available, on request, in other languages – please e-mail [csequiries@scotcourts.gov.uk](mailto:csequiries@scotcourts.gov.uk) or phone 0131 444 3455.

Dokument ten jest dostępny na żądanie w języku polskim. Prosimy o kontakt e-mailowy [csequiries@scotcourts.gov.uk](mailto:csequiries@scotcourts.gov.uk) lub telefoniczny 0131 444 3455.

Paprašius bus pateikta daugiau šio dokumento kopijų kitomis kalbomis – rašykite el. laišką [csequiries@scotcourts.gov.uk](mailto:csequiries@scotcourts.gov.uk) arba skambinkite 0131 444 3455.

Se pot oferi la cerere copii traduse în alte limbi ale acestor documente; vă rugăm să trimiteti în acest sens un email la [csequiries@scotcourts.gov.uk](mailto:csequiries@scotcourts.gov.uk) sau să sunați la numărul 0131 444 3455.

Копии данного документа доступны по запросу на других языках – пожалуйста, отправьте сообщение на адрес электронной почты [csequiries@scotcourts.gov.uk](mailto:csequiries@scotcourts.gov.uk) или позвоните по номеру 0131 444 3455

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