



Fact Sheet

A guide for witnesses attending court

When will I be required to attend court?

In most cases we will sort out the problem without having to take legal action but if the problem cannot be resolved we have a range of legal remedies available such as, injunctions, anti social behaviour orders (ASBO), demoted tenancies and possession proceedings. Depending on the nature of the anti- social behaviour, St. Leger Homes may apply to the court for an injunction to help to prevent further incidents from happening whilst the case is being dealt with. This would be up to your Estates Officer and the Legal Officer to decide if this would be appropriate, however you can ask if this is an option available to you. In order to apply for any of the above we need your help to gather as much evidence as possible.

If you are required to give a statement and attend court one of our dedicated Estates Officers will keep in very close contact with each victim and witness. They will speak to you on a regular basis and inform you on the progress of the case, you will also be supplied with their direct contact number. You will be asked to complete monitoring forms giving details of dates, times and locations of all incidents. These forms will be explained to you in detail and you will be shown how to complete them correctly.

St. Leger Homes understand that providing evidence and appearing in court is frightening for most people and some fear reprisals. We have various help available should you agree to be a witness.

Vulnerable marker

St. Leger Homes is here to help you, we are dedicated to working with other agencies to provide the best neighbourhoods for our tenants. We work very closely with South Yorkshire Police to identify priority cases. In exceptional circumstances a marker can be placed on the Police computer highlighting a specific address of a victim or a witness. This is done at the request of a Police Sergeant who will assess this on an individual case basis.

Security measures

St. Leger Homes can offer a target hardening scheme, if they feel it is necessary to improve the home security of your property. The packages can include a security light, extra locks fitted to doors and windows, a spy hole in your door, a letterbox grill.

Travel

Sometimes, people worry about whether they will be able to get to the court on time and how will they get there. St. Leger Homes can provide a taxi to take you to and from court. If this is required we will ensure you do not have to share any waiting area with the person you are giving evidence against.

Information can be made available in other languages, or other formats such as Braille or audio tape, on request. Please ask a member of our staff for more information, or if you need any other help or advice. They can arrange to speak to you in your own language if you need them to.

You can take a friend or a member of your family to court with you, however they will have to wait in the waiting area until the hearing has finished.

Victim Support

If you are concerned about going to court to give evidence as a witness your Estates Officer will work closely with Victim Support before you go to court. Staff who work for Victim Support are all highly trained and are there to help you, however they cannot discuss evidence or give legal advice.

The service they provide is free and confidential and includes the following:

- Someone for you to talk to
- Friendly support and practical advice before, during and after the hearing
- Reassurance
- How to apply for compensation (if necessary)
- General Court information
- A visit to the court can be arranged at your request before the hearing date so you can see what it is like and they will explain what will happen on the day.

See the useful contacts at the end of this fact sheet for information on how to contact Victim Support.

If you have any problems or concerns about going to court, you must let the person who asked you to go to court know as soon as possible.

St. Leger Homes can arrange for you to meet with their Legal Officer who will be representing your case before you attend court. You can have a chat to him/her about the process and what will be required of you.

Where will you give your evidence?

More than likely you will give your evidence in the County Court.

If the Defendant attends court he/she will be in the court room and they may also have their own legal advisor or they may send a representative to speak on their behalf.

No one in a County Court wears the white wigs often seen on judges or lawyers in films or on TV. Some hearings are public and therefore there may be members of the public present. Generally the hearings are closed and therefore no members of the public are allowed in.

Who will be present in the court room?

- Yourself
- Sometimes there may be other witnesses present
- Housing Officer – St. Leger Homes
- Legal Officer – Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council
- The person you are giving evidence against (may not attend)
- Defendant's representative (if they have one)

Giving your evidence

Sometimes the Judge will ask you to confirm information you have provided in your witness statement and could ask you some questions. If you are asked questions don't panic, speak slowly and clearly and ask for questions to be repeated if you don't understand or can't hear. Always answer honestly and only answer the question you have been asked and direct your answers to the judge.

After the hearing

You may find out on the day what will happen to the person you are giving your evidence against or the case may be adjourned for further evidence to be gathered. If this happens your Estates Officer will keep you updated on the progress of the case and you will be required to provide evidence of any further incidents. If the case is dealt with on the day, your Estates Officer is still there and will be happy to give you further advice and will explain the legal action if any is to be taken.

What can you do?

1. Report all serious incidents to the Police and to St. Leger Homes
2. Keep good written records of each incident
3. Talk with neighbours and other victims
4. Contact your local Victim Support service on 01302 365 531
5. Contact Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111
6. Keep in regular contact with your Estates Officer at St. Leger Homes

Useful contacts for advice and support

Agency	Contact Details
Asylum Support	Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council 01302 862 039
Citizens Advice Bureau	Old Guildhall Yard, Frenchgate, Doncaster 01302 735 225
Dearne Valley Victim Support	5 Manvers House, Pioneer Close, Rotherham 01709 877 511
Disability Support (DIAL)	Unit 9, Shaw Wood Business Park, Shaw Wood Way, Doncaster 01302 327 800
Doncaster Victim Support	41 College Road, Waterdale, Doncaster 01302 365 531
South Yorkshire Police	Emergencies only 999 All other enquiries 01142 202 020
Womens Aid	19 Priory Place, Doncaster 01302 326 411

For further information contact:

Write to: St. Leger Homes of Doncaster Ltd
St. Leger Court
White Rose Way
Doncaster
DN4 5ND
Fax: 01302 862720
Email: info@stlegerhomes.co.uk

