



## **Practical tips for witnesses giving oral evidence in the UK Covid-19 Inquiry**

This short guide is intended to help you familiarise yourself with the process of giving oral evidence as a witness in the UK Covid-19 Inquiry. This guide does not train or coach you to give the substance of your evidence in any way.

### **General points to note**

- When giving evidence you are required to **tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth**.
- Your evidence should therefore be your **honest** and **independent recollection of events** in your **own words**. It must not be untruthful or misleading.
- Unlike in other types of proceedings you may be familiar with, in an **inquiry, no one has a case to prove**. Questions are asked to **assist an inquiry** in its search for the truth.

### **Before the hearing**

- **Re-read** and ensure you are **familiar with the witness statement(s), notes, reports and exhibits** you have produced, and any other documents relevant to the hearing.
- Check the **location and timings** of the hearing, or the **joining details** if you are giving evidence **remotely by video link** (see below).
- You may wish to **watch some of the previous UK Covid-19 Inquiry hearings** to familiarise yourself with the process. These can be found on the [UK Covid-19 Inquiry website](#) and [YouTube channel](#).
- Ensure you have any reading glasses, medication etc. that you might need.

### **At the hearing**

- You may find the process nerve-wracking and some questions to be difficult, but they are not intended to trip you up. They are, however, important questions and **your evidence is being sought to assist the UK Covid-19 Inquiry** in making



recommendations. You should therefore try to give as **complete** and **honest answers** as possible.

- Address the Chair (Baroness Heather Hallett) as '**My Lady**' and the barristers as '**Mr / Ms [Surname]**' e.g. Mr Keith.
- When you are called to give evidence, you will be required to **swear an oath** or an **affirmation** to confirm you will tell the truth.

#### **While giving oral evidence**

- **Speak slowly and clearly** into the microphone so the Chair and those attending the hearing can hear you, and so the stenographer can take a clear note.
- **Listen carefully** to the questions being asked and **take your time** when answering.
- If a **question is not clear**, ask for it to be **repeated** or **rephrased**.
- **Answer the question that has been asked and avoid "going off on a tangent"**. If you want to provide information which is not in direct answer to the question, please answer the question and then ask if more context would be appropriate.
- **Provide complete answers** as incomplete answers can be misleading.
- **Do not refuse or avoid answering questions**. If you **do not know the answer** to the question, say so.
- If you are required to **look at a document, take your time**. Read the document before speaking. **Request more time** if you need it.
- If you **feel ill at any point or need to pause** then tell the Chair and barrister.

#### **While giving oral evidence**

- Ensure you have a **good internet connection**, and that you can give evidence **alone** in a secure and quiet room with no interruptions/distractions.
- **Allow time to join** the hearing and/or time to deal with any technical issues.
- Inform the Chair and the barristers as soon as any **technical issues** arise.
- There can be a **time lag** in transmission. Inform the Chair and the barristers if this becomes problematic.