

Protocol for April 2025 Hearing

Introduction

1. The Chair will hold an evidential hearing during April and May 2025 for a period of three weeks. This will be referred to by the Inquiry as the April Hearing.
2. The purpose of the April Hearing is to introduce important contextual evidence relating to the provision of mental health inpatient care in Essex and to explore some specific issues around the provision of care. The April Hearing will therefore include:
 - a. Opening Statements from the Chair and Counsel to the Inquiry;
 - b. Evidence from healthcare providers and other relevant bodies and organisations;
 - c. Expert evidence.
3. The Inquiry does not intend to hear evidence in April from the families and friends of those who died, or from those with lived experience.
4. This note sets out the kinds of evidence that the Inquiry intends to hear during the April Hearing. It also gives details of the plans and procedures for the April Hearing and explains the support and facilities that will be available both for witnesses and for those attending the hearings or watching remotely.
5. A separate protocol will be published in due course in relation to future hearings.

Dates

6. It is intended that the hearing will take place over a period of three weeks, beginning on **Monday 28 April 2025** and concluding on **Thursday 15 May 2025**.
7. During that period, the Inquiry will not sit on Fridays. In addition, the Chair will not hear evidence on Monday 5 May and Wednesday 7 May 2025.

8. Inquiry hearings will usually take place between 10am and 4:30pm, with a one-hour break for lunch between 1pm and 2pm. The Inquiry will also normally take a short break mid-morning and mid-afternoon.

Venue and Facilities

9. The April Hearing will take place on the 5th floor of Arundel House, Arundel Street, Temple, London WC2R 3DX. The venue is located close to Temple tube station and is easily accessible from Liverpool Street Station and other London transport hubs.
10. For those who are attending the hearings, the following will be available at the venue:
- Access and facilities for those with mobility and/or disability issues including wheelchair accessibility and hearing loop;
 - Publicly available Wi-Fi throughout the venue;
 - Tea, coffee and biscuits (available in the café area);
 - Emotional support available for those participating in the hearings; and
 - Security staff will be at the hearing venue to ensure everyone's safety.

Support

11. The Inquiry places the wellbeing of those engaging with and/or giving evidence to the Inquiry at the centre of its work. Whilst the Inquiry does not intend to hear evidence in April from the families and friends of those who died, or from those with lived experience, it recognises that for many individuals, it may be challenging to listen to oral evidence that closely relates to their experience and that some of the evidence given at the hearings may be very difficult for those attending to listen to. The Inquiry also recognises that witnesses may be vulnerable for a variety of reasons. The Inquiry's principal objective is to ensure that every person engaging with the Inquiry and each witness is supported in a way that is most appropriate for that individual.
12. The Chair has wide discretion to put in place measures to support witnesses in giving evidence as well as to support those attending. This will take an individualised approach as far as is reasonably possible.

13. The Inquiry offers independent emotional support to those who give oral evidence at hearings and to those who attend hearings. For information about that support, including how to access it and who to contact, please click [here](#). The Inquiry has also published a separate Protocol on Vulnerable Witnesses, which can be accessed [here](#) and a Protocol which deals with special measures for witnesses, which can be accessed [here](#).
14. Where the Chair has decided that a witness is vulnerable in line with the Inquiry's Protocol on Vulnerable Witnesses, the Chair may seek the views from the witness about any further measures that may assist them to provide evidence.

Attendance at Hearings

15. In line with section 18 of the Inquiries Act 2005, the April Hearing will be a public hearing. The public and the press will be welcome to attend in person and view the hearings, save for in certain circumstances where a Restriction Order has been granted. Attendance at the hearing venue in person may be subject to capacity and attendees will be required to register in advance.
16. As set out in the Terms of Reference, those engaging with the Inquiry are to be treated by all parties with respect. Principles of Engagement for all public hearings will be made available in due course.
17. The hearing will be available to watch on the Inquiry's YouTube channel. The hearing will be streamed with a time delay of 10 minutes.

Opening Statements

18. The Chair will give an Opening Statement at the April Hearing and will then invite Counsel to the Inquiry to provide an Opening Statement. The Chair does not intend to invite opening statements from any Core Participants at the April Hearing.

Evidence and Counsel to the Inquiry Presentations

19. During the April Hearing, the Inquiry intends to focus principally on the contextual background relating to the provision of mental health inpatient care in Essex and specific issues around the provision of care. The Inquiry intends to hear evidence from healthcare providers and other relevant bodies and organisations at the April Hearing.
20. The Chair will invite a range of evidence in different formats, including (but not limited to):
- Written statements (published on the Inquiry's website and/or read at the hearing);
 - Oral evidence given at the hearing;
 - Photographs and video footage;
 - Evidence presented or summarised by Counsel to the Inquiry;
 - Written reports from Expert Witnesses.

Procedures for Witnesses

21. Witnesses who are giving oral evidence to the Inquiry at the April Hearing will be notified of the date and time of their evidence by **26 March 2025**. Evidence will be provided to the Inquiry under oath or affirmation.
22. Witnesses who are called to give oral evidence may be taken through their accounts and asked questions about their evidence by Counsel to the Inquiry. Under Rule 10(1) of the Inquiry Rules 2006, the expectation is that only Counsel to the Inquiry or the Inquiry panel (in this case, the Chair) may ask questions of a witness giving oral evidence at an Inquiry hearing. This is because a public inquiry is not a trial where two sides are presenting arguments; it is an investigatory process.
23. Costs for witnesses relating to preparation for and giving evidence at the opening hearings are dealt with in the Inquiry's Protocol on Witness Expenses, which can be accessed [here](#). For those witnesses who are legally represented, information on costs relating to legal expenses can be found in the Inquiry's Protocol on Legal Costs, which can be accessed [here](#).

24. There will be opportunities for legal representatives of bereaved families and those with lived experience to engage with the evidence considered at the April Hearing, both through the Rule 10 process and via submissions. Further details on these will be provided separately. As a general point, the Chair encourages the legal representatives for bereaved families to work co-operatively together, where common issues may arise. Such collaboration enhances the effectiveness of the Inquiry, avoids unnecessary duplication, and ensures efficient use of public resources.

Transcripts and the Publication of Evidence

25. Written statements provided by witnesses relevant to the April Hearing will be disclosed to Core Participants in a bundle at least 4 weeks before the April hearing. Those witness statements and any other documents which are relevant, necessary and proportionate will also be published on the Inquiry's website once they have been referred to at the April Hearing.

26. Transcripts of the hearings will be made available on the Inquiry's website within 24 hours of the conclusion of each sitting day. Video recordings of the hearings will also be made available via the Inquiry's website at an appropriate time.

Restriction Orders and Special Measures

27. The Inquiry recognises that there may be circumstances in which particularly sensitive information should be excluded from disclosure to Core Participants or to the wider public. Under section 19 of the Inquiries Act 2005, various restrictions can be imposed on attendance at the Inquiry, or at any particular part of the Inquiry, or on the disclosure of any evidence given or documents provided to the Inquiry. Any applications for a Restriction Order will be determined by the Chair in accordance with the power under section 19 and the procedure set out in the Inquiry's Protocol on Restriction Orders, which can be accessed [here](#).

28. The Inquiry may hear from witnesses who have been granted anonymity. Where an anonymous witness is due to give oral evidence, the Inquiry

will liaise with them about any measures that may assist them to give their evidence safely and to the best of their ability. Subject to those views, the general procedure for witnesses who have been granted anonymity and are giving oral evidence at a hearing will be as follows:

- a. The Chair will make a Restriction Order prohibiting the publication or disclosure of the name or address of the witness or any identifying information. This Order will apply to everyone.
- b. Before the witness gives evidence, the Chair will explain that a Restriction Order is in place which prohibits its disclosure or publication of the name or address of the witness or of information which would identify the witness.
- c. No mention will be made of any information which has been redacted from the witness's written statement.
- d. No recognisable image of the witnesses will be live streamed or shown on a video recording of the hearing.
- e. Additional measures may be introduced where they are appropriate. These may include, for example, screening, a private entrance to the hearing room, providing evidence in private, voice distortion or a statement being read by Counsel to the Inquiry.
- f. If at any point during their evidence any reference is made to identifiable features for an anonymised witness, the Chair can halt the proceedings and make a further Restriction Order to ensure that this information is not more widely shared. There will be sufficient delay in the transmission to permit this to take place, before the sensitive information is streamed on the internet.
- g. The Inquiry will review all transcripts of oral evidence prior to publication on the Inquiry website. Checks will be undertaken to ensure that the witness's anonymity has been preserved.

Point of Contact

29. If you have any queries about this Protocol, you can contact the Inquiry by phone (voicemail) on 020 7972 3500, by email at Contact@LampardInquiry.org.uk or by post - The Lampard Inquiry, PO Box 78136, London, SW1P 9WW.

18 March 2025