

Information on your visit to the Investigation Committee

1. This booklet is being sent to you with your letter of appointment. If we have been unable to reach you by phone to confirm that the date is suitable to you, we ask that you contact us as soon as possible to confirm that you will attend. Once you accept an appointment, that time is reserved for you and will not be offered to anyone else.
2. The following may help you to plan your visit to give evidence to the Commission of Investigation into the Mother and Baby Homes:
 - (i) the length of your visit will depend on how long you need to speak with us – we would not anticipate any session lasting more than two hours with the average being around one hour.
 - (ii) the Investigation Committee would welcome any documentation and photographs you may wish to bring with you (we will photocopy and return same to you);
 - (iii) do allow yourself sufficient time for travel;
 - (iv) please retain all travel receipts i.e. train tickets, for reimbursement;
 - (v) you are welcome to bring a companion with you when you meet the Commission. In most cases you can decide if you would like your companion to sit adjacent to you during the hearing or to wait for you in our waiting room. However there are 2 exceptions to this:
 - **if your companion is under the age of 18 he or she cannot go into the hearing room.**
 - **If your companion is a person who is going to the Investigation Committee or the Confidential Committee, it is not in their interest to sit in on your hearing and we would ask that you make your companion aware of this.**
 - (vi) your companion will be asked to keep the hearing confidential.
 - (vii) on your arrival, the staff of the Commission will greet you and will answer any queries you may have;
 - (viii) a person who is apparently under the influence of alcohol, other substances or medication will have his/her hearing deferred;
 - (ix) if you wish for a break during the hearing, that will be arranged for you;
 - (x) all hearings of the Investigation Committee are recorded and the evidence is sworn evidence.
 - (xi) when the hearing has finished, a member of staff will be available to you as part of the witness support programme of the Commission.

They will have information on counselling services if you would like to receive that;

- (xii) the Commission is aware that speaking of your experiences to us may be very distressing and driving afterwards can be especially difficult. It can be helpful to arrange to have a friend collect you after the hearing if you are coming on your own. You may wish to take the rest of the day off.

3. Reports to the Authorities:

No report on anything you tell the Investigation Committee will be given to the authorities, except in the following circumstances:

If the Committee has reason to believe that:

- a serious crime is being committed;
- a serious risk to a person's life exists; or
- abuse of a child is ongoing.

In any of those situations, the person is obliged to report the matter to the Gardaí or to the health board.

4. Because this is a Commission of Investigation set up under the Commission of Investigations Act 2004 there are three matters which it is important to bear in mind when giving evidence to the Investigation wing of the Commission

Firstly, the work of the Commission is confidential and this hearing is in private. No one is permitted to discuss the issues that are raised at the hearing, outside of the hearing.

Secondly, the Commission has certain powers under the Act under **sections 16, 17 & 28 of the Commissions of Investigations Act 2004**. These powers are explained in Appendix 4 of the Book of Rules and Procedures which we have sent to you already. Before you give your evidence these will be explained further to you. You will also have to confirm, at the hearing, that you have received and understand them.

Thirdly, you need also be aware that should any evidence that you give to the Investigation Committee reflect on other persons or bodies, the Commission is obliged to furnish a summary of relevant evidence to those persons or bodies who may in turn seek an opportunity to cross examine you on the matters raised. If that occurs the Commission will invite you back for that purpose and if you decide not to attend then the Commission would have to take that into consideration when considering whether to use your evidence or the weight that should be given to your evidence.