

Information for other witnesses who are attending a public hearing

Easy Read

About this document

This is Easy Read information.

You can find other information on our website:

www.childabuseinquiry.scot

A friend, family member, or support person may be able to help you read this document.

What is a public hearing?



- If someone has given a witness statement to the Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry, they **might** be asked to take part in one of our public hearings.



- Lady Smith is the Chair of the Inquiry. She is in charge of the public hearings.
- At the hearings, Lady Smith listens to people speak about what happened to children when they were in care.

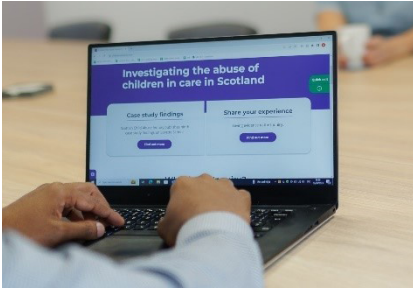
When hearings are public it means that:



- anyone can sit in the hearing room and watch the hearings



- people who work for the media can also attend the hearings



- we share the written record of what happened at the hearings on our website so anyone can read it.

What happens when I take part in a public hearing?



- We might ask you to take part in a public hearing as a **witness**.

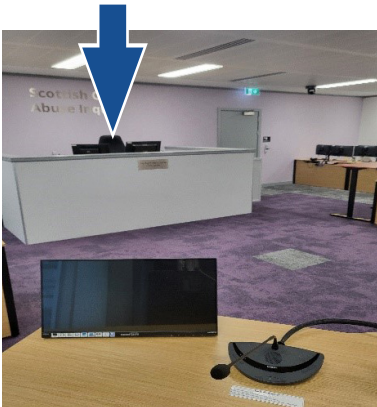


- We will ask some witnesses to give **evidence** at a hearing.

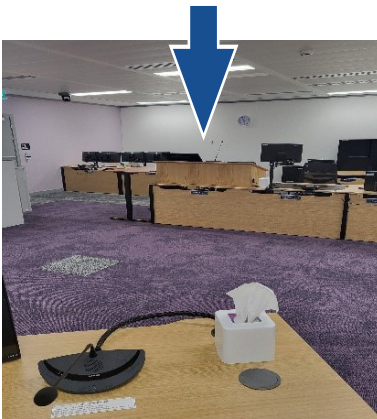


- When you give evidence, you will be asked to speak about the things you have told us about in your witness statement.
- Your Witness Support Officer will contact you to let you know if you are being asked to attend a hearing.

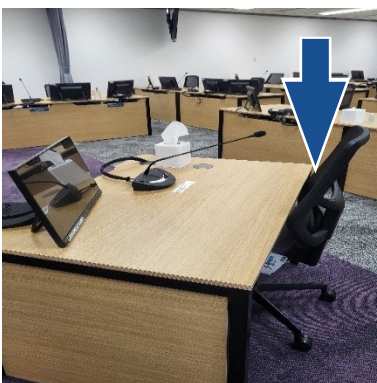
Who takes part in an Inquiry hearing?



- Lady Smith is in charge of the hearings. She sits at a desk at the front of the hearing room.



- Counsel to the Inquiry are lawyers. They ask witnesses questions. They stand at another table to the left of Lady Smith. Counsel face the witness.



- The witness sits to the right of Lady Smith.



- Your Witness Support Officer and supporter, if you have one, will be sitting close by.

There might be other people in the hearing room, including:



- lawyers who represent people or organisations involved in the Inquiry



- stenographers, who make a written record of what is happening



- people who look after the computers and display documents



- journalists and other people who work for the media



- people who work for the Inquiry



- members of the public.



- If there are people who work for the media in the hearing room, they cannot film or record what is happening. If your identity is protected, the media cannot name you if they write about the hearing.



- If the media ask to speak to you or film you after the hearing, you do not have to speak to them unless you want to.

What will happen at the hearing?



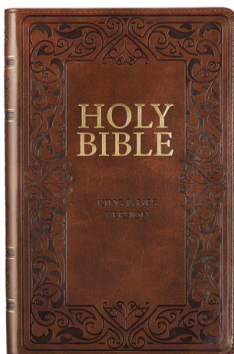
- If you take part in a public hearing, the Witness Support Team will support you to give evidence in the way that suits you best.



- You can bring a supporter to the hearing with you.



- Before you start giving your evidence, the Chair will ask you to raise your right hand and swear an **oath** or make an **affirmation**.



- When you swear an oath, you make a promise to God to tell the truth.



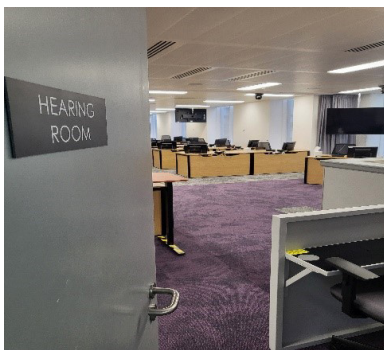
- If you prefer, you can make an affirmation. An affirmation is also a promise to tell the truth.
- Once you have sworn an oath or made an affirmation, you must answer all the questions truthfully.
- Counsel to the Inquiry will ask you questions about your evidence.
- The Chair may also ask you questions.

Visiting before a hearing

If you are a witness:



- your Witness Support Officer will give you the chance to visit the hearings venue before you attend a hearing



- you will be able to meet counsel and have a look at the hearing room. This is called a familiarisation visit.

Where are the Inquiry's public hearings held?



- Public hearings are held in a room at our office in Edinburgh. We call this the 'hearing room'.



- Our office is fully accessible. It is in Edinburgh, on the 2nd floor of Mint House, 20 West Register Street (just off St Andrew Square), EH2 2AU.

How do I get to the Inquiry hearings venue?

There are public transport stops near our hearings venue.

These include:



- Waverley railway station



- the Airlink bus service to and from Edinburgh airport



- a range of Lothian Buses and First Bus stops



- the St Andrew Square tram stop.

If you are coming by car:



- metered parking is available at St Andrew Square, a few minutes' walk away
- there are several multi-storey car parks nearby.

Information about the hearings venue



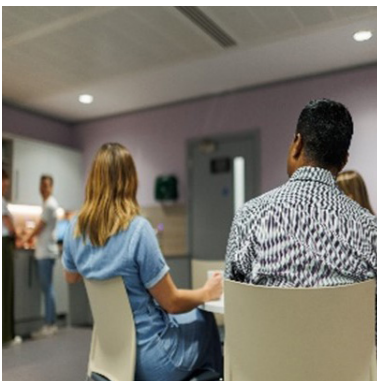
- The venue is wheelchair accessible.



- There is a fixed hearing induction loop in the hearing room.



- Screens will usually show the people speaking at the hearing.



- There is a kitchen area where members of the public can spend time during breaks. Tea and coffee are available.



- Toilet facilities are available.

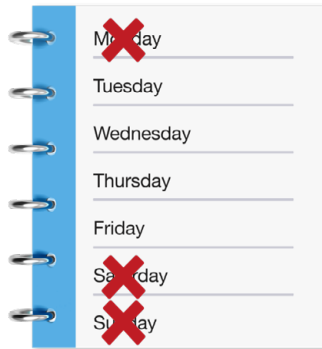


- There is a separate room where people can watch and listen to the hearing on screen if they prefer.



- Witnesses giving evidence have their own witness room and separate toilets.

When do hearings take place?



- Hearings usually run from Tuesdays to Fridays.



- Hearing days usually start at 10 am, with a 20-minute break in the morning.



- There is a one-hour lunch break, usually at 1 pm, and a 10-minute break in the afternoon.



- Hearings are usually finished by 4 pm.

Can I claim expenses for coming to hearings?

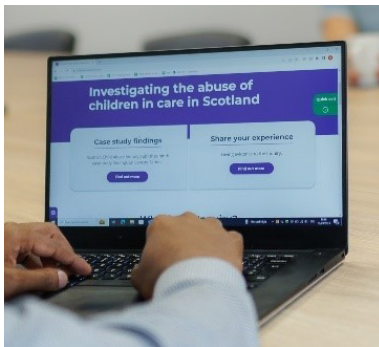


- If you have been invited to give evidence as a witness, your Witness Support Officer will make all travel and hotel arrangements for you.



- You may have to claim expenses in advance. The Witness Support Team will be able to tell you more about this.

I'm a member of the public. Can I come to hearings?



- Yes, members of the public can come to hearings to listen to the evidence.
- Our hearing room has 40 public seats.
- The seats can't be booked in advance.
- If you can't come to a hearing, you can read the hearing **transcripts** on our website at: [Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry | Evidence Hub](#)
- **People may find parts of the evidence upsetting or distressing.**

What can I do and what can't I do at hearings?



- There are rules to follow when people attend our public hearings.
- Lady Smith expects witnesses to be treated with respect by everyone present, including lawyers, the public, and the media.
- Everyone in the hearing room is expected to sit quietly when a hearing is taking place.
- You cannot bring banners or leaflets, or display photos or other images in the hearings venue.



- The hearings must go on without interruptions or noise.



- If anyone tries to stop the hearings, they will be asked to leave.

- It is important to keep the hearing room quiet and calm. This keeps everyone safe.



- Eating and drinking is not allowed in the public seating area.



- You cannot film, record, or take photos at the hearings.



- Mobile phones must be switched off or turned to silent in the hearing room.



- You must not leave any personal belongings unattended anywhere in the hearings venue.



- Smoking or vaping is not allowed inside the building.

Will there be filming at the hearing?



- Inquiry hearings are not filmed.
- A written **transcript** of what was spoken about at hearings will be available for each day of hearings.

Will people who work for the media be at the hearing?



- Journalists and other members of the media can come to hearings to listen to the evidence.

What happens after a public hearing?



- After each public hearing, we publish a **transcript** of what happened at the hearing on our website.

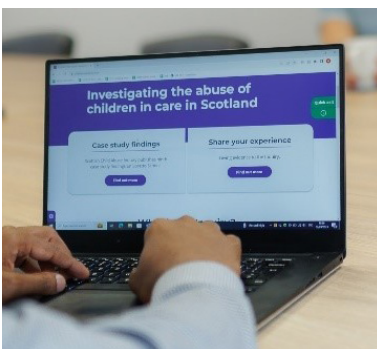
- A transcript is a written record of what people said.



- This means we share what you told us at the public hearing. Anyone can read the transcripts.

- We might share what you told us:

- on our website
- in a report.



How to contact the Witness Support Team



- Phone us on 0800 0929 300.



- E-mail us at
talktous@childabuseinquiry.scot



- Write to us at
SCAI
PO Box 24202
Edinburgh EH3 1JN

If you are deaf or hard of hearing, you can:



- use the Relay UK service at
www.relayuk.bt.com
- contact us through an online British Sign Language (BSL) interpreter at
www.ContactScotland-BSL.org

When you contact us, let us know if:



- you have any concerns
- you have additional support needs that might mean you need to share your experiences in a particular way



- English is not your first language



- you need special arrangements because you are in a young offenders institution, prison, or somewhere similar.