



# **UK Covid-19 Inquiry Hearing Centre in Northern Ireland**

**(at the Clayton Hotel)**

## **Public User Guide**

**April 2024**

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## Covid-19 Inquiry hearing centre in Belfast, Northern Ireland

Welcome to the hearing centre for the UK Covid-19 Inquiry in Northern Ireland, at the Clayton Hotel.

This guide is designed to guide you in your visit to the hearing centre, how to get there and what to expect when you arrive 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 Clayton Hotel, 22-26 Ormeau Avenue, Belfast BT2 8HS, United Kingdom - [The Clayton Hotel, Belfast](#)



Clayton Belfast is [located](#) in Belfast a short walk from the train and bus stations. It's a 5-minute walk to [Belfast City Hall](#) or 15-minute walk to [Botanic Gardens](#).

Directions to the [Clayton Hotel, Belfast](#)

## Travelling to The Clayton Hotel

Easily accessible to George Best City Airport, Belfast International Airport, Belfast Central Train Station, Belfast Ferry Terminals, and the M1 and M2 motorways.

### By Plane

George Best Belfast City Airport (BHD) - Located 4 miles/6.4 km southeast of Clayton Hotel Belfast, George Best Belfast City Airport is the closest to the hotel.

- A taxi typically costs £13.00 (one way), taking 20 minutes, depending on traffic.
- Alternatively, catch one of the frequent Airport Express 600 buses which terminate in the city centre at nearby Europa Bus Centre. Airport Express adult fares are £2.50, journey time is 30 minutes.
- Driving Directions\*: Continue on Sydenham By-Pass/A2 to Oxford Street. Follow Oxford Street to East Bridge Street. Take A24 onto Ormeau Avenue. Hotel is at the bottom of the street on the left-hand side.

Belfast International Airport (BFS) - 20 miles / 32 km north of the hotel

- A taxi to Belfast International Airport costs £31.00 and takes 35 minutes, depending on traffic.
- The Airport Express 300 service operates up to every 15 minutes and terminates at the nearby Europa Bus Centre in the city centre. Journey times are 40 minutes and adult fares £8.00.
- Driving Directions - Continue to Airport Road and follow signs to M2. Follow M2 to Sydenham Road in Belfast. Take the exit towards Queen's Island from M3. Continue on Sydenham Road, take Station Street, Oxford Street and A24 to Ormeau Avenue.

### By Train

Great Victoria Street Station - a five minute walk

- taxis are readily available, fares are typically £5.00.
- Walking Directions: From Glengall Street turn right onto Great Victoria Street. At next traffic lights turn left onto Bruce Street. Turn left at the next set of traffic lights onto Bedford Street. Turn right at the next set of traffic lights onto Ormeau Avenue. The hotel will be on your right-hand side.

Belfast Lanyon Place Station (formerly Belfast Central). 15 minutes walk from the hotel

- 5 minutes by taxi.
- Walking Directions: Exit the station, turn left and walk 500m along East Bridge St. At the junction follow East Bridge Street round to the left. After 200m, at the major junction, turn right onto Ormeau Ave, you will see our hotel ahead on the left-hand side.

### **By Bus**

The hotel is a 5-minute walk from Europa Buscentre located in Great Victoria street and a few minutes' walk from the Glider bus stop and the metro buses beside Belfast City Hall which will take you to the outskirts of the city.

The Belfast City Airport has a designated Airport Express 600 Service with buses every 30 minutes at peak times from the front of the terminal building to the centre of town. The journey takes around 10 minutes, with tickets available at the information desk in the arrivals hall or directly from the driver on arrival.

The Airport Express 300 service operates 7 days a week at peak times on Monday – Friday services run every 15 minutes from Belfast International Airport to Europa Bus centre. Please check the [Translink](#) website for the timetable.

[How to get to Clayton Hotel Belfast Northern Ireland by bus](#)

### **By Taxi**

The Clayton Hotel's preferred taxi operator is FonaCAB. If you require a taxi while at the hotel contact the hotel reception team who can prebook on your behalf, alternatively call 028 90 333 333.

### **Parking**

The hotel does not offer onsite parking, however, a discounted rate is available of £12.50 for 24 hours at the nearby NCP car park on Dublin Road. Please take the parking token to the front desk team to validate eligibility for this offer.

This special 24 hour charge applies for a one entry/exit only. Excess time beyond the 24 hours will automatically be charged an additional £12.50. Please ensure to get the token at reception to avail of this special rate.

NCP Dublin Road opening times - Monday to Saturday 07:00 - 12:00. Sunday 09:00 - 12:00.

Limited on-street parking is available around the hotel. Tickets must be purchased from the Pay & Display machines. A charge of £1.20 per hour applies from 08:00 - 18:00, Monday to Saturday.

### **Getting around with Belfast bikes**

Take advantage of more than 300 bikes that you can rent 365 days a year from 6.00am to midnight. Be instantly flexible and move around the city quickly. The registration is free of charge. Before renting your first bike though, the company will need to verify your payment method and you will be required to deposit a minimum credit of £5. The basic rate is ideal for occasional rides. Billing will take place in

30-minute intervals at £1 per 30 minutes, which is great value. There is a Belfast Bikes pick up point just behind the hotel.

## **Accessibility**

There is ramp access to the hotel's main entrance. A standard accessible toilet is available on the ground and second floors. The nearest Changing Places (CP) toilet to the Clayton hotel is [Causeway Exchange](#) (4 minutes walk from the Clayton Hotel) and anyone who requires a CP toilet can enter and use. Details of the two nearest locations can be found [here](#).

## **Arrival at the Clayton Hotel - venue access**

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.

## **Seat reservations**

There are seats available in the public gallery in the hearing room available for reservation. Additional seats in the viewing room are available 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 can be accessed [here](#).

Members of the media are not permitted to use this booking system and must contact [media@covid19.public-inquiry.uk](mailto:media@covid19.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 midday the day before a hearing is due to start.

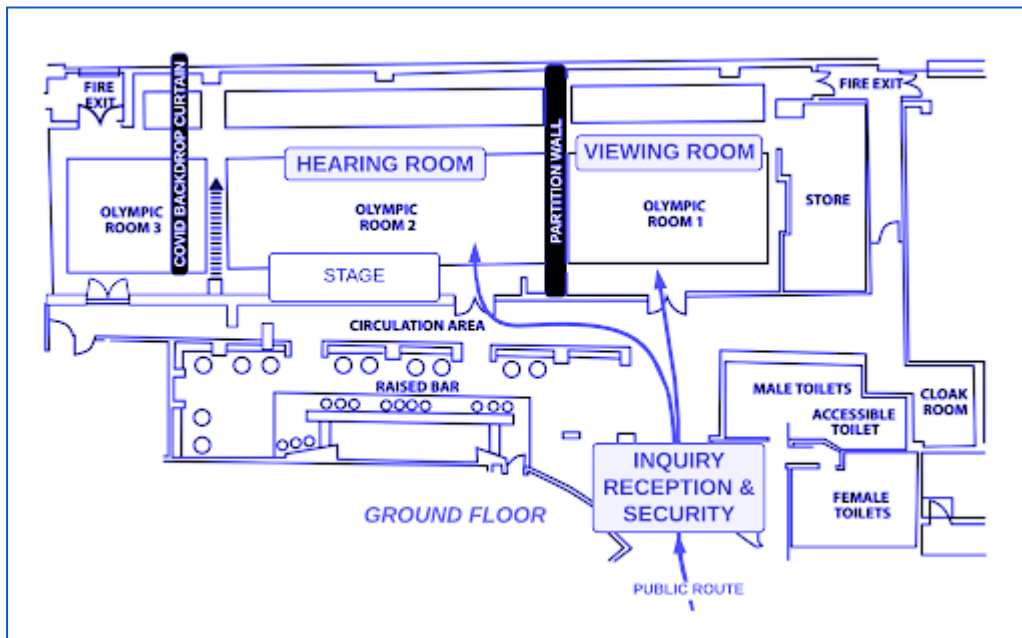
Reservations must be made for an individual and should only be made for dates that the named individual can attend. The reservation form allows the individual to book for themselves, or on behalf of others, for the week ahead. Block bookings for multiple individuals must be avoided.

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](mailto: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](mailto: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.

## Directions within the venue building



**Ground Floor (The Olympic Suite)** - as you enter the building through the main entrance, the Inquiry reception desk is on your left and wash/cloakrooms on your right. For accessibility, there is a ramp going into the hotel towards the Olympic bar area if access is required. Accessible toilets are available on the ground floor.



On your left, a visual image of the main entrance as you enter the building.

**Viewing room (Olympic 1)** - situated directly opposite the main entrance. As you enter the building, the viewing room is set up with screens displaying the hearing evidence feed and transcript, with theatre style seating.

**Hearing room (Olympic 2)** - Facing the entrance to the viewing room, the hearing room is to your immediate left, providing a public gallery seating in theatre style with live evidence and a screen for transcript and another for evidence.

**Raised Bar** - Past the security set up, behind the Inquiry reception where you will find the press registration desk, tapestry set, signage screens, complimentary tea and coffee in a soft seating, cafe style tables and chairs area.

## Hearing room etiquette

During the first two weeks, 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 week three, 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.

You also cannot take in items that security staff think could be used as a weapon, even if you think these are harmless.

- Blades - such as scissors, penknives and razors.
- Other sharp items - such as knitting needles and darts.
- Glass - for example drink and perfume bottles, glass and perspex frames.

- Metal items - cutlery, toys, screwdrivers, hammers and nails, chains, full-length umbrellas, crash helmets.
- Syringes - unless prescribed.
- Toy guns - and other things that look like guns
- Alcohol - solvents and other potentially harmful substances.
- All photographic, audio and video recording equipment, whether digital or analogue, with the exception of mobile phones, which cannot be used in the hearing room.
- Liquids that are not drinks or prescription medicine - such as oils, perfumes, other body products, lighter refills, vaping items, glues, cleaning products, 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 .

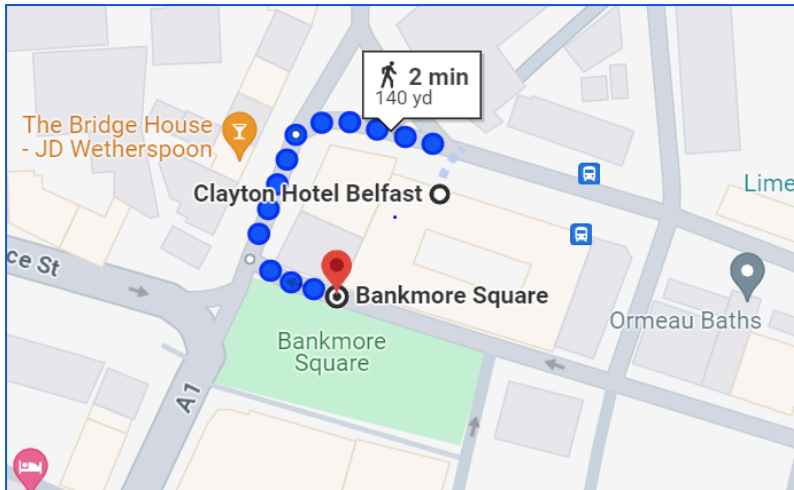
Items that you may have on you whilst in the building are:

- 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](mailto:operations.team@covid19.public-inquiry.uk)

## **In an Emergency**

The fire alarm is a high pitched sound that will ring for one minute. Fire wardens will make their way to the fire panel and take roles allocated. They will investigate the alarm warning provided by the fire panel. If there is a risk of danger, a bell will ring continuously and the building will be evacuated for the fire brigade to arrive. You will find a member of the Clayton Hotel staff at every exit point to direct you to the fire assembly point, Bankmore Square, located just behind the hotel. As you leave the building from the main entrance, bear left, left again, round the corner and left again where you approach Bankmore Square.



## First aid

Most managers and supervisors are first-aid trained and all departments at the Clayton Hotel have first aiders working throughout the day. Please contact the main reception desk who will contact the duty manager who arranges for a first aider to attend.

The [Belfast City Hospital](#) is a 17 min walk, 4 min drive from the Clayton Hotel.

The [Royal Victoria Hospital](#) is a 23 min walk, 6 min drive from the Clayton Hotel.

## 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](mailto: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 Northern Ireland 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.

The Inquiry's [Covid Policy](#) will be implemented as appropriate and necessary across all hearing venues.

The Clayton Hotel no longer has a Covid Policy in place for the venue and now has a safety promise in place, link [here](#) for details.

## **Key Contacts at the Clayton**

- Clayton Reception - 028 9032 8511
- Covid-19 Inquiry Operations Team - [operations.team@copyright19.public-inquiry.uk](mailto:operations.team@copyright19.public-inquiry.uk)

**Secure Wifi access** - Username - C19Inquiry\_Guest  
Password - C19CLAYTON2024