



UK Covid-19 Inquiry Hearing Centre in Wales (Mercure, Cardiff North) Public User Guide

February 2024

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Covid-19 Inquiry hearing centre in Cardiff, Wales

Welcome to the Cardiff hearing centre for the UK Covid-19 Inquiry in Wales.

This guide is designed to help navigate you in your visit to the hearing centre, how to get there and what to expect when you arrive here and take you through the areas within the building, the facilities, and some of the processes in place. The Inquiry hearing centre will be based at the [Mercure Cardiff North](#)



The Mercure Cardiff North is located 3 miles from Cardiff City Centre close to Cardiff's major business parks. The hotel is easily accessible by road, with the M4 close by and on-site parking available.

Travelling to the Mercure Cardiff North Hotel

Use [this Google Map link](#) to help you get there.

By car

M4 Motorway - Junction 29 - 10 min drive

Parking (220 spaces) - All staff and visitors attending the hearing will be given parking on a complimentary basis. On arrival inform the registration desk of your car registration.

By Train

Cardiff Central Train Station - 20 min drive

By Aeroplane

Cardiff Airport - 35 min drive

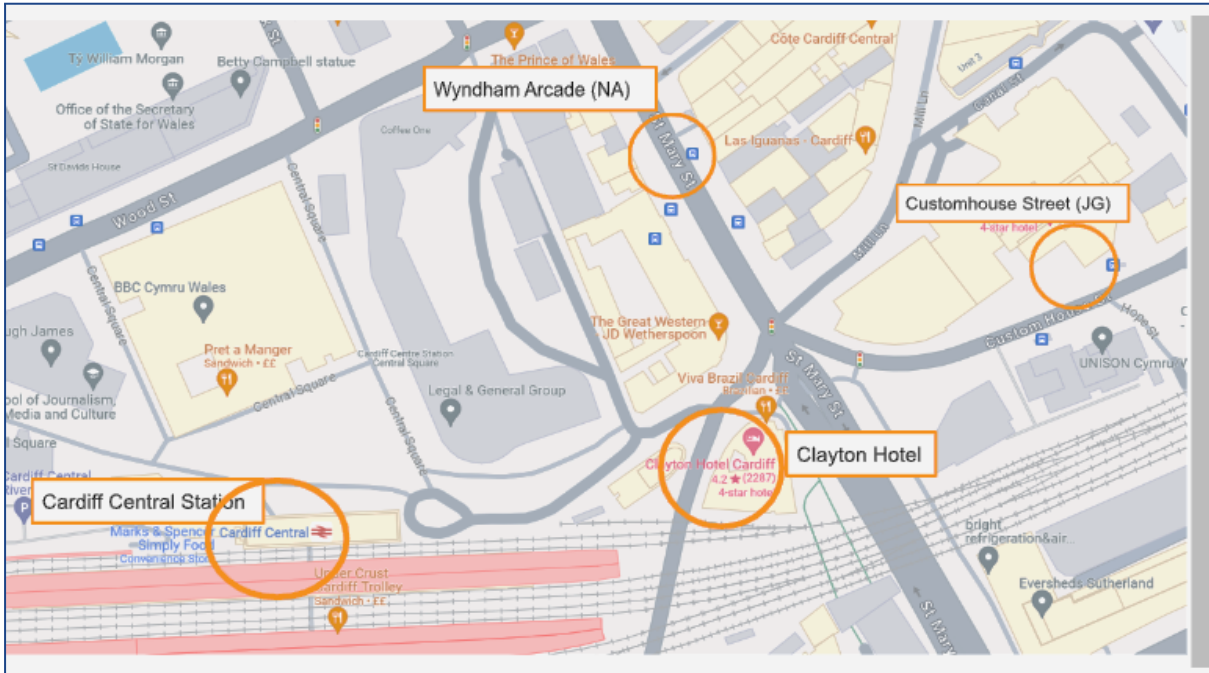
Bristol Airport - 1 hour drive

Private minibus service

For those who have confirmed seats in the public gallery, there will be a private minibus service available on hearing days with a scheduled service pre-hearing (9:15am) from Cardiff Central train station using this [minibus schedule](#) to the venue, timings for the return journeys at lunchtime and post-hearing will depend on hearing running times:

- Morning - Pick up from Cardiff Central station at 9:15am pick-up location available on this [minibus schedule](#).
- Lunch - Return journey from the Mercure to Cardiff Central and back (dependant on hearing timings)
- Evening - Departure from the Mercure back to Cardiff Central 15 minutes after the hearings end (dependant on hearing timings)

By Bus



Bus routes from Cardiff City Centre to the Mercure Cardiff North and back
[57 & 58 with Cardiff Bus](#)
[C1 with Adventure travel](#)

Bus stops in Cardiff City Centre:
Wyndham Arcade (NA) and Customhouse Street (JG)

Bus stops near the Mercure Cardiff North:
Queenswood and Llanedeyrn Rd



Arrival at the Mercure

The public entrance to the Inquiry is through the main entrance of the Mercure Hotel.



On arrival, those with a confirmed seat reservation email will inform the front of house staff who will direct you accordingly.

You will be issued with a 'Visitor' lanyard, which must be worn at all times when inside the hearing centre, and handed back to the front of house staff when leaving at the end of the day.

Core Participants Legal Teams will be directed to the security check, the media will be directed to the security check and to liaise with the Inquiry's Media team.

To enter the hearing room and lobby you will go through a standard security check, which includes a walk through metal detector and a bag check. This also applies to witnesses and their legal teams.

Staying at the Mercure Cardiff North Hotel

Visitors for the Inquiry who wish to stay at the Mercure will be offered a discounted rate of £85 per night for a double room, single occupancy or £100 per night for a double or twin based on two sharing and will include breakfast and car parking. Rooms are subject to availability, please quote Covid 19 Inquiry to access this rate.

Seat reservations

There are 20 seats available in the public gallery in the hearing room available for reservation. There are a number of seats available in the viewing room, on a 'first come, first served' basis, in person, on the day of the hearing.

The reservation form is available for anyone to use in order to reserve a seat in the public gallery in the hearing room and is in both [English](#) and [Welsh](#). Those booking seats in advance will also be able to indicate whether they require the minibus service, parking and/or lunch.

Members of the media are not permitted to use this booking system and must contact media@copyright19.public-inquiry.uk and the Inquiry's media team if they wish to attend the hearings.

Link to the seat reservations will be available to use at least one week before a hearing week and will be released on a weekly rolling basis. If a hearing date is not visible on the reservation form then it has either not been released yet, or the reserved seating is full for that date. Seat reservations close at midday the day before a hearing is due to start.

Reservations must be made for an individual and should only be made for dates that the named individual can attend. The reservation form allows the individual to book for themselves, or on behalf of others, for the week ahead. Block bookings for multiple individuals must be avoided.

Reservations should only be made for dates that the named individual is able to attend. It is strongly advised that if you cannot attend and have reserved a seat, please cancel as soon as possible by emailing operations.team@covid19.public-inquiry.uk to allow others an opportunity to attend.

Confirmation of seats notification will be sent through by email (from operations.team@covid19.public-inquiry.uk) if you have requested a seat reservation.

If a particular day is full, the email will not confirm the booking but will suggest booking another day or taking advantage of the seats available on the day only.

Rooms and directions within the building

Hearing Room Lobby - As you enter the venue, bearing slightly to your left is the Inquiry reception desk, with the hotel's reception desk straight ahead. You will be directed to the right of the hotel's reception desk to pass through security. Tea and coffee will be available.

Hearing Room (Carmarthen Suite) - Once through security, walk towards a set of stairs, ahead and to the left, walk past this area, go through a set of double doors, and you will find the Carmarthen, the hearing room for the Covid-19 Inquiry.

Viewing room - Coming out of the hearing room lobby and past security turn left making your way through a set of double doors and past the toilets. Bear left and walk through another set of double doors, where you reach a long corridor and walk down this corridor to the viewing room.

Support Room - This is the support room where the emotional support team is available throughout the proceedings of the hearings. This is situated on the same corridor as the viewing room.

Refreshments

Tea and coffee will be served free of charge throughout the day. All those attending the hearings can order the £10 set lunch menu, with payments made directly to the hotel.

Orders can be placed on arrival on the day, in advance in person or via email (operations.team@covid19.public-inquiry.uk) or via the public gallery seat booking form.

Those bringing their own lunch will be able to eat in the hearing room 'lobby' and the viewing room, but not in the hotel's restaurant, lounge or bar areas.

Hearing room etiquette

During the first week, hearings will run from Tuesday - Friday between 10:00 and 16:00 and doors to the hearing rooms open an hour before the hearing starts. In the following two weeks, hearings will run from Monday - Thursday between the same times. There will be two short breaks during the day and an hour's lunch break, subject to any changes.

The Hearing schedule can be accessed on our [website](#) and [X \(formerly known as Twitter\)](#) for updates.

When sitting in the hearing room, please be considerate and respectful of those around you. You can hold images of loved ones in the hearing room (printed or laminated only) and the Inquiry kindly asks that you hold these images on your lap and that you refrain from raising them any higher to avoid obstruction to others in the room.

Water will be available and no other food and drink may be consumed in the hearing room. Devices with recording or filming technology including mobile phones are not permitted to be used in the hearing room. If there is a need to access your devices, you can do so by leaving the hearing room quietly while the hearing is running.

Please note that filming and recording of the Inquiry will be taking place throughout the duration of the hearing and broadcasted live via YouTube (with a three minute

delay). Anyone within the hearing room may be captured on camera in the background, or while cameras are panning the room. If you do not wish to be filmed, please make your way to the viewing room where the hearing is also broadcast with a three minute delay.

The viewing room will be open at the same time as the main hearing room doors. In the viewing room there is a theatre style seating area, where you can consume hot drinks, eat and use your electronic devices.

You can leave the hearing centre during the day and return at any time, leaving with your lanyard on you. On your return, you will need to show your lanyard and go through security again. If you are leaving the centre for the day please return your lanyard to the Front of House team.

Security process

Security checks and prohibited items - All visitors attending the hearings must go through security each time they enter the hearing centre. Please allow extra time to go through security as you may have to queue upon entry.

You will go through a security check, which may include emptying your pockets and hand searching or using a handheld scanner.

If you're wearing a head covering for religious or cultural reasons, you will be informed how this may be searched by the security staff.

Prohibited items - such as guns, firearms, knives or other weapons are not allowed into the building at any point. You will be reported to the police if you try to take a weapon into the hearing centre.

Other items that may be used as weapons, even if considered to be harmless are listed below. The list is inexhaustive.

- Blades - such as scissors, penknives and razors.
- Other sharp items - such as knitting needles or darts.
- Glass - perfume bottles, photo frames, drinking bottles.
- Metal items - cutlery, toys, screwdrivers, hammers and nails, chains, umbrellas, crash helmets.
- Syringes - unless prescribed.

- Alcohol - solvents and other potentially harmful substances.
- All photographic, audio and video recording equipment, whether digital or analogue with the exception of mobile phones, although you cannot use these in the hearing room.
- Liquids that are not drinks or prescription medicine - such as oils, perfumes, other body products, lighter refills, vaping items, glues, etc.

You cannot take any of the above into the hearing room, security will confiscate these from you and issue you with a receipt which you will use to collect this item on your way out of the building .

Items that you may have on you whilst in the building are:

- Mobile phones - should be switched off or put on silent in the hearing room and not permitted to capture any proceedings or recordings.
- Hand sanitiser - you will be asked to use this in front of security staff to prove it's not a harmful item. Hand sanitiser stations are situated throughout the hearing centre.
- Drinks - Unopened drinks in cartons and cans, and drinks in a bottle, flask or cup with a lid - these cannot be made of glass. If your drink is opened, or in a flask or cup, you'll be asked to drink some to prove it is not harmful
- Medication - Prescription medicines that have details on to prove this is a valid prescription, and any information will not be recorded or shared.

Please inform the Inquiry if you require reasonable adjustments during security checks when attending the centre via operations.team@covid19.public-inquiry.uk

In an Emergency

Every Monday at 7pm there is a fire alarm test and we let all conference rooms know about it. If the fire alarm goes off any other time, they will investigate to see if it is a false alarm. If it's continuous they go into a full evacuation and leave the building. The reception area fire panel has a 4-minute delay response that goes off first. After this, the whole hotel has sounders beeping everywhere to evacuate the guests and staff. Fire actions notices are displayed around the venue, behind all meeting room doors.

First aid - At least one first aider is present on site during the hearing times, please contact the main reception who will contact the first aider to attend.

Emotional support

Attending the hearing centre in person to experience such proceedings may be challenging and trigger difficult and upsetting memories, emotions, and sensory responses.

The Inquiry aims to implement a trauma-informed approach acknowledging that the impact of Covid 19 has been widespread and caused trauma on individual, group, and community levels.

To make the hearings more accessible, and reduce barriers to attending in person, trained counsellors are available during hearings to provide support. If you cannot locate a counsellor please approach the Inquiry staff to assist.

There is a support room at the hearing centre available for use by the counsellors when privacy and discretion is required. Please be mindful that when speaking to counsellors outside the support room, complete privacy cannot be guaranteed.

If you are concerned about the **immediate safety of yourself or someone else at the hearing centre**, please alert a member of the Inquiry staff or security team who will assist you.

If you would like to share feedback about your support experience at the hearing centre please let us know at operations.team@covid19.public-inquiry.uk.

Alternatively you can write to us at: **FREEPOST** UK Covid-19 Public Inquiry.

We understand that attending the hearing centre can be impactful in a number of ways. Please look at the Inquiry website where you will find contact information for a number of organisations that offer a range of types of support, advice, and services.

Samaritans are available 24/7, and are free to call on 116 123.

Commemoration

As part of our efforts to recognise and acknowledge the human impact of the pandemic, and to ensure it remains at the heart of proceedings, there will be a series

of commemorative photography and prints that are locally significant on display in the public areas.

On the first day of the hearings, we will screen an impact film, featuring individuals from across Wales talking about their experience of the pandemic. This sets the tone and context, ensuring that the subsequent proceedings are set in the context of the lived experience of those who suffered hardship and loss during the pandemic

Covid Policy

This policy is designed to reduce the risk of Covid-19 transmission whilst the Inquiry hosts its hearings and is aimed at all Inquiry staff attending hearings, including the secretariat, legal teams, contractors and security staff. This document also applies to all visitors attending hearings, including core participants, legal representatives, media and the general public.

All UK Government mandated Covid-19 restrictions have now been lifted, however please keep in mind that some staff and visitors at the hearing centre may be vulnerable. Please respect all attendees' individual wishes on social distancing and mask wearing.

For more information see [Covid Policy](#)

Key Contacts at the Mercure Cardiff North venue

Venue Contacts

- Main contact on 02920589910 or email hb539-sb@accor.com
- Covid-19 Inquiry Operations Team - operations.team@copyright19.public-inquiry.uk

Secure Wifi access

Username: C19Inquiry_Guest

Password: C19MERCURE2024