

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

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Factsheet – Inquiry hearings

This factsheet provides information about practical arrangements for the Inquiry hearings.

For more information on the procedures before hearings and at hearings see the practice guidelines on [pre-hearing procedures](#) and [hearings](#).

What are Inquiry hearings for?

Inquiry hearings:

- allow us to explore, usually in a public setting, the key issues that the Inquiry is looking into;
- give all core participants a fair opportunity to participate in such parts of the Inquiry process that relate to their interests;
- give some applicants and other key witnesses the chance to give evidence in public;
- enable the Inquiry to see and hear applicants and other key witnesses giving evidence and any documents they refer to.

The hearings of the Inquiry are separated into phases. This allows us to deal with the large amount of evidence that needs to be covered in organised and manageable parts.

We plan to finish each phase before we start another, but we may have to be more flexible depending on how far the Inquiry's investigations have progressed.

Within each phase there are case studies into particular areas of interest to the inquiry. Case studies may focus on particular care settings, or cover more general themes.

Inquiry hearings are not the only work that the Inquiry does. We obtain many more witness statements than are discussed at Inquiry hearings. The Inquiry looks carefully at all witness statements it obtains. Before hearings begin we investigate. After individual hearings we may prepare findings or interim reports. We will present a final report, with recommendations, at the end of the Inquiry.

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

Our hearings venue has 40 public seats. They can't be booked in advance.

If you come to hearings we won't ask you what your interest in the hearings is.

If you can't come to a hearing, you can read the hearing transcripts on our website. We publish them as soon as possible after the end of each hearing. It can take up to 10 days to prepare transcripts before they are published.

We plan to hold as many hearings as possible in public. In some circumstances hearings may be held in private or with the witness giving evidence from behind a screen or by a video link from another location.

Witnesses who feel they need special measures to be taken in order to support them giving evidence, such as giving evidence from behind a screen or in private (with only key people in the hearings room), should raise their concerns with their witness support officer. The Chair will then decide whether it would be appropriate to make arrangements to accommodate their concerns. She may require further information before making a decision.

Please be aware of the distressing nature of some of the evidence that the Inquiry is likely to hear.

Who takes part at an Inquiry hearing?

The Chair of the Inquiry sits on a raised area at the front of the hearings room. She listens to all the evidence and makes any decisions which are necessary in the course of the hearing.

Counsel to the Inquiry are positioned across from the witness in the hearings room. They ask most of the questions.

There may be legal representatives for parties who are participating in the hearing. They sit in an area towards the front of the hearing room. They may, if the Chair gives permission, be allowed to ask questions of witnesses.

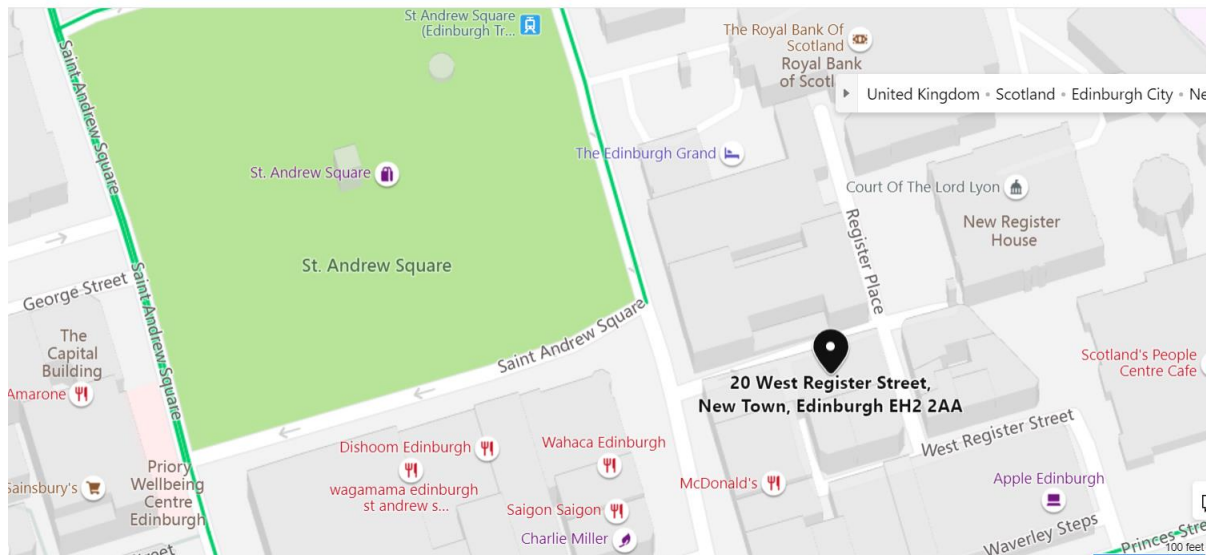
Stenographers will usually be seated at a desk to the right of the Chair.

Other members of the Inquiry team will be on hand to assist with the running of the hearing.

The witness support team provides assistance to all witnesses at hearings. This includes meeting them when they arrive and explaining the procedures to them. Witnesses stay in the witness room before they give evidence. They are shown from there to the witness seat in the hearings room when it is time for them to give evidence.

Where is the Inquiry hearings venue?

Our hearings venue is centrally located in Edinburgh on the **2nd floor of Mint House, 20 West Register Street (just off St Andrew Square), Edinburgh, EH2 2AU.**



Mint House is a modern, glass fronted building.

How do I get to the Inquiry hearings venue?

Nearby public transport stops for Mint House include: Waverley railway station, the Airlink bus service to and from Edinburgh Airport, a range of Lothian Buses and First Bus stops and the St Andrew Square tram stop.

[Tram timetable](#)
[Lothian Buses](#)
[Waverley Station](#)

Car Parking

Whilst there is no visitor parking on-site, metered parking is available at St Andrews Square a few minutes' walk away. There are several multi-storey carparks in close proximity:

- [St James Quarter](#)
- [Q-Park OMNI](#)
- [Waverley Car park](#)

When will the hearings be?

Hearings will usually run Tuesdays to Fridays during the weeks they are taking place.

Hearing days usually start at 10am, with a 20 minute break in the morning. There is a one hour lunch break, usually at 1pm, and a 10 minute break in the afternoon. Hearings aim to finish at 4pm each day. These timings are approximate and may vary from time to time.

The hearings venue will open to the public at 9.15 am each day of hearings.

Sometimes there will be a delay before a hearing can start, or a hearing may finish early. We will try to avoid this where possible, but unforeseen circumstances may make it unavoidable.

What facilities are there at the venue?

In the Hearings Room there is space for at least two wheelchairs and a fixed hearing loop induction system installed for people who are hard of hearing. Screens will, where appropriate, show those speaking at the front of the room.

As part of the hearings venue we have a break out area where members of the public can spend time during breaks. Toilet facilities are also available, across from the lifts on the second floor of Mint House.

Free Wi-Fi is available for anyone in the hearings venue for use during breaks and lunch.

Mint House is occupied by various tenants and they have the right to use their premises without disruption. As a result, we encourage anyone coming to hearings to avoid loitering in other parts of the building before/after hearings and during breaks.

Family members or friends who are accompanying witnesses will be offered a private room where they can watch and listen to the hearings on screen.

Witnesses giving evidence have their own witness room and private toilet facilities. For more information on being a witness see our [guidelines in relation to hearings](#).

Members of the Inquiry team are on hand throughout the hearings venue. If you require assistance, they can be identified by the "Inquiry team" passes they wear.

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

The Chair expects witnesses to be treated with respect by everyone present, including by lawyers, the public and the media.

Everyone in the Hearings Room is expected to sit quietly when a hearing is taking place.

You can't bring banners or leaflets, or display photos or other images in the hearings venue. Eating and drinking is prohibited in the public seating area.

The hearings must proceed without disruption or interruptions. Anyone attempting to disrupt the hearings will be removed from the venue.

No filming, recording or photography is permitted in the hearings venue without the permission of the Chair, which must be sought in advance. Mobile phones must be switched off or turned to silent in the hearings room.

The Chair has the power to ban people from the hearings venue. She will use that power if she needs to in order to make sure that the hearings venue is safe for everyone involved, that hearings are orderly and progress timeously.

Don't leave any personal belongings, papers or documents unattended anywhere in the hearings venue. We can't guarantee the security of any items.

Smoking inside Mint House is strictly prohibited. There is a designated smoking area to the side of the front door.

Will there be filming at the hearings?

A transcript of proceedings will be available for each day of hearings. For more information on the publication of transcripts see our [practice guideline on hearings](#).

Inquiry hearings will not be routinely live-streamed

The Chair will not permit the filming of the public in the hearings venue. The Chair will also not permit any filming which could reveal the identity of a witness where the witness' identity must be protected under a restriction order.

Recording, filming and/or photography are not allowed without the permission of the Chair. For more information on the effect of restrictions orders see the [protocol on restriction orders](#).

Will there be journalists at the hearings?

Journalists and other members of the media can come to the hearings. They need to be accredited media to be given access to the hearings venue.

For more information on accreditation and specific media briefing, please contact the Inquiry's media team at 3x1 Public Relations by email on SCAI@3x1.com or by phone on 0131 225 7700 or 0141 221 0707.

Can I claim expenses for coming to the hearings?

You may be able to claim expenses for travel and food and claim compensation for loss of time for coming to the hearings even though you are not a witness.

However, the Chair has to decide all applications within the limits of the relevant inquiries legislation. This may mean that she is unable to grant your application.

You may have to claim expenses in advance. For more information on what can be claimed, and how to apply, see our protocols on [expenses](#) and [loss of time](#). Our witness support team can help you apply.