



SFO

serious
fraud
office

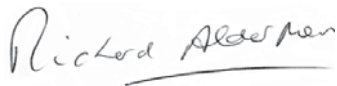
Giving a witness statement to the SFO
- What happens next?

Thank you for coming forward to help us with our case

I am sorry that you have been the victim of a financial crime. I appreciate that this is a difficult time for you and am therefore really grateful that you are willing to help us with our case. What you are doing is very important. The criminal justice system simply cannot work without people like you. Witnesses are key to bringing offenders to justice.

Now that you have given a witness statement, you may be called to give evidence in court. This may already be a worrying time for you and we do not wish to add to that. Please do therefore get in touch with us if you have any concerns about appearing in court. Our people have a lot of experience of court procedure and will be only too happy to help you. If you prefer, they can put you in touch with the independent Witness Service. But first, please read through this booklet. It answers some of the most common questions we are asked about witness statements and appearing in court.

Thank you again for your help.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Richard Alderman". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a thin horizontal line.

Richard Alderman
Director

Why have you been asked to give a witness statement?

You may be asked to give a witness statement if you:

- know something about a particular case of economic crime that we are investigating
- have specialist knowledge on a subject that would be useful in deciding the facts in a trial (you will then be a professional or expert witness).

Is there anything else I can do?

Yes. It is important to tell us:

- if you have left out anything relevant from your statement or if it is incorrect
- if your contact details (eg email, home address or phone number) change. You may be surprised to know that trials can collapse because witnesses cannot be contacted in time
- dates when you may not be able to go to court. Please update this information as soon as it changes. This information is needed when the trial date is set.

Will the suspect (the 'defendant') or the defence lawyer be given my address?

No. When we take your statement, we will confirm your address and contact details so that we can contact you in the future. We will not share your address or contact details with the defendant or their solicitor. The defendant or their solicitor is normally only told the names of any witnesses and we will send them a copy of your witness statement. Witnesses are not usually asked to give their address out loud in court.

What will happen to my statement?

If a suspect is charged in relation to this case, your statement and all the other evidence may form part of the case for the prosecution. We prosecute cases of serious or complex economic crime on behalf of the Crown (the Queen).

Your statement could be read to the court (without you needing to be present) or you could be asked to come to court to answer questions about your evidence. We will only be able to tell you which applies once the defence has told us if they need to ask you questions about your evidence.

If you have given a statement and are then asked to go to court to give evidence, you must do so. If you are asked to go to court, you will be sent:

- a letter telling you when and where to go
- a booklet explaining what happens at court and what being a witness at court involves
- a copy of your statement (and any exhibits) to help you refresh your memory.

Who will read my statement?

Everyone involved with the case will read your statement (for example the SFO, the defence and the judge).

What if someone tries to intimidate me?

It is a criminal offence to intimidate a witness or anyone helping us with an investigation. If you are harassed or threatened in any way before, during or after the trial, you should tell our representative or a police officer immediately.

Will I be told what is happening in the case?

We are improving our procedures for keeping victims and witnesses up to date with what is happening, but it is not always possible for us to do this for every development. If you wish, we will give you updates when we have relevant information. Remember that there may be occasions when the law or the sensitive nature of criminal investigation work prevents us from discussing the case. But please contact us if you have any questions or concerns.

We will contact you in good time if you are needed to go to court. This may be some time after you gave your statement as cases can take time to progress.

Victims and witnesses of crime are usually told if:

- a suspect is charged and there is to be a trial
- the case does not proceed for any reason
- the suspect admits the offence and is cautioned or pleads guilty at court.

Will I have to go to court?

You will only have to go to court if the defendant:

- denies the charge and pleads 'not guilty'
- pleads guilty but denies an important part of the offence which might affect the type of sentence they receive
- your evidence is required.

If you are asked to go to court, the prosecution and defence lawyers will ask you questions about your evidence. To help you refresh your memory, we will send you a copy of your statement approximately three weeks before you are due to attend court. We will also send you copies of any related documents that you produced or referred to in connection with the case (these are called your exhibits). Please read these before you come to court.

We appreciate that being a witness and appearing in court may be a new and worrying experience for you. You might be worried about appearing in court. We will do all we can to support you in the run up to the day and at court. We will send you information about the court and explain what is involved in being a witness at court. We will try and answer your questions and put you in touch with the independent Witness Service (if you wish), which is run by the charity Victim Support. Their service is confidential.

Where will the case be heard?

Because we only prosecute serious or complex economic crime cases, SFO trials are generally heard in front of a judge and jury at the Crown Court.

What will happen if I don't go to court?

Please tell us as soon as possible if you have any problems or concerns about going to court. There may be ways in which we can alleviate your concerns or help you attend. If you have to go to court but there is reason to believe that you will not go voluntarily, the court may issue a witness summons against you. If you fail to attend court without a good reason, the court could issue a warrant for your arrest and find you in "contempt of court".

Who can help?

Please feel free to contact the person named on page 7 of this booklet. They will try to answer your questions.

Extra help is also available to support vulnerable or intimidated witnesses when they give evidence. If our lawyer thinks that a witness qualifies for this enhanced support, known as 'special measures', they have to ask the judge for permission to use them. If you are required to give evidence as a witness in court, a member of the SFO will tell you what type of help is available and will discuss with you what you need.

Before the trial you can also contact the free and confidential Witness Service, run by Victim Support. Their trained volunteers are available in every court and can offer:

- information on what happens at court
- emotional support and someone you can talk to in confidence
- someone to go into the courtroom with you when you give evidence
- a visit to the court before the trial and, where possible, a look around a courtroom so that you know what to expect.

The Witness Service does not discuss evidence or give legal advice. To find out about your local Witness Service, look in the phone book under the name of the Crown Court. Or, you can phone **0845 30 30 900**. Alternatively, you can contact us.

Contact details

Name of officer dealing with your case or taking this statement:

Position:

Phone Number:

Email:

Case Reference Number:

Please keep these details somewhere safe for future reference.

Contacting the Serious Fraud Office

If you believe that you have been the victim of a fraud there are a number of ways to contact the Serious Fraud Office. You can call the Fraud hotline on +44 (0)20 7239 7388 which is answered between 09:00 and 17:00. Out of hours messages can be left on the answering service. You can also contact us through our website www.sfo.gov.uk.

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