

*Domestic violence includes any form of physical, sexual, emotional or financial abuse within or after an intimate relationship. You are not to blame; abusive behaviour is never acceptable. Support is available.*

***Your comments are welcome***

As the Specialist Domestic Violence Court is a new initiative we welcome your comments and suggestions. You will be asked to fill in a comment form to help the Court and support agencies know whether they are meeting your needs.

Your supporting agency would be pleased to also pass on to the Court any thoughts you may have for improving our service.

***Contact phone numbers for support agencies***

*Confidentiality is assured for all these services.*

Witness Service: 020 8700 9342 or 020 8700 9448

***If you live in Hammersmith and Fulham:***

ADVANCE (advocacy service): 020 7385 0409

Police Community Safety Unit: 020 8246 2880

***If you live in Kensington and Chelsea:***

Eaves Women's Aid: 020 7373 8660

Victim Support: 020 7259 2424

Police Community Safety Unit: 020 8246 0226

In an emergency or harassment: 999

***The Specialist Domestic Violence Court***  
*at West London Magistrates Court*

**Information for  
Victim/Witnesses**

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**West London Magistrates Court**

181 Talgarth Road  
London W6 8DN

Version 1.0 October 2002



## ***The Specialist Domestic Violence Court at West London Magistrates Court***

From October 2002 onwards, domestic violence court cases are being dealt with in a different way at West London Magistrates Court.

- A new Specialist Domestic Violence Court will deal with most cases.
- Everyone dealing with the case at the Court has received special training in domestic violence and what it means for victim/witnesses
- A range of safety and support measures have been put in place to help you coming to court.

This leaflet is to help you know and make use of what is available before, during and after the court date.

### ***Before the court date***

You can contact the organisations listed on the back page at any time before or after the court case if you are a victim of domestic violence. They can help you with information, advice and other practical issues to do with your safety. Whether or not you choose to get in touch now, here are some ideas for keeping safe and preparing yourself for the Court.

*Please note: Children can't be brought to court, so arrange childcare in advance.*

#### **Speak to the Witness Service...**

...to **arrange a visit to the court** (pre-court visit) before the case date to see what happens, where, and to check out or request safety measures for the day of the trial, e.g. you can arrange to enter and leave the court building by a separate entrance if you are worried about meeting your partner /ex-partner;

...if you have a **disability** and need disabled parking at court, or to arrange assistance with access to the building.

#### **Speak to the Police...**

...if you need an **interpreter** or British Sign Language interpreter to be present for a pre-court visit or in court to assist you as a witness;

...in **advance for a travel warrant** (voucher for expenses) to cover the cost of public transport to and from the court. If you do not feel safe on public transport, tell the police — it may be possible to arrange another way of getting to the court;

...about **any other legal action** relating to the domestic violence, eg non molestation orders, or child contact proceedings;

...at **once about any harassment**, threats or danger, or if the terms of bail conditions or civil injunctions are broken by your partner/ex-partner.

### ***Expenses on the day***

You can claim for travelling and other expenses and for an allowance towards any earnings you have lost. Keep all receipts. You should have received a claim form in the post from the police, if not, please ask the prosecutor.

### ***On the day you go to court***

- You can bring a friend to wait with you.
- Bring some money to buy drinks or food.
- Try to arrive a bit earlier than you need to.
- When you arrive, tell the person at reception that you are a witness for the Specialist Domestic Violence Court.
- You will be met by a worker from the Witness Service (Kensington and Chelsea residents) or ADVANCE (Hammersmith and Fulham residents), who will describe what is going to happen, and stay with you.

- You will be taken to a waiting room away from the accused person.
- If you have asked for an interpreter, you will be introduced to them.

### ***In Court***

When you go into the courtroom, your supporter from the Witness Service or ADVANCE will be there too. You will be shown into the witness box and asked questions by the prosecution and the defence about what happened to you. After you have given your evidence, you will be told you can leave the Court.

Magistrates will listen to all the evidence (e.g. from police, witnesses, medical evidence) and decide whether the person accused of violence against you is guilty or not. If the accused person is found guilty the magistrates decide on the punishment (sentence). You may be asked for your views to help the court decide on the punishment.

### ***After Court***

You will be contacted by the police and/or your support agency about the court's decision as soon as possible.

They will also give you any information you need to help you think about the choices you have and support you as you make them.

Your support agency can help you apply for a protection order (Non-Molestation Order) if you don't already have one.

If you are threatened or harassed in any way by your partner or ex-partner after the court hearing, you should get in touch at once with the police or your support agency.