

## The Witness Charter

The 34 standards of the Witness Charter – with a brief explanation given for those affecting Bedfordshire Police – are:

1. **Ensuring fair treatment**  
Witnesses will be treated fairly and with respect according to their needs, irrespective of race, religion, background, gender, age, sexuality or disability.
2. **Reporting a crime or incident**  
We will publicise details of how to contact the police and the arrangements for reporting a crime or other incident. If you report a crime or incident, we will ensure you understand what we tell you, explain how we will deal with the matter and how long it may take, and give you a reference or crime number and contact details.
3. **Initial needs assessment by the police**  
We will identify whether prosecution witnesses are vulnerable or intimidated and seek their views on measures that might help them.
4. **Initial identification as a vulnerable or intimidated witness**  
When taking a statement, we will assess witnesses' needs, including their preferred way of being contacted, language and communication needs, and any other help needed in order to give evidence.
5. **Making a statement**  
This standard explains the statement-taking process to witnesses and how, when making a written statement, we will ensure their statement is accurately recorded and they will be allowed to check it and change any inaccuracies or add anything more that they want to say.
6. **After a statement is given**  
We will give witnesses a contact number and a leaflet that explains what will happen next, and ask whether they want to be referred to Victim Support or the Witness Service for more support.
7. **Being kept updated on progress during the investigation of a serious criminal offence**  
If a witness is told they are likely to be called to give evidence, we will update them at least once a month on the progress of the case until the point of closure of the investigation. If the investigation is still ongoing after six months, we will agree with the witness on the frequency of future updates.
8. **Action on intimidation**  
We will find out if witnesses are being intimidated or are at risk of intimidation and, if so, give them advice or refer them to an appropriate agency for help.
9. **Being kept updated on progress after charge**  
We will inform prosecution witnesses whether the defendant has been charged, released on bail or held in custody. The Witness Care Unit will inform witnesses of the case's progress once the defendant has been charged. If the case goes to court, the Witness Care Unit will inform witnesses whether the defendant has been released on bail, the outcome of relevant court hearings and how to apply for special measures to help them give evidence.
10. Follow-up needs assessment
11. Meeting your needs
12. Taking account of your availability
13. Giving priority to cases involving vulnerable witnesses, including child witnesses
14. Notice of trial date and minimising unnecessary attendance
15. Information about the court process
16. Information about the court and its location
17. Visiting court before trial
18. Attendance of family and supporters
19. Support at court
20. Court facilities and signage
21. Safety at court
22. Lawyers introducing themselves
23. Waiting rooms and standby arrangements
24. Waiting times at court and being kept updated on progress
25. Special arrangements for witnesses with disabilities or medical conditions
26. Special measures for vulnerable or intimidated witnesses
27. Communication aids
28. The witness box
29. Cross-examination
30. Being informed of the result
31. Appeals

- 32. Post-trial support
- 33. Claiming expenses

**34. Complaints**

Witnesses will be informed that if they are unhappy with the service they receive, they should make a complaint. We will let them know how to make a complaint, treat it seriously and try to deal with it as soon as possible.