

Being a witness in an online hearing



Easy read booklet

1. Who we are



We are the **Scottish Social Services Council**.

We make sure **social service workers** in Scotland give good care.



We can **investigate** when we receive information about a social service worker that causes concern about whether they can provide good care (a **concern**).

Investigate means we will try to find out what happened. We will speak to people and look at documents to find out the facts.



After we have finished our investigation, we will make a **decision** about the concern. We will decide if anything should be done about it.

2. What this booklet is about



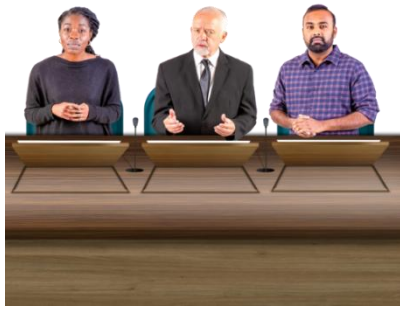
One of the things we do to investigate concerns is to speak to **witnesses**. This is called **taking a statement**.



A witness is someone who speaks about what they have seen or heard. This will normally be about the concern we are investigating.



We will take a note of what the witness tells us. We will type up a **statement**. The statement will record what the witness told us about the concern. The statement is used to help us make a decision on the concern. A statement is sometimes called **evidence**.



Once the investigation has finished, a **hearing** may take place. A hearing involves a number of different people listening to information about the concern and making a decision. They are called a **Panel**.



We sometimes ask witnesses to come to the hearing and speak about their statement. This is called **giving evidence**.



A hearing can be held on the internet, using **Microsoft Teams**. This is a computer programme which helps everyone to appear on a screen together.



This booklet explains what to expect if you have been asked to be a witness in a hearing taking place on Microsoft Teams.

3. Different types of hearing



There are 4 different types of hearing.



In an **application hearing**, the Panel need to decide whether someone who has applied to work as a social service worker is able to provide good care.



In an **impairment hearing**, the Panel need to decide whether someone who is already working as a social service worker is able to provide good care.



In a **restoration hearing**, a decision was made in the past that the social service worker was not able to provide good care. The Panel need to decide whether the social service worker is now able to provide good care.



In a **Temporary Order** hearing, the Panel need to decide whether to do something while a concern is investigated.

A Temporary Order can be put in place which may:

- stop a social service worker from working
- put things in place to make sure it is safe for them to work

while we investigate the concern.

4. People in the hearing



There are a few different people in a hearing.



The social service worker who is being investigated may be there.



The social service worker may also have a **representative**. A representative is someone who speaks on behalf of the social service worker and may ask questions for them.



There will be a **Solicitor** who will say what the SSSC's position is. This may be someone you have spoken to before. They may also ask questions.



The Panel has three people.

- A **Legally Qualified Chair (LQC)**. They are in charge of the hearing.
- A **Social Service Member**. They are a social service worker.
- A **Lay Member**. They are a normal member of the public.



There is a **Hearing Clerk**. They help the Panel to make sure the hearing goes well, like keeping things on time.



Other witnesses may also be involved in the hearing.



Members of the public and **media** might also be there. Media could mean a reporter from a newspaper, radio station or television channel.

5. Hearings using Microsoft Teams



Your hearing is being held using Microsoft Teams.



To use this, you will need something that can connect to the internet and has a camera. This could be a:

- mobile phone
- tablet
- computer.



You should download the Microsoft Teams app if you can. It is free to do this.



The Hearing Clerk will phone you 1 or 2 weeks before the hearing to test Microsoft Teams with you.

This is also a chance for you to ask the Hearing Clerk any questions you have.



You should make sure you have a quiet place to join the hearing when it is your time to give evidence.



Computer Room

This could be somewhere like a room in your home.

6. Timings



The SSSC Solicitor will send a letter to you which tells you when you will be asked to give evidence.



You will be given a date and time when the SSSC Solicitor expects the Panel will be ready to hear your evidence.



It is important that you tell us as soon as possible if you are not able to give evidence at the time that is on your letter.



The date and time you are given may change. This is because things happen in hearings which can cause delays. The Hearing Clerk will keep you updated.



We will tell you how long we think your evidence will take and how long the hearing will take, but it could take more time or less time than this.



Speak to the SSSC Solicitor or the Hearing Clerk if you are worried about giving evidence. They can help answer your questions.



Let the SSSC Solicitor or the Hearing Clerk know as soon as possible if you are not able to give evidence on the day of the hearing due to something happening, like feeling unwell.



We can think about changing the plan for your evidence if you tell us what is happening as soon as possible.

7. Supporter



You can have someone with you when you give evidence if this would help you. This is called a **Supporter**.



The Supporter should not be:

- the social service worker we are investigating
- another witness
- someone else that has investigated the concern.



The Supporter should not say anything for you when you are giving evidence. It is important that your evidence is your own words.



If you would like to have a Supporter with you when you give evidence, please tell us as soon as possible.

8. Giving evidence in the hearing



You should wear smart clothes that you are comfortable in when giving evidence.



You should not bring any paperwork with you. The SSSC Solicitor and the other people in the hearing will ask you to look at documents when you give evidence. These will be shown to you during the hearing. This might include your statement.



The Hearing Clerk will call you when the Panel is ready to hear your evidence. They will send you an internet link to click on. This will allow you to join the hearing. The hearing is recorded.



When you join the hearing, the people in the hearing will appear on the screen in front of you. You should have your camera switched on when giving evidence.



The LQC will introduce themselves. The other people in the hearing will also introduce themselves. You will be asked to tell the truth (be honest and not lie) when giving your evidence.



The SSSC Solicitor will ask you questions first. The questions might be about things like:

- your name
- what you saw, heard or did
- how you felt about what happened
- what the social service worker says happened.



The social service worker or their representative will ask questions next. They may say that your evidence is not right or say that you are not telling the truth. This is because they can challenge (**cross-examine**) your evidence.



The LQC, Social Service Member and Lay Member can then ask questions.



You can ask for a break at any time, if you feel you need it.



If you do not know an answer to a question, do not understand a question or cannot remember something, that is ok. Just say this in the hearing.



You might be asked to leave the hearing during your evidence. If this happens, do not worry about it. It might be because something has happened which the people in the hearing need to talk about without you there.



The Hearing Clerk will let you know when the hearing is ready to start again. You should not talk about the hearing with anyone else during the break.

9. After you have given evidence



Once you have finished giving evidence, you are free to do what you want.



You should not talk about your evidence with any other witnesses.



Let the Hearing Clerk know if you want to speak to the SSSC Solicitor after you have given evidence. They will speak to you as soon as they can.

10. Publicity



We let people know that **Impairment Hearings** are taking place on our website. This lets people know about the hearing in case they want to watch it.



Sometimes, these hearings, or parts of them, might take place in private. This can be because there is something being talked about that is sensitive.



We do not put information about **Application, Restoration** or **Temporary Order** hearings on our website. These hearings are almost always heard in private.



If a hearing is held in public, and someone is there to hear your evidence, your name may appear in a report, like a newspaper article.



After an Impairment Hearing has finished, information about the Panel's decision will be published on our website. Some things will not be published, such as your name and other private details.



Speak to the SSSC Solicitor if you are worried about any publicity that might come out of your evidence.

11. Help with being a witness



We understand that being a witness in a hearing can be tricky and stressful.



Our Hearing Clerks receive special training to help you. They will be the main person you speak to on the day of the hearing. They will also call you after the hearing to check how you are.



If you feel worried, scared or upset, there's also a phone line you can call where people will listen and help. You don't have to pay to call them, and you can talk to them any time — day or night.



You can call the support line on 0808 169 4430 (or +44 141 271 7133 if you're calling from abroad).



If you need other support, please speak to the Hearing Clerk or SSSC Solicitor. They may be able to help.

12. More information



This is the end of this booklet.



To find out more, you can visit our website if you click [on this blue link](#).



On our website you can find more information about:

- investigations
- hearings
- being a witness
- decisions.



In this Easy Read document, we used pictures from Photosymbols.