



Delivery Improvement Unit  
Room F2  
Massey House  
Stormont Estate  
Belfast  
BT4 3SX

Tel: (028) 905 27123  
Fax: (028) 905 27668  
Email: [jpd.public@dojni.x.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:jpd.public@dojni.x.gsi.gov.uk)

Date: 26 July 2010

Dear Colleague,

### **Consultation on Proposals to Achieve Best Evidence in Criminal Proceedings**

The Department of Justice, together with its statutory and voluntary partners represented on the Victim and Witness Task Force (VWTF), is consulting on revised guidance for practitioners - for example, police officers, social care workers, legal representatives and therapists - on interviewing victims and witnesses, using special measures and the provision of pre-trial therapy in order to achieve best evidence in criminal proceedings.

In 2003 Achieving Best Evidence (ABE) guidance was published in NI. It set out procedures to be followed by police and their partners in social services in planning and conducting video recorded interviews of vulnerable and intimidated witnesses. However, it did not include detailed guidance on using special measures, and procedures to be followed for witness support and preparation ahead of proceedings and on the day of trial. Pre-trial therapy guidance to assist practitioners in supporting adult and child witnesses was also not produced. The VWTF therefore undertook to update ABE to produce more comprehensive guidance for practitioners.

The draft guidance is now being issued for consultation. The contribution of the sub-group of the VWTF to the development of this draft document was invaluable and very much appreciated. However, to ensure that this work is appropriately concluded and that a comprehensive and useful guidance document to support practitioners working with vulnerable and intimidated witnesses is produced, your assistance and contribution by way of this consultation exercise is requested and welcomed. You are therefore invited to participate in this consultation process by reviewing and commenting on the draft document.

An electronic version of the consultation document and the draft guidance is available to view and download from the DOJ and CJSNI websites ([www.dojni.gov.uk](http://www.dojni.gov.uk) and [www.cjsni.gov.uk](http://www.cjsni.gov.uk)). A response pro forma is also provided for your convenience. Hard copies will be posted on request.

Your comments, which should include your name and contact address, should be sent in whatever format you choose to the address above and should be received by **5pm on Friday 15 October 2010.**

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Maura Campbell', written in a cursive style.

**Maura Campbell**  
Deputy Director  
Criminal Justice Development Division