



Supporting You Through Jury Service

Jury service

Jury service is an important public duty and, as a juror, you play a vital role in the criminal justice system. Each year, approximately 200,000 people across England and Wales are summoned for jury service.

For most people, jury service is interesting, rewarding and something they will do only once or twice in their lifetime. However, sometimes people may find it a daunting experience because of the responsibility of the decisions they are asked to make, along with extra travelling or having to make additional arrangements. Remember, you will not be on your own and if you have any difficulties or concerns, you may talk to court staff or fellow jurors.

Jurors decide whether or not defendants are guilty of the offence they are charged with, based on the evidence presented in court. The Crown Court deals with the more serious criminal trials which can include murder, rape and grievous bodily harm. As a result, sometimes jurors hear evidence which may be distressing and upsetting for many reasons. We have worked jointly with Samaritans (**see page 2**) to provide this leaflet, to support jurors emotionally, before, during and after jury service.

Before you start jury service

If this is the first time you have been called for jury service, it is normal to feel apprehensive about what to expect and what you will be asked to do.

The information sent to you, and available through the website of HM Courts & Tribunals Service, is designed to provide reassurance by explaining the procedure. However, we recognise you may still have concerns or questions.

If you are particularly worried and you think a visit to a court would help, you may be able to arrange a visit to the courthouse before you start jury service. You can do this by contacting the Jury Central Summoning Bureau (JCSB); or you may ask the JCSB to arrange for you to talk about your concerns, by telephone, with a member of the court staff.

While you are on jury service

Once you are at court and have been selected to sit on a trial, the judge will give you further guidance on your responsibilities in the courtroom and during the trial. Jury service can affect people in different ways. You may hear or see evidence which upsets you and it may, in some circumstances, cause past events and feelings to emerge. 🖱

Court staff are available at all stages of jury service

Please remember that court staff are available at all stages of jury service. In particular, if you are unsure or uneasy about anything during the trial, you should write a note to the trial judge and attract the attention of the usher by raising your hand. The usher will pass your note to the judge who will deal with your query or concern. Or you may write a note to the judge, in private during a break, and hand the note to the usher when you return to the courtroom.

You may just need to speak to someone about your feelings

Sometimes you may just need to speak to someone about how you are feeling while on jury service. Court staff and your fellow jurors on the trial may be able to help you and this may be enough, so that the feelings go away when you realise you are not alone. However, if you talk about your jury service you must be careful about what you discuss. You must ensure you follow at all times, the directions given by the trial judge about your responsibilities as a juror.

It is an offence for anyone outside your jury to try and influence you about a case or help you reach a decision on whether the defendant is guilty or not guilty.

If anyone approaches you about a case, you must tell a court official or police officer at once so that the matter can be reported to the trial judge.

After you finish jury service

After jury service, if you have been upset by any of the evidence, you may find the need to talk about your feelings. Samaritans is available to you, or you may wish to contact your doctor (GP) for advice and to find out what support is available to you.

However, you should not discuss at any time the conversations which took place in the jury deliberation room. This includes any statements and opinions expressed by you or your fellow jurors while in the deliberation room because all of these conversations are private to you and your fellow jurors.

As a juror, you should be aware of the need to comply with the Contempt of Court Act 1981 which states that it is contempt of court punishable with a fine or imprisonment to obtain, disclose, or solicit any particulars of statements made, opinions expressed, arguments advanced or votes cast by members of a jury in the course of their deliberations in any legal proceedings.

Please remember that once you have completed your jury service, the Contempt of Court rules will continue to apply if you discuss any details of cases. This includes discussions with representatives of Samaritans, your GP, court staff, and family and friends.

How Samaritans can help

Samaritans is an independent charity that provides emotional support, which is available 24 hours a day, but does not offer advice. 🗨️

You will be encouraged to talk about your feelings which allows you time to think through your concerns and explore your options.

You can talk to Samaritans in complete confidence because they will not share what you tell them with anyone and will not judge you.

Samaritans has 18,500 trained volunteers offering emotional support by telephone and email as well as through letters and face to face meetings. There are 201 branches across the United Kingdom and Republic of Ireland. From relationship and family problems to job related stress and financial worries, Samaritans is available to anyone who is in any kind of distress.

How to contact Samaritans

■ Telephone

(Please see Samaritans' website for the latest call charge details.)

United Kingdom: 08457 90 90 90

Republic of Ireland: 1850 60 90 90

■ Email

jo@samaritans.org

■ Visit website

www.samaritans.org

■ Letter

Chris, PO Box 90 90, Stirling, FK8 2SA

■ Contact your local branch of Samaritans.

Find your nearest branch by visiting www.samaritans.org .

Frequently asked questions

Q How do I know what to expect while on jury service?

The 'Juror Charter' sets out the minimum standards that you, as a juror, can expect from HM Courts & Tribunals Service at each stage of your jury service. Copies of the 'Juror Charter' are available at court.

More information on jury service and what this involves can be found in the booklet 'Guide to Jury Service' which all jurors receive with their confirmation pack.

You may watch the film 'Your role as a Juror' ahead of jury service, online at 'Directgov' www.direct.gov.uk/. The 20 minute film will give you an opportunity to find out more about jury service before you attend court. The film will be shown to you at court on your first day. In addition, you will be given an introductory speech from the jury manager which will include more information about the specific court you are serving at.

Q Surely, Samaritans is for people who feel suicidal?

No—Samaritans provides emotional support on many issues from relationship and family problems to job related stress and financial worries. Samaritans is available to anyone who is in any kind of distress.

80 per cent of callers are not suicidal and just want to speak to someone for support and to discuss the emotions they are feeling.

Q What should I do if someone approaches me to try to influence my decision and it is outside of court hours?

If someone approaches you while you are outside the court, you should contact the Police and report the matter immediately. When you next return to court, you should tell a court official so the matter can be reported to the trial judge.