

# Who's who in the magistrates' court

The **defendant** is the person who has been accused of the offence. The defendant sits in the dock and sometimes a uniformed officer sits near to them.

A **witness supporter** may be able to sit with a young witness while they are giving evidence.

The **witness** answers questions from the witness box. Most young or vulnerable witnesses give evidence using a TV link from another room in the court building or from a different court.

The **defence lawyer/solicitor** helps the defendant. This lawyer acts on their instructions by asking the witnesses questions. Sometimes a defendant will represent themselves.

The **prosecutor** is a lawyer who presents the case fairly against the defendant. They do this by presenting evidence and asking the witnesses questions about what they saw or heard, or what happened to them. They often challenge the defence witnesses. They will also challenge the defence version of events.

The **usher** sometimes wears a black gown and will take you into the courtroom. While you are waiting, you can ask the usher for help if you need anything. If you leave the waiting area, you must let the usher know.

The **legal adviser** advises the magistrates on the law and helps to manage proceedings in court.

The **magistrates** are in charge of the courtroom. There are usually three magistrates but there may be two, or just one **district judge**. They don't wear wigs or gowns. The magistrates decide if the defendant broke the law and how they are dealt with.

The magistrates' court is open to the **public**. Members of the public may sit quietly and listen at the back of the court.