

# Attending the Public Hearings at Banbridge Courthouse

## Guidance for Witnesses

### Giving evidence

Please contact the Inquiry on 028 90 720600 as soon as possible if for any reason you are unable to attend the Inquiry on the day that you are due to give evidence.

If you are legally represented you should also keep in contact with your solicitor about your availability and notify them immediately if anything changes.

### Arriving at Banbridge Courthouse

On arrival, please make yourself known to Inquiry staff at the front door (they will be wearing identity badges). A member of staff will show you to the witness waiting area.

Please remember to bring reading glasses if you require them. It would also be useful for you to bring a copy of your statement/s.

### Friends and family

You may bring a friend or member of your family with you and they will be able to sit in the Inquiry Chamber while you give your evidence. The Inquiry Chamber is the room in which the Chairman and Panel will sit to hear evidence from witnesses.

### Giving your evidence

When the time comes to give your evidence, a member of the Inquiry team (usually a witness support officer) will escort you to the witness table in the Inquiry Chamber, and will sit behind you while you give evidence. You will be seated in front of a microphone while you give your evidence with a good view of the Chairman, the two Panel Members and Counsel to the Inquiry.

You will be asked to take the oath. You can ask to see it beforehand so you can feel more comfortable with it. You can take the oath on the holy book of your religion or, if you do not wish to take the oath, you can affirm (promise) to tell "the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth". Whichever way you do it, you are promising

to tell the truth. The Inquiry will ask your legal representative about this when you are asked to attend the Inquiry.

You will be asked questions by Counsel to the Inquiry. Please answer each question truthfully to the best of your ability. Take whatever time you need before answering. If you do not know the answer to a question, cannot remember or simply do not understand the question, please tell Counsel or ask for clarification of any point. In front of you will be a screen on which relevant documents or pictures will appear.

Your evidence will be recorded by a stenographer as you speak. The Inquiry hearings are public (unless in closed session) and your evidence will be posted in the transcripts section of the Inquiry website.

You will not be identified by name in the evidence that is posted on the website. The Chairman has put in place a Restriction Order which means that your name and/or identity cannot be disclosed by anyone unless you give your consent.

## Refreshments

Tea and coffee will be available in the witness waiting area before you give evidence. There will also be water available in the Inquiry Chamber while you give evidence.

## After giving your evidence

You will be told by the Chairman when your evidence is complete or whether (and when) you need to return. After you have finished giving evidence you may stay and watch the remainder of proceedings that day, or you may leave straight away. The Inquiry staff will be able to help you and answer any questions.

## Support for Witnesses

The inquiry is aware that the process of recounting relevant events when giving evidence may be difficult for some witnesses. The Inquiry's dedicated Witness Support Officers will be present in Banbridge and will be known to the witnesses coming to give evidence.

In addition, a counsellor from the Victims' Support Service established through the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister will be available at Banbridge if a witness feels they wish to speak to someone.

## Subsistence/Travel Claims

Witnesses wishing to make a claim for travel and subsistence should read the guidance and complete the relevant attached form(s) and return to the Inquiry Secretariat.

## Public access to the hearings

### Timetable

The Inquiry will publish a provisional schedule of hearings and witnesses (by designation only) to be called on its website on a weekly basis. The timetable will normally be published a week in advance of hearings taking place.

[http://www.hiainquiry.org/index/provisional\\_timetable.htm](http://www.hiainquiry.org/index/provisional_timetable.htm)

The standard timings for each session are:

- Morning sessions 10:30 - 13:00
- Afternoon sessions 14:00 - 16:30

The Inquiry does not guarantee that every session will run for its full duration. Please note that the Inquiry is not scheduled to sit every day once it commences. Members of the public are encouraged to check the website to ensure that they do not travel unnecessarily to the venue when there are no scheduled hearings.

### Access for people with disabilities

Banbridge Courthouse is accessible for those with disabilities and the hearing room is fitted with an induction loop.

### Refreshments

Vending machines providing tea, coffee and snacks are available in the reception area for public use.

### Standards of behaviour

Once in the Inquiry Chamber, members of the public are required to observe standards of behaviour similar to those observed in the public gallery of a courtroom. The following rules must be complied with at all times:

## Noise

There must be silence in the public area of the Inquiry Chamber while the Inquiry is in session.

## Electronic devices

Members of the public are prohibited from bringing electronic devices such as cameras, personal data applications, MP3 players or any recording device into the Inquiry Chamber. Mobile telephones should be turned off. We ask that you take this into consideration when attending the hearings.

## Disruption

Any individual, who disrupts the proceedings of the Inquiry within the Inquiry Chamber, will be deemed to have forfeited their right to attendance and may be removed from the premises. Types of behaviour which will not be tolerated include the interruption of the Chairman, Counsel or witnesses, the display of banners of any size or the throwing of objects.

Anyone who does not comply with any of these requirements may be refused entry to the Inquiry Chamber or asked to leave the room at any point in the proceedings.

## Venue and Location

Banbridge Courthouse  
Victoria Street  
BANBRIDGE  
BT32 3DH  
County Down

[Location Map](#)

## Getting to and from Banbridge

Details of public transport are available at [www.translink.co.uk](http://www.translink.co.uk)