

Brook House Inquiry

Support for witnesses

Some people may find giving evidence to a Public Inquiry a difficult experience or be anxious about the process. For some witnesses, giving evidence may bring back difficult memories, personally or professionally; others may be anxious about giving a good account of themselves or their organisation. Each witness will have different feelings.

We want to support witnesses through the process of giving evidence regardless of who they are. The Inquiry has procured professional, independent and confidential witness support services from crisis support [charity Hestia](#). You can find more information about Hestia on their website (<https://www.hestia.org/brook-house-inquiry>).

To access free witness support please contact the Hestia Brook House Inquiry Support free phone: 0808 164 0008

Further information about Hestia's service is available on the Inquiry website. You will also find some links to a [range of other organisations offering different types of emotional and practical support](#). We hope these are helpful.

How to contact us

For further information about the Brook House Inquiry, please check our website. You will find information about hearings and latest news from the Inquiry.

www.brookhouseinquiry.org.uk

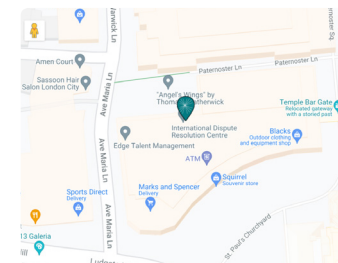
You can also follow us on Twitter [@brookinquiry](#) and our [YouTube channel](#) (www.youtube.com/channel/UC6a78Z5JFxtneBFQe4AV-Kw).

If you have a question for the Inquiry Team please get in touch:
Telephone: 0800 181 4363
Email: enquiries@brookhouseinquiry.org.uk

INFORMATION AND SUPPORT FOR WITNESSES

Address

1 Paternoster Lane
St. Paul's
London
EC4M 7BQ



Nearest Transport links

Mainline railway station: Blackfriars Thameslink;
City Thameslink
Underground: Blackfriars
Bus: 11; 15; 17; 26; 56; 76

About the Brook House Inquiry

The Brook House Inquiry has been set up to investigate the decisions, actions and circumstances surrounding the mistreatment of detainees at Brook House Immigration Removal Centre (IRC) shown in the BBC Panorama programme “Under-Cover: Britain’s Immigration Secrets”, aired on 4 September 2017.

The Brook House Inquiry is led by Kate Eves. Kate was appointed as Chair to the Brook House Inquiry by the Home Secretary in November 2019.



What is a witness?

Witnesses are people who have information that is relevant to the Inquiry. This may be because of what you saw or experienced at Brook House, because of your role at the time, or because you were involved in the monitoring or oversight of Brook House. Or you may be an expert witness with specialist knowledge or insight.

Our legal team will contact you about your evidence and arrange to take a witness statement if required.

What next?

Whatever the reason you have been identified as a witness, you may have questions about the Inquiry process. This leaflet is designed to answer some of those questions and provide information about where to find support if you need it. If you have any further questions, please get in touch with us. You are also encouraged to have a look at our website.

Being a witness

Can I refuse to be a witness?

The Chair has the power to compel witnesses – this means the Chair can issue a notice requiring a person to attend and give evidence. We would prefer if witnesses did so voluntarily and are working hard to make this as easy as possible.

We hope that witnesses will help the inquiry to ensure that these sorts of events never happen again. If you have particular concerns about giving evidence, please get in touch with us right away.

Can I give my evidence anonymously?

The Inquiry will strive to ensure that all witnesses are able to give evidence with dignity and in a safe environment. The Inquiry has protocols in place for dealing with vulnerable witnesses. A copy of our [Vulnerable Witnesses protocol](#) is available on our website. Any applications for anonymity should be made to the Chair, in accordance with Section 19 of the Inquiries Act 2005.

Do I need a solicitor?

You do not need to have a legal representative to be a witness or to take part in the Inquiry. However, many witnesses find this supportive and the Inquiry may be able to help with costs. For any queries about legal representation, please email our legal team at:

solicitors@brookhouseinquiry.org.uk

What do I do if I need help to give evidence?

The Inquiry is committed to ensuring witnesses can give their best evidence and we will provide witnesses with the appropriate support to enable this to happen. We have access to interpreters and translation services to support this. Please let us know if there is anything we need to do to assist you.

Attending hearings

Will I have to give evidence in person?

Not every witness will be required to give evidence in person – in some cases a witness statement may be sufficient. If you are required to give evidence in person, we will contact you nearer the time. It may also be possible to give evidence via video-link.

What if I can't attend that day?

If you are unavailable on particular dates, please let us know as soon as possible. We will do our best to accommodate individual circumstances.

Do I have to tell my employer?

It is a matter for the individual whether to inform their employer that they are required to attend a hearing. Witnesses may want to consult their employer's HR procedures for guidance.

Can I claim money for expenses?

Section 40 of the Inquiries Act 2005 gives the Chair power to award expenses and legal costs to those who give evidence. You can find more information about this and how to apply in the [Inquiry's Costs Protocol](#) available on our website.

Can I have a friend or relative to support me?

You can bring someone to support you at the hearing. They cannot sit with you while you give evidence, but they can be with you while you wait or watch from the public gallery while you give evidence.