

**SFO**

**Serious Fraud Office**

Our commitment to you

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# OUR COMMITMENT TO YOU

## Introduction

This leaflet tells you what you can expect from the Serious Fraud Office (SFO) if you have been identified as a victim of a fraud or corruption.

We are aware at the SFO that fraud and corruption are not victimless crimes. We have seen first hand the worry and distress they cause. Even if we cannot recover the money you have lost, you can be assured that we are committed to doing all that we can to get justice for you and as much recompense as possible.

I know that this is important to you. Many previous victims have written to thank me for the work our people have done to put fraudsters behind bars. They have told me that they got comfort from knowing that the fraudster was jailed and had not retained any financial benefit from their crime. They also said that they felt the public was safer because of that.

Most victims are individuals, but businesses, their employees and owners can also be the victims of fraud and corruption. We appreciate the special concerns that a business may have as our investigation and any court hearing progress. If you are a business, talk to us about your concerns. We will do what we can to help you.

**Richard Alderman**  
**Director**

# WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT OF US IF YOU ARE A VICTIM OF A FRAUD OR CORRUPTION

**1. We will consider the impact on you or your family when we decide – based on the information available to us - how to pursue the case. In some cases we will prosecute, at other times, we will take civil action.**

Our cases can involve widescale fraud or corruption on an international level, with victims in many countries around the world. We will make sure that the charges we make or the decision to take civil action reflect the extent and the seriousness of the fraud or corruption against the victims. We will do this by considering witness and personal statements as appropriate.

**2. We will tell you if the charge is withdrawn, discontinued, substantially altered or if we decide to take civil action instead.**

Victims are at the heart of what we do. Each of our cases has its own plan for keeping in touch with you from the time we identify you as a victim of fraud or corruption until we close down the case. You will have the option to be kept informed about progress in your case. As cases can involve thousands of victims (including many living abroad), our main way of keeping in touch with you will be through updates on our website – [www.sfo.gov.uk](http://www.sfo.gov.uk). If you do not have easy access to the Internet, let us know and tell us how you would prefer us to contact you.

**3. We will always consider applying for court orders that are in the interest of you and the other victims of the fraud or corruption, or for your future protection.**

We are committed to getting justice and recompense for victims. At the appropriate stage in our investigation or during the trial we will apply for relevant court orders. These can include orders to restrain or confiscate the assets of the defendants, to compensate victims or disqualify convicted fraudsters from being company directors. Where appropriate and justified on the evidence we have, we will encourage the court to impose a restraining order not only for your future protection but also to protect the public.

**4. We will keep you up to date on the progress of any appeal, and explain the effect of the court's judgment.**

When a defendant is convicted, they may appeal their conviction or sentence. We will tell you if this happens. This will usually be through an update on our website – **[www.sfo.gov.uk](http://www.sfo.gov.uk)**.

We will tell you the grounds of the appeal and how it affects the court's judgment. We will also tell you when any appeal hearing will take place.

# WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT FROM US IF YOU ARE CALLED AS A WITNESS AT COURT

## **5. Where practical, we will ask for your (or your family's) views when we are considering whether a plea is acceptable.**

Some defendants decide to plead guilty rather than face a trial by jury. If you are a victim in the case and have been called to the court as a witness, we may ask for your views when we consider whether a plea is acceptable.

## **6. We will address any specific needs you have, including protecting your identity.**

It is important for you and us, and for the criminal justice system as a whole, that you are able to give the best evidence you can at court. We will discuss any special needs you may have and, where appropriate, we will apply for "special measures". This may include applying to protect

your identity or to prevent inappropriate reporting in the media or, in very limited circumstances, to give evidence over a video link.

## **7. We will help you prepare for your court appearance.**

At least three weeks before the court hearing, we will send you a copy of your witness statement and any exhibits that you have produced or referred to in it. This will give you a chance to refresh your memory of what you said. On the day of your court appearance a member of our specialist support team, a Witness Care Officer, will meet you at court. They will answer any questions you have on procedure and processes. They will also give you a chance to read your statement again. Please note, though, that the law does not allow them to discuss your evidence with you.

**8. We will support you as much as we can on the day of your court appearance.**

Some people will be apprehensive about their appearance in court; others will be more relaxed about it. We will support you as much as we practically and legally can. If you feel you have further information that may help the court but have not already given it, we will tell you how you can do this.

**9. We will protect you from unwarranted or irrelevant attacks on your character. This may involve us asking the court to intervene where we consider that cross examination is inappropriate or oppressive.**

The defence has a right to challenge your evidence and we respect that right. However throughout a trial we will watch out for any unwarranted or

irrelevant attacks on your character and, where appropriate, we will ask the court to intervene.

**10. Where a defendant is convicted, we will robustly challenge defence mitigation which is derogatory to your character.**

Where a defendant is convicted of a crime and before sentence is passed, their lawyer has the opportunity to address the court to try and explain why the crime may have been committed and to outline the personal circumstances of their client. This is called mitigation. We will challenge any assertion the defence makes in mitigation that we feel is derogatory to your character and which we consider is either false or not relevant for the judge to consider. If so we may also apply to the court to prevent the defendant's account being reported by the media.

# CONTACT PAGE

If you want to contact the SFO you should get in touch with:

Name:

Phone:

Fax:

Email:

It will help us if you quote this reference

[WWW.SFO.GOV.UK](http://WWW.SFO.GOV.UK)