2. Going to court as a supporter

The courts are public places, trials and hearings are held in public, as an important part of the legal system.

Any one can go into the court building. Court buildings usually have:

- **Several court rooms where hearings are actually heard**
- **Waiting areas outside the court rooms**
- **Side rooms off the waiting area that can be used for meetings, such as with a solicitor**

Court rooms have a public gallery where any member of the public can sit and watch a trial or hearing (although there may occasionally be exceptions to trials being public). Go through the main door into the court room. If you cannot see where the public gallery is ask someone in the court, allthough if you look lost a clerk will usually come over to help you. Sometimes the gallery is a glassed off room, sometimes a row of seats in the court room itself.

It can be a good idea to visit the court building before the first hearing, go into a court room and watch what's going on, just to get the look and feel of the environment.

Remember to switch off your phone, or switch it to silent, and generally be quiet, when in the public gallery.

You'll be able to see the defendant from the gallery, who has to go into the 'dock', often a glassed off room.

When you first go into the court building you will have an airport style search and your belongings will be x-rayed. Any sprays (e.g. perfume) or sharp instrument, such as bike tools, will be taken from you and may be re-claimed when you leave the building. Knives are a problem, so best left at home.

In the entrance area there will be a list of who is to be heard where. Look for the defendants surname under the list for each court room.

Court staff can be friendly and willing to help you find your way around.