

# Preliminary Hearing

**A preliminary hearing is used to make sure that the defence and the prosecution are ready for the case to go to trial. If they are ready, the court will set a date for the trial to begin. If they are not ready, the case will be "continued". This means another preliminary hearing will be called later to decide when the trial will begin.**

## **Who can go**

Preliminary hearings are open to the public so anybody is able to attend. But witnesses who might be called to give evidence during the case will be asked not to attend as this could prejudice the case.

## **What might happen**

The accused can plead guilty or plead innocent at the preliminary hearing. If the accused pleads guilty then witnesses will not be needed to give evidence.

If Victim Information and Advice (VIA) find out the accused intends to plead guilty, they will do their best to let you know. But the accused may decide on this plea at the last minute. They can change their mind about pleading guilty up until the time the plea is made in court.

