

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 welcomed

The Specialist Domestic Violence Court welcomes 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 or support agencies

Confidentiality is assured for all these services

The Witness Service at West London Magistrates Court:
020 8700 9342 or 020 8700 9448

In addition, if you live in

Hammersmith and Fulham call:

ADVANCE (Advocacy Service)

Police Community Safety Unit: 020 8246 2828

Police Witness Care Unit: 020 8246 2501

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

Eaves Women's Aid: 020 7373 8660

Victim Support: 020 7259 2424

Police Community Safety Unit: 020 8246 0226

Police Witness Care Unit: 020 8246 0407

In an emergency always call 999

West London Magistrates Court
181 Talgarth Road London W6 8DN
Tel: 0845 601 3600

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The Specialist Domestic Violence Court at West London Magistrates Court

Information for victims/witnesses



The Specialist Domestic Violence Court at West London Magistrates Court

Since October 2002, domestic violence court cases have been dealt with in a different way at West London Magistrates Court:

- a specialist domestic violence court deals with most cases
- everyone dealing with the case at the court has received special training in domestic violence and what it means for victims/witnesses
- a range of safety and support measures have been put in place to help you in coming to court.

This leaflet is to help you know and make use of what is available before, during and after your appearance at court.

Before the court date

You can contact the organisations listed on the back page at any time before or after the court case. 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 court.

Please note: children can't be brought to court, so you will need to 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 or your support worker...

...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;

...if you feel scared or threatened giving evidence in front of the accused. The court may agree for you to give evidence via TV/video link or behind screens;

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

...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.

Expenses on the day

You can claim for travel 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 Witness Care Unit, if not, please ask the prosecutor or the Witness Service at court.

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 support worker /the Witness Service who will describe what is going to happen and stay with you, if you wish
- 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
- A prosecutor will come and talk to you and give you your statement to read.

In court

If you have a support worker they will be in the courtroom when you go in. If you do not have a support worker and would like support, please talk to the Witness Service.

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 or a District Judge will listen to all the evidence (e.g. from police, witnesses or medical evidence) and decide whether the person accused of domestic violence against you is guilty or not. If the accused person is found guilty the Magistrates or District Judge decide on the punishment (sentence). The sentence may be decided another day.

After court

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

Your support agency can help you apply for a protection order (non-molestation order) if you feel you need 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 as this is viewed very seriously by the court.