

<sup>9</sup> visits from neighbourhood wardens at pre-arranged times (sometimes daily); and <sup>9</sup> phone calls from the local authority at pre-arranged times.

The interim order enables witnesses to be protected from the outset of the court process. Sections 48 and 49 of the Criminal Justice and Police Act 2001 make it an offence to intimidate witnesses in civil proceedings such as those for ASBOs.

## Improving protection of witnesses in court

### Manchester City Council protects witnesses

#### **Issue**

Witnesses felt anxious about giving evidence. Their concerns included the prospect of appearing in court, coming face to face with defendants and being threatened by defendants at the court building, as well as uncertainties about waiting room and refreshment facilities.

#### **Approach**

Manchester City Council negotiated the following arrangements with local courts for anti-social behaviour cases:

- \* access to a quiet room for witnesses;
- <sup>9</sup> a video link for perpetrators in prison where it would be expensive to bring them back for an ASBO or injunction hearing (this also has the benefit of being less stressful for the witnesses);
- \* a video link for children and young people; and
- <sup>9</sup> police presence, where appropriate.

In addition, the council provides practical information and support to witnesses.

They are made aware of what to expect, including the court layout, where they and the defendant(s) will be sitting and how people will be dressed. Practical support also includes transport to and from the court, being met by a council officer on arrival and information about refreshment and bathroom facilities.

#### **Outcome**

The result has been reassurance and physical security for witnesses. This has led to a reduction in the anxiety about the prospect of appearing in court or accidentally meeting a defendant. Witnesses are better able to focus on the case. The case manager is also able to keep witnesses informed of progress and to manage the case more effectively.

#### **Contact**

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