

A chance to have your say



Northern Ireland
Law Commission

promoting law reform in Northern Ireland

Northern Ireland Law Commission would like to
engage with children and young people

What's this all about?

In Northern Ireland, if you are asked to go to court to give your account of a crime you saw being committed or has been committed against you, you could get help to tell your story to the court if you are under 17 years of age. The help you could get is called "special measures".

What are special measures?

Normally, if you have to tell your story to a court, you sit in court before a judge and answer questions which are asked by lawyers. Special measures allow you, for example to tell your story from behind a screen so you cannot be seen by everyone in the courtroom or you can sit in another room and tell your story to the court by a television link.

What is a criminal court?

If someone breaks the law, for example speeding in a car, hurting someone or stealing they will go to a criminal court who will decide on the type of punishment they should get.

Why do you want to hear from children and young people?

We are called the Northern Ireland Law Commission – we are in charge of ensuring the law is working well and we make suggestions on how it could be better.

We are now making a suggestion that the same "special measures" available for criminal courts should be available for civil courts.

We want to know whether children and young people would find it useful to have a law which allows them added protection when giving evidence in a civil court.

What is a civil court?

Civil courts deal with all sorts of cases which are not criminal cases. For example, this type of court decides things like whether a child can have contact with a parent they don't live with, or how much money you should get if you hurt yourself because of someone else's fault. They can also sort out disagreements between people who have done business together.

What do we want to know?

1. Would these special measures be a good idea?
2. If you did have to go to court, would special measures help you to tell your story about what happened to you?
3. Is there anything else that would help children/young people tell their story on what happened?