

## **Information sheet for witnesses giving evidence**

This information sheet has been put together to inform you of everything you need to know before you come to give oral evidence to the Inquiry. Prior to coming to give evidence, you will have been offered a familiarisation visit to talk through the process of giving evidence and the support arrangements you require. If you are yet to have your familiarisation visit please speak to your legal representative who will be able to arrange one with the Inquiry team.

### **Travelling to Holborn Bars (De Vere)**

138-142 Holborn, London, EC1N 2SW

Please arrive at least 45 minutes before the scheduled start of your evidence.

- **By tube:** The nearest tube station is Chancery Lane on the Central Line. When leaving the station take exit number two and the entrance to Holborn Bars is located approximately 50 meters ahead in the large red brick building.
- **By rail:** City Thameslink and Blackfriars are also approximately 10 minutes walk away from Holborn Bars. Please note that the 521 bus service runs Monday to Friday.
- **By Bus:** From London Waterloo Station there are two bus services available, Bus 341 and 521. Alighting at Holborn Circus bus stop will ensure you are opposite the entrance to Holborn Bars.

If you are experiencing travel difficulties that will delay your arrival, please immediately contact your legal representative or the Inquiry witness liaison officer on **07801 405645** to let them know.

### **On arrival at Holborn Bars**

When you arrive at Holborn Bars, you can either come through the main entrance or a separate private entrance. As part of your familiarisation visit, the Inquiry team will discuss the options and confirm your preference. If you feel this hasn't been agreed or you change your mind on which entrance you would like to come through, please let your legal representative know, or contact the Inquiry at [hearingenquiries@grenfelltowerinquiry.org.uk](mailto:hearingenquiries@grenfelltowerinquiry.org.uk) and we will ensure this is in place.

On arrival at Holborn Bars, our Witness Liaison Officer, Laura Brooks will meet you at your preferred entrance at the agreed time. In case of any problems on the day, Laura can be contacted on **07801 405645**. Laura will take you to your witness waiting room where you will need to wait until you are called to give your evidence. Your legal representative and counselling support will be available to support you during this time. Tea and coffee will be

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provided in the witness waiting room and an usher or witness liaison officer will be on hand if you need to go to the toilet.

The Inquiry will manage the arrangements for individual witnesses to ensure you are not approached by the media, other core participants or third parties during your time at the hearing.

### **The hearing room**

When it is time to give your evidence the usher will escort you from the witness waiting room to your seat at the front of the hearing room.

As marked on the floor plan below, there is a separate desk for you as a witness to sit at, to the right of the Chairman. You will be provided with paper copies of any witness statements and documents you have provided to the Inquiry. There is also a screen if you feel more comfortable looking at electronic copies, along with water and tissues.

As shown on the floor plan, the first row of public seating has 4 seats, labelled 'Designated Witness Support', which will be reserved for anyone you would like to have present in the hearing room (such as your relatives and counselling support). The rest of the public seating is prioritised for the Bereaved, Survivors and Resident core participants.

The Witness Liaison Officer and ushers will be available to answer any questions or concerns you may have during your time at the hearing giving evidence.

### **Being 'sworn in'**

Once you have taken your seat, the usher will take you through the process of being sworn in. This is the process of making a formal promise to be truthful when answering all questions put to you. Swearing in can be done either with or without a Holy book. The usher will talk you through what to say. If you are speaking through a translator, they will repeat the lines in your chosen language.

### **Giving your evidence**

We want you to be able to give evidence to the best of your ability and to feel comfortable while doing so. We will be liaising with you and your legal representatives to discuss any preferences or vulnerabilities you may have.

The Inquiry will provide interpreters to enable you to give your evidence in the language with which you are most comfortable.

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If you would like to raise certain preferences or vulnerabilities with us, please do not hesitate to do so through your legal representative or by contacting [solicitor@grenfelltowerinquiry.org.uk](mailto:solicitor@grenfelltowerinquiry.org.uk) directly.

A 'Vulnerable' witness is someone who:

- experiences stress or difficulty in giving evidence;
- is likely to suffer a detrimental effect in the quality of any statement or evidence they give;
- requires increased support to ensure they are able to fully participate; and/or
- may be at a significant risk that giving evidence may have a negative effect on their mental health or well-being.

The Inquiry can put in place measures to make you feel more comfortable in giving your evidence. We are open to hearing any suggestions of suitable arrangements you or your legal representatives might want to make, to ensure you are comfortable, however, below are some examples of what the Inquiry can do.

- **The appointment of an intermediary** to assess the additional needs of any witness, to assist with making a statements and/or to assist with giving oral evidence at the hearings.
- **The appointment of an interpreter** for those who wish to give evidence in a different language.
- **A recorded interview** in place of a written statement.
- **Screens** meaning you are behind a screen and people sitting in the hearing room cannot see you.
- **A live link from a location outside the Inquiry hearing room** i.e. another room within Holborn Bars or a different location.
- **The support of a friend or relative** who will be allowed to sit with you while you are giving evidence.
- **Regular breaks** at prescribed times.
- **Time limits** for questioning a witness.

## Questioning

Only Counsel to the Inquiry will ask you questions. They will be aware of any support requirements and vulnerabilities you may have in giving evidence. You will not be cross-examined or asked questions by other legal representatives. Any questions they may have will be given to Counsel to the Inquiry to ask you.

## **Breaks**

Regular breaks will be offered while you are giving evidence but if you would like a break at any time during the course of the hearing please ask the Chairman or Counsel to the Inquiry and they will give you one.

When the hearing breaks you will be escorted to your witness waiting room by the usher. They will be on hand if you need tea, coffee or to go to the toilet. Please note that during the breaks you are not allowed to talk to anyone about the evidence you are giving.

The Inquiry usually breaks for lunch each day at 13:00 - 14:00.

## **Fire alarm test**

If the fire alarm sounds, the usher will escort you to evacuate and remain with you.

All fire exits are shown on the floor plans below in annex 1 and 2. Within the main hearing room there are two fire exits on the right hand side of the room.

Please note the fire alarm at Holborn Bars is tested every Wednesday at 16:45, after the session for that day has finished.

## **When you have finished giving evidence**

Once you have finished giving your evidence to the Inquiry, the Chairman will thank you and the usher will escort you back to your witness room. You can stay in the room with your family, legal representatives and counsellors for as long as you need. The witness liaison officer will be available if you would like to be escorted out of the building.

The evidence you will give will form part of the Inquiry record and will be on the Inquiry website. This includes a live stream of the proceedings.

You must not discuss the evidence you have given with any witnesses who have not yet given their evidence. This includes talking about it on any social media sites.

## **Additional information**

The Inquiry publishes the witness schedule at the end of each week, with the names of witnesses appearing the following week. In helping to manage any concerns about press intrusion, the Inquiry will let media representatives know if you would prefer not to be approached by them. Please let your legal representatives or the Inquiry know if this is the

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case. You may also want to consider the privacy settings on any of your social media accounts.

The Independent Press Standards Organisation (IPSO) has published a leaflet with advice for people who are concerned about press harassment. A link can be found on the 'venue' page on the Inquiry website.

## Expenses

You can claim expenses for any loss of earnings that you incur during your time giving evidence at the Inquiry. Further information on the expenses process, including travel is included with the information that has been sent to you.

## If you have any further questions

Please speak to your legal representative or contact the Inquiry witness liaison officer at [hearingenquiries@grenfelltowerinquiry.org.uk](mailto:hearingenquiries@grenfelltowerinquiry.org.uk).

## The main hearing room layout



