



Criminal Procedure (Scotland) Act 1995

1995 CHAPTER 46

PART XII

EVIDENCE

[^{F1} Witness anonymity orders

Textual Amendments

F1 Ss. 271N-271Z inserted (28.3.2011) by [Criminal Justice and Licensing \(Scotland\) Act 2010 \(asp 13\)](#), ss. **90(1)**, 206(1); S.S.I. 2011/178, art. 2, sch.

Modifications etc. (not altering text)

C1 Ss. 271N-271Z applied (28.3.2011) by [Criminal Justice and Licensing \(Scotland\) Act 2010 \(asp 13\)](#), ss. **90(3)(4)**, 206(1); S.S.I. 2011/178, art. 2, sch.

271N Witness anonymity orders

- (1) A court may make an order requiring such specified measures to be taken in relation to a witness in criminal proceedings as the court considers appropriate to ensure that the identity of the witness is not disclosed in or in connection with the proceedings.
- (2) The court may make such an order only on an application made in accordance with sections 271P and 271Q, if satisfied of the conditions set out in section 271R having considered the matters set out in section 271S.
- (3) The kinds of measures that may be required to be taken in relation to a witness include in particular measures for securing one or more of the matters mentioned in subsection (4).
- (4) Those matters are—
 - (a) that the witness's name and other identifying details may be—
 - (i) withheld,

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- (ii) removed from materials disclosed to any party to the proceedings,
 - (b) that the witness may use a pseudonym,
 - (c) that the witness is not asked questions of any specified description that might lead to the identification of the witness,
 - (d) that the witness is screened to any specified extent,
 - (e) that the witness's voice is subjected to modulation to any specified extent.
- (5) Nothing in this section authorises the court to require—
- (a) the witness to be screened to such an extent that the witness cannot be seen by the judge or the jury,
 - (b) the witness's voice to be modulated to such an extent that the witness's natural voice cannot be heard by the judge or the jury.
- (6) An order made under this section is referred to in this Act as a “witness anonymity order”.
- (7) In this section “specified” means specified in the order concerned.

271P Applications

- (1) An application for a witness anonymity order to be made in relation to a witness in criminal proceedings may be made to the court by the prosecutor or the accused.
- (2) Where an application is made by the prosecutor, the prosecutor—
- (a) must (unless the court directs otherwise) inform the court of the identity of the witness, but
 - (b) is not required to disclose in connection with the application—
 - (i) the identity of the witness, or
 - (ii) any information that might enable the witness to be identified, to any other party to the proceedings (or to the legal representatives of any other party to the proceedings).
- (3) Where an application is made by the accused, the accused—
- (a) must inform the court and the prosecutor of the identity of the witness, but
 - (b) if there is more than one accused, is not required to disclose in connection with the application—
 - (i) the identity of the witness, or
 - (ii) any information that might enable the witness to be identified, to any other accused (or to the legal representatives of any other accused).
- (4) Subsections (5) and (6) apply where the prosecutor or the accused proposes to make an application under this section in respect of a witness.
- (5) Any relevant information which is disclosed by or on behalf of that party before the determination of the application must be disclosed in such a way as to prevent—
- (a) the identity of the witness, or
 - (b) any information that might enable the witness to be identified, from being disclosed except as required by subsection (2)(a) or (3)(a).
- (6) Despite any provision in this Act to the contrary, any relevant list, application or notice lodged, made or given by that party before the determination of the application must not—

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- (a) disclose the identity of the witness, or
 - (b) contain any other information that might enable the witness to be identified, but the list, application or notice must, instead, refer to the witness by a pseudonym.
- (7) “Relevant information” means any document or other material which falls to be disclosed, or is sought to be relied on, by or on behalf of the party concerned in connection with the proceedings or proceedings preliminary to them.
- (8) “Relevant list, application or notice” means—
- (a) a list of witnesses,
 - (b) a list of productions,
 - (c) a notice under section 67(5) or 78(4) relating to the witness,
 - (d) a motion or application under section 268, 269 or 270 relating to the witness,
 - (e) any other motion, application or notice relating to the witness.
- (9) The court must give every party to the proceedings the opportunity to be heard on an application under this section.
- (10) Subsection (9) does not prevent the court from hearing one or more of the parties to the proceedings in the absence of an accused and the accused's legal representatives, if it appears to the court to be appropriate to do so in the circumstances of the case.
- (11) Nothing in this section is to be taken as restricting any power to make rules of court.

271Q Making and determination of applications

- (1) In proceedings on indictment, an application under section 271P is a preliminary issue (and sections 79 and 87A and other provisions relating to preliminary issues apply accordingly).
- (2) No application under section 271P may be made in summary proceedings by any party unless notice of the party's intention to do so has been given—
- (a) if an intermediate diet has been fixed, before that diet,
 - (b) if no intermediate diet has been fixed, before the commencement of the trial.
- (3) Subsection (2) is subject to subsections (4) and (8).
- (4) In summary proceedings in which an intermediate diet has been fixed, the court may, on cause shown, grant leave for an application under section 271P to be made without notice having been given in accordance with subsection (2)(a).
- (5) Subsection (6) applies where—
- (a) the court grants leave for a party to make an application under section 271P without notice having been given in accordance with subsection (2)(a), or
 - (b) notice of a party's intention to make such an application is given in accordance with subsection (2)(b).
- (6) The application must be disposed of before the commencement of the trial.
- (7) Subsection (8) applies where a motion or application is made under section 268, 269 or 270 to lead the evidence of a witness.
- (8) Despite section 79(1) and subsection (2) above, an application under section 271P may be made in respect of the witness at the same time as the motion or application under section 268, 269 or 270 is made.

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- (9) The application must be determined by the court before continuing with the trial.
- (10) Where an application is made under section 271P, the court may postpone or adjourn (or further adjourn) the trial diet.
- (11) In this section, “ commencement of the trial ” means the time when the first witness for the prosecution is sworn.

271R Conditions for making orders

- (1) This section applies where an application is made for a witness anonymity order to be made in relation to a witness in criminal proceedings.
- (2) The court may make the order only if it is satisfied that Conditions A to D below are met.
- (3) Condition A is that the proposed order is necessary—
 - (a) in order to protect the safety of the witness or another person or to prevent any serious damage to property, or
 - (b) in order to prevent real harm to the public interest (whether affecting the carrying on of any activities in the public interest or the safety of a person involved in carrying on such activities or otherwise).
- (4) Condition B is that, having regard to all the circumstances, the effect of the proposed order would be consistent with the accused's receiving a fair trial.
- (5) Condition C is that the importance of the witness's testimony is such that in the interests of justice the witness ought to testify.
- (6) Condition D is that—
 - (a) the witness would not testify if the proposed order were not made, or
 - (b) there would be real harm to the public interest if the witness were to testify without the proposed order being made.
- (7) In determining whether the measures to be specified in the order are necessary for the purpose mentioned in subsection (3)(a), the court must have regard in particular to any reasonable fear on the part of the witness—
 - (a) that the witness or another person would suffer death or injury, or
 - (b) that there would be serious damage to property,
 if the witness were to be identified.

271S Relevant considerations

- (1) When deciding whether Conditions A to D in section 271R are met in the case of an application for a witness anonymity order, the court must have regard to—
 - (a) the considerations mentioned in subsection (2), and
 - (b) such other matters as the court considers relevant.
- (2) The considerations are—
 - (a) the general right of an accused in criminal proceedings to know the identity of a witness in the proceedings,
 - (b) the extent to which the credibility of the witness concerned would be a relevant factor when the witness's evidence comes to be assessed,

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- (c) whether evidence given by the witness might be material in implicating the accused,
- (d) whether the witness's evidence could be properly tested (whether on grounds of credibility or otherwise) without the witness's identity being disclosed,
- (e) whether there is any reason to believe that the witness—
 - (i) has a tendency to be dishonest, or
 - (ii) has any motive to be dishonest in the circumstances of the case, having regard in particular to any previous convictions of the witness [F2, including any convictions by a court in any part of the United Kingdom or in any member State of the European Union,] and to any relationship between the witness and the accused or any associates of the accused,
- (f) whether it would be reasonably practicable to protect the witness's identity by any means other than by making a witness anonymity order specifying the measures that are under consideration by the court.

Textual Amendments

- F2** Words in s. 271S(2)(e) inserted (31.12.2020) by [The Criminal Justice \(EU Exit\) \(Scotland\) \(Amendment etc.\) Regulations 2020 \(S.S.I. 2020/339\)](#), regs. 1(3), **13(14)** (with reg. 16)

271T Direction to jury

- (1) Subsection (2) applies where, in a trial on indictment, any evidence has been given by a witness at a time when a witness anonymity order applied to the witness.
- (2) The judge must give the jury such direction as the judge considers appropriate to ensure that the fact that the order was made in relation to the witness does not prejudice the accused.

271U Discharge and variation of order

- (1) This section applies where a court has made a witness anonymity order in relation to any criminal proceedings.
- (2) The court may discharge or vary (or further vary) the order if it appears to the court to be appropriate to do so in view of the provisions of sections 271R and 271S that applied to the making of the order.
- (3) The court may do so—
 - (a) on an application made by a party to the proceedings if there has been a material change of circumstances since the relevant time, or
 - (b) on its own initiative.
- (4) The court must give every party to the proceedings the opportunity to be heard—
 - (a) before determining an application made to it under subsection (3)(a), and
 - (b) before discharging or varying the order on its own initiative.
- (5) Subsection (4) does not prevent the court from hearing one or more of the parties to the proceedings in the absence of an accused and the accused's legal representatives, if it appears to the court to be appropriate to do so in the circumstances of the case.
- (6) In subsection (3)(a) “the relevant time” means—

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- (a) the time when the order was made, or
- (b) if a previous application has been made under that subsection, the time when the application (or the last application) was made.

271V Appeals

- (1) The prosecutor or the accused may appeal to the [^{F3}appropriate Appeal Court] against—
 - (a) the making of a witness anonymity order under section 271N,
 - (b) the kinds of measures that are required to be taken in relation to a witness under a witness anonymity order made under that section,
 - (c) the refusal to make a witness anonymity order under that section,
 - (d) the discharge of a witness anonymity order under section 271U,
 - (e) the variation of a witness anonymity order under that section, or
 - (f) the refusal to discharge or vary a witness anonymity order under that section.
- (2) The appeal may be brought only with the leave of the court of first instance, granted—
 - (a) on the motion of the party making the appeal, or
 - (b) on its own initiative.
- (3) The procedure in relation to the appeal is to be prescribed by Act of Adjournal.
- (4) If an appeal is brought under this section—
 - (a) the period between the lodging of the appeal and its determination does not count towards any time limit applying in respect of the case,
 - (b) the court of first instance or the [^{F4}appropriate Appeal Court] may do either or both of the following—
 - (i) postpone or adjourn (or further adjourn) the trial diet,
 - (ii) extend any time limit applying in respect of the case.
- (5) An appeal under this section does not affect any right of appeal in relation to any other decision of any court in the criminal proceedings.

[In this section, “appropriate Appeal Court” means—

- ^{F5}(6) (a) in the case of an appeal under this section against a decision made in proceedings on indictment, the High Court;
- (b) in the case of an appeal under this section against a decision made in summary proceedings, the Sheriff Appeal Court.]

Textual Amendments

- F3** Words in s. 271V(1) substituted (22.9.2015) by [The Courts Reform \(Scotland\) Act 2014 \(Consequential Provisions No. 2\) Order 2015 \(S.S.I. 2015/338\)](#), art. 1, **sch. 2 para. 5(10)(a)** (with art. 4)
- F4** Words in s. 271V(4)(b) substituted (22.9.2015) by [The Courts Reform \(Scotland\) Act 2014 \(Consequential Provisions No. 2\) Order 2015 \(S.S.I. 2015/338\)](#), art. 1, **sch. 2 para. 5(10)(a)** (with art. 4)
- F5** S. 271V(6) inserted (22.9.2015) by [The Courts Reform \(Scotland\) Act 2014 \(Consequential Provisions No. 2\) Order 2015 \(S.S.I. 2015/338\)](#), art. 1, **sch. 2 para. 5(10)(b)** (with art. 4)

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271W Appeal against the making of a witness anonymity order

- (1) This section applies where—
 - (a) an appeal is brought under section 271V(1)(a) against the making of a witness anonymity order, and
 - (b) the [F6 court hearing the appeal] determines that the decision of the judge at first instance was wrong in law.
- (2) The [F7 court hearing the appeal] must discharge the order and the trial is to proceed as if the order had not been made.

Textual Amendments

- F6** Words in s. 271W(1)(b) substituted (22.9.2015) by [The Courts Reform \(Scotland\) Act 2014 \(Consequential Provisions No. 2\) Order 2015 \(S.S.I. 2015/338\)](#), art. 1, [sch. 2 para. 5\(11\)](#) (with art. 4)
- F7** Words in s. 271W(2) substituted (22.9.2015) by [The Courts Reform \(Scotland\) Act 2014 \(Consequential Provisions No. 2\) Order 2015 \(S.S.I. 2015/338\)](#), art. 1, [sch. 2 para. 5\(11\)](#) (with art. 4)

271X Appeal against the refusal to make a witness anonymity order

- (1) This section applies where—
 - (a) an appeal is brought under section 271V(1)(c) against the refusal to make a witness anonymity order in relation to a witness in criminal proceedings, and
 - (b) the [F8 court hearing the appeal] determines that the decision of the judge at first instance was wrong in law.
- (2) The [F9 court hearing the appeal] must make an order requiring such specified measures to be taken in relation to the witness in the proceedings as the court considers appropriate to ensure that the identity of the witness is not disclosed in or in connection with the proceedings.

Textual Amendments

- F8** Words in s. 271X(1)(b) substituted (22.9.2015) by [The Courts Reform \(Scotland\) Act 2014 \(Consequential Provisions No. 2\) Order 2015 \(S.S.I. 2015/338\)](#), art. 1, [sch. 2 para. 5\(12\)](#) (with art. 4)
- F9** Words in s. 271X(2) substituted (22.9.2015) by [The Courts Reform \(Scotland\) Act 2014 \(Consequential Provisions No. 2\) Order 2015 \(S.S.I. 2015/338\)](#), art. 1, [sch. 2 para. 5\(12\)](#) (with art. 4)

271Y Appeal against a variation of a witness anonymity order

- (1) This section applies where—
 - (a) an appeal is brought under section 271V(1)(e) against a variation of a witness anonymity order, and
 - (b) the [F10 court hearing the appeal] determines that the decision of the judge at first instance was wrong in law.
- (2) The [F11 court hearing the appeal] must discharge the variation.
- (3) If the [F12 court hearing the appeal] determines that it is appropriate to make an additional variation in view of the provisions of sections 271R and 271S, the court may do so.

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Textual Amendments

- F10** Words in s. 271Y(1)(b) substituted (22.9.2015) by [The Courts Reform \(Scotland\) Act 2014 \(Consequential Provisions No. 2\) Order 2015 \(S.S.I. 2015/338\)](#), art. 1, **sch. 2 para. 5(13)** (with art. 4)
- F11** Words in s. 271Y(2) substituted (22.9.2015) by [The Courts Reform \(Scotland\) Act 2014 \(Consequential Provisions No. 2\) Order 2015 \(S.S.I. 2015/338\)](#), art. 1, **sch. 2 para. 5(13)** (with art. 4)
- F12** Words in s. 271Y(3) substituted (22.9.2015) by [The Courts Reform \(Scotland\) Act 2014 \(Consequential Provisions No. 2\) Order 2015 \(S.S.I. 2015/338\)](#), art. 1, **sch. 2 para. 5(13)** (with art. 4)

271Z Appeal against a refusal to vary or discharge a witness anonymity order

- (1) This section applies where—
- (a) an appeal is brought under section 271V(1)(f) against a refusal to discharge or vary a witness anonymity order, and
 - (b) the [^{F13}court hearing the appeal] determines that the decision of the judge at first instance was wrong in law.
- (2) The [^{F14}court hearing the appeal] must discharge the order, or make the variation, as the case requires.
- (3) If, in the case of a variation, the [^{F15}court hearing the appeal] determines that it is appropriate to make an additional variation in view of the provisions of sections 271R and 271S, the court may do so.]

Textual Amendments

- F13** Words in s. 271Z(1)(b) substituted (22.9.2015) by [The Courts Reform \(Scotland\) Act 2014 \(Consequential Provisions No. 2\) Order 2015 \(S.S.I. 2015/338\)](#), art. 1, **sch. 2 para. 5(14)** (with art. 4)
- F14** Words in s. 271Z(2) substituted (22.9.2015) by [The Courts Reform \(Scotland\) Act 2014 \(Consequential Provisions No. 2\) Order 2015 \(S.S.I. 2015/338\)](#), art. 1, **sch. 2 para. 5(14)** (with art. 4)
- F15** Words in s. 271Z(3) substituted (22.9.2015) by [The Courts Reform \(Scotland\) Act 2014 \(Consequential Provisions No. 2\) Order 2015 \(S.S.I. 2015/338\)](#), art. 1, **sch. 2 para. 5(14)** (with art. 4)

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Changes and effects yet to be applied to the whole Act associated Parts and Chapters:

Whole provisions yet to be inserted into this Act (including any effects on those provisions):

- s. 5A inserted by [2010 asp 13 Sch. 7 para. 26](#)
- s. 13(1B)(1C) inserted by [2006 asp 10 s. 82\(2\)](#)
- s. 13(2)(aa) inserted by [2006 asp 10 s. 82\(3\)\(b\)](#)
- s. 13(3A) inserted by [2006 asp 10 s. 82\(4\)](#)
- s. 13(5)(ba) inserted by [2006 asp 10 s. 82\(5\)\(a\)](#)
- s. 13(6)(a)(iii) and word inserted by [2006 asp 10 s. 82\(6\)\(b\)](#)
- s. 13(8) inserted by [2006 asp 10 s. 82\(7\)](#)
- s. 22(5A) inserted by [2007 asp 6 s. 7\(2\)\(g\)](#)
- s. 22A(1A) inserted by [2023 asp 4 s. 1\(2\)](#)
- s. 23B(1)(1A) substituted for s. 23B(1) by [2023 asp 4 s. 2\(2\)\(a\)](#)
- s. 23B(6A) inserted by [2023 asp 4 s. 1\(3\)\(c\)](#)
- s. 23B(8)-(10) inserted by [2023 asp 4 s. 2\(2\)\(c\)](#)
- s. 23C(1A) inserted by [2023 asp 4 s. 2\(3\)\(b\)](#)
- s. 23C(3) inserted by [2023 asp 4 s. 2\(3\)\(c\)](#)
- s. 24(2C) inserted by [2023 asp 4 s. 4\(4\)](#)
- s. 24(2AA) inserted by [2023 asp 4 s. 4\(2\)](#)
- s. 73A inserted by [2004 asp 3 s. 2\(3\)](#)
- s. 167(7D)(7E) inserted by [2007 asp 17 sch. 4 para. 1\(3\)](#)
- s. 167(7D) words substituted by [2010 asp 13 Sch. 3 para. 16\(2\)](#)
- s. 167(7E) words substituted by [2010 asp 13 Sch. 3 para. 16\(3\)](#)
- s. 194ZA repealed by [2014 asp 18 sch. 3 para. 25](#)
- s. 200A inserted by [2016 asp 1 s. 85](#)
- s. 205A added by [1997 c. 48 s. 1\(1\)](#) (This amendment not applied to legislation.gov.uk. 1997 c. 48, s. 1 repealed (27.6.2003) without ever being in force by [2003 asp 7, s. 19\(3\)](#); S.S.I. 2003/288, art. 2, Sch.)
- s. 210ZA inserted by [2023 asp 4 s. 5](#)
- s. 249(4A)-(4D) inserted by [2014 asp 1 s. 24](#)
- s. 271D(4A) inserted by [2019 asp 8 s. 6\(4\)](#)
- s. 271F(2)(aa) inserted by [2019 asp 8 s. 10\(4\)](#)
- s. 271AA inserted by [2019 asp 8 s. 6\(2\)](#)
- s. 271BZD inserted by [2019 asp 8 s. 3\(2\)](#)
- s. 288AB288AC inserted by [2024 asp 1 s. 32\(3\)](#)
- Sch. 5A added by [1997 c. 48 s. 1\(2\)](#) (This amendment not applied to legislation.gov.uk. 1997 c. 48, s. 1 repealed (27.6.2003) without ever being in force by [2003 asp 7, s. 19\(3\)](#); S.S.I. 2003/288, art. 2, Sch.)