



Northern Ireland

Rights of victims of crime in criminal proceedings - Northern Ireland

If you have been a **victim of crime**, the law confers certain individual rights to you, before, during and after court proceedings (trial). You can also benefit from various forms of assistance and may be able to claim compensation for the damages caused by the crime.

Criminal proceedings in Northern Ireland start with investigation, where the police gather evidence. Once the police have completed their investigation, the case is passed to the prosecution service. The public prosecutor examines whether or not there is enough evidence against the suspect for a reasonable prospect of conviction and whether it is in the public interest to prosecute him or her. If the prosecutor decides that a prosecution should not go ahead, the case will be closed. Otherwise the prosecutor will prepare the case for hearing, and prosecute the case in court. In either situation you will be notified of the prosecution decision and, if the case is going to court, you will be contacted about the date of the hearing.

Cases for less serious offences are heard at the magistrates' courts. Cases for more serious crimes (like rape or robbery) are heard at the Crown Court by a judge and a jury. The jury is composed of 12 people selected at random from the electoral register who listen to the evidence presented during the trial and decide if the defendant is guilty of the crime. The judge decides on matters of law during the trial, such as whether the presentation of certain evidence is allowed. At the end of the trial if the jury finds the defendant guilty the judge decides the sentence for the crime according to the law.

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