



# Witness Expenses Guidance

January 2024

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# Overview

This expenses guidance explains the rules and the process for claiming back travel and accommodation costs for witnesses and core participants attending UK Covid-19 Inquiry Public Hearings.

The Inquiries Act and rules allow for the reasonable costs of attending Inquiry public hearings to be refunded. The conditions and rates in this statement have been set, where possible, in line with the practice of public bodies.

This guidance applies to:

- Witnesses who are individuals not connected with a substantial organisation
- Core Participants and their legal representatives in receipt of an award under section 40 of the Inquiries Act 2005 (“s.40”), where such expenses are allowable under the terms of the award, and prior authority has been obtained from the relevant module solicitor.

The Inquiry finance team will consider individual circumstances, reasonable costs and travelling distance when deciding claims for travel and other expenses. **All expenses must be supported by receipts.**

In most cases the Inquiry team will arrange hotel accommodation and travel for witnesses and one companion (where required). Where this is not possible and you have to book your own travel and accommodation, any claims should be submitted within one month of attending a public hearing.

Please note, it will not be possible to refund your expenses before you have attended the hearing, unless there are exceptional circumstances. If you feel your circumstances should be taken into account please contact the Inquiry.

Costs of travel from outside the UK will be discussed on an individual basis.

# Travel and accommodation

## Travel expenses

- Claims for travel expenses must include tickets that clearly show the date of travel, the details of where you have travelled to and from, and the price.
- The cost of journeys by rail or coach can be reimbursed at a standard rate or economy fare. Where possible tickets should be booked in good time so that cheaper fares are secured. Timed tickets are preferred to open tickets.
- In most cases car and motorcycle mileage will be reimbursed at 26p per mile. In the following circumstances we are able to reimburse at 45p per mile:
  - When travel by public transport was impossible or more expensive than the cost of using your own car, or;
  - You have to drive your own car because of a disability or use of your car is classed as a reasonable adjustment.
- Reasonable parking charges, but not fines, will be reimbursed when a valid receipt is provided.
- Rail, tube and bus services should be used for journeys in London and other cities where this is more convenient, quicker and cost-effective.
- Depending on your individual needs, travelling by taxi may be more appropriate than other forms of transport. Prior approval should be obtained from the Inquiry's Legal Operations team.
- For travel to and from London airports, the London Underground, the Heathrow, Gatwick and Stansted express services, Thameslink (for Luton or Gatwick) or the Docklands Light Railway should be used at standard class.

# Accommodation

## Witnesses

- Witnesses living in the town or city where hearings take place, or reasonably nearby will not be entitled to claim an overnight stay.
- Witnesses who do not live in the town or city where hearings take place, or reasonably nearby will be reimbursed for an overnight stay if they are giving evidence to the Inquiry in the morning.
- If you are giving evidence in the afternoon and live more than 3 hours away from the venue, then an overnight stay is permitted.

The following maximum rates will apply (**per room - not per occupant**) to claims for hotel (bed and breakfast rate) / self-catering accommodation:

| London      | Major UK Cities   | Rest of the UK |
|-------------|---|----------------|
| £162 (+vat) | £110 (+vat)<br>(Aberdeen, Birmingham, Belfast, Bristol, Cardiff, Coventry, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Harlow, Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester, Middlesborough, Newcastle, Oxford, Portsmouth, Reading, Sheffield, York) | £100 (+vat)    |

## Companion's expenses

- Within the scope of this guidance, if someone attending an Inquiry hearing requires a companion to accompany them (such as a support worker or family member), this person's travel will be arranged by the Inquiry. In such cases, please contact the Inquiry's legal operations team at [legal.operations@coronavirus.inquiry.gov.uk](mailto:legal.operations@coronavirus.inquiry.gov.uk).

## Subsistence allowance

- For daytime travel, you can claim £15 for food and drink costs (excluding alcohol), with an additional £15 if you are staying overnight. You can claim costs from the point at which you leave your home to attend an Inquiry hearing.

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| Travelling before 6 am                                     | £5        |
| Up to 5 hours  | Up to £10 |
| Over 5 hours without an overnight stay                     | £15       |
| More than 12 hours or beyond 8pm without an overnight stay | £25       |
| Travelling for most of the day and overnight               | £30       |

## How witnesses can claim expenses

- The Inquiry will reimburse you by bank transfer into your personal bank account.
- Please contact the legal operations team for the relevant form and submit your expenses, together with copies of your receipts to [expenses@coronavirus.inquiry.gov.uk](mailto:expenses@coronavirus.inquiry.gov.uk). Please note, your claim cannot be processed without copies of your receipts.
- Alternatively you can give your receipts to your dedicated witness officer on the day of your evidence. We will require some additional information from you in order to process your claim in this way.

## Other costs

- If you have incurred costs which are not covered by this guidance, please contact the Inquiry's legal operations team on [legal.operations@coronavirus.inquiry.gov.uk](mailto:legal.operations@coronavirus.inquiry.gov.uk).

## Payment of expenses

- Provided all information submitted is correct, payment of your expenses will be made via BACS with reference 'CO' within 4 weeks.

## Core participants

- Core participants and their legal representatives who are in receipt of a s.40 funding award should submit any expenses claims via their recognised legal representative in line with this policy. Prior written authority by email must be obtained from the relevant module solicitor before any bookings/reservations are made.