



# Coroners and Justice Act 2009

## 2009 CHAPTER 25

### PART 3

#### CRIMINAL EVIDENCE, INVESTIGATIONS AND PROCEDURE

### CHAPTER 2

#### ANONYMITY OF WITNESSES

##### *Witness anonymity orders*

## 86 Witness anonymity orders

- (1) In this Chapter a “witness anonymity order” is an order made by a court that requires 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 kinds of measures that may be required to be taken in relation to a witness include measures for securing one or more of the following—
  - (a) that the witness's name and other identifying details may be—
    - (i) withheld;
    - (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.
- (3) Subsection (2) does not affect the generality of subsection (1).
- (4) Nothing in this section authorises the court to require—

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- (a) the witness to be screened to such an extent that the witness cannot be seen by—
    - (i) the judge or other members of the court (if any), or
    - (ii) the jury (if there is one);
  - (b) the witness's voice to be modulated to such an extent that the witness's natural voice cannot be heard by any persons within paragraph (a)(i) or (ii).
- (5) In this section “specified” means specified in the witness anonymity order concerned.

## 87 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 defendant.
- (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 his or her legal representatives.
- (3) Where an application is made by the defendant, the defendant—
  - (a) must inform the court and the prosecutor of the identity of the witness, but
  - (b) (if there is more than one defendant) 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 defendant or his or her legal representatives.
- (4) Accordingly, where the prosecutor or the defendant proposes to make an application under this section in respect of a witness, any relevant material which is disclosed by or on behalf of that party before the determination of the application may 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).
- (5) “Relevant material” 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.
- (6) The court must give every party to the proceedings the opportunity to be heard on an application under this section.
- (7) But subsection (6) does not prevent the court from hearing one or more parties in the absence of a defendant and his or her legal representatives, if it appears to the court to be appropriate to do so in the circumstances of the case.
- (8) Nothing in this section is to be taken as restricting any power to make rules of court.

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## **88 Conditions for making order**

- (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 such an order only if it is satisfied that Conditions A to C 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 defendant 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 and—
  - (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.
- (6) In determining whether the proposed order is 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.

## **89 Relevant considerations**

- (1) When deciding whether Conditions A to C in section 88 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) below, and
  - (b) such other matters as the court considers relevant.
- (2) The considerations are—
  - (a) the general right of a defendant 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 weight of his or her evidence comes to be assessed;
  - (c) whether evidence given by the witness might be the sole or decisive evidence implicating the defendant;
  - (d) whether the witness's evidence could be properly tested (whether on grounds of credibility or otherwise) without his or her 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,

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having regard (in particular) to any previous convictions of the witness and to any relationship between the witness and the defendant or any associates of the defendant;

- (f) whether it would be reasonably practicable to protect the witness by any means other than by making a witness anonymity order specifying the measures that are under consideration by the court.

## **90 Warning to jury**

- (1) Subsection (2) applies where, on a trial on indictment with a jury, 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 warning as the judge considers appropriate to ensure that the fact that the order was made in relation to the witness does not prejudice the defendant.

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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. 11A and cross-heading inserted by [2023 c. 41 Sch. 11 para. 1\(1\)](#)
- Sch. 1A inserted by [2023 c. 41 Sch. 11 para. 1\(2\)](#)