

# Preparing for your Parole Oral Hearing

## Information for prisoners about Oral Hearings

Easy Read version



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**This guide follows on from the booklet called “A guide to help with your Parole Review”.  
It is for any prisoner whose case will be heard at an oral hearing.**

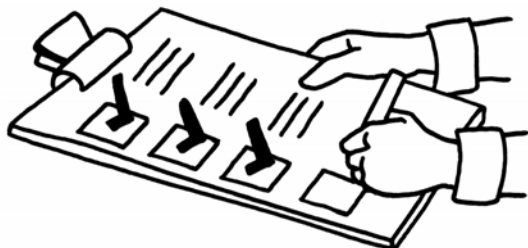
# Help with this leaflet

Some of the words used in the leaflet are in **bold** type.

We have explained what these words mean at the end of this leaflet in the 'Glossary' section.



This leaflet will help you prepare for your **parole oral hearing**.



It explains what will happen.



If you need help with the things in this leaflet you should ask somebody in the prison to help you.



You can ask your offender supervisor, offender manager, a prison officer, the prison chaplain or a prison visitor.

# Help with your parole oral hearing



You can ask a **legal representative** for help with your parole oral hearing. You might have a legal representative who helped you with written representations.

If you do not have a legal representative the prison will have a list of legal representatives who you can contact.

You can ask a member of staff in the prison to show you the contact list.



If you cannot afford to pay for a legal representative you can apply for **legal aid**.

In most cases you should be able to get legal aid for your parole oral hearing.

This means you will get a legal representative for free who will be able to help you.



Some people will not be able to get legal aid because of their type of parole review.

You should check with a legal representative or the Prisoners' Advice Service if you can get legal aid.



If you cannot get a legal representative you can ask a friend or someone else you know to help you with your parole oral hearing.



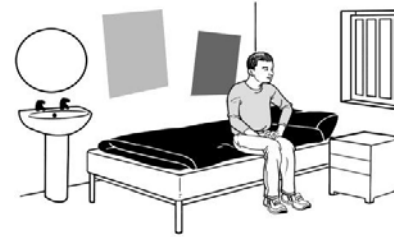
The person who is helping you with your parole oral hearing is called your **representative**.



There are some people who cannot be your representative.



You cannot be represented by someone if they are being kept under the Mental Health Act or if they might be kept under the Act soon.



You cannot be represented by someone if they are in prison or if they have left prison but are still on licence.



You cannot be represented by someone if they have an 'unspent' offence.

This is when someone must admit to having a criminal conviction if they are asked. It means not enough time has passed for a person to be able to keep their criminal convictions a secret.



You can contact the Prisoners' Advice Service for free help and advice.

Telephone: **0845 430 8923**  
(Only on Monday, Wednesday and Friday)

Write:  
Prisoners' Advice Service  
PO Box 46199  
London  
EC1M 4XA

Email:  
**[advice@prisonersadvice.org.uk](mailto:advice@prisonersadvice.org.uk)**



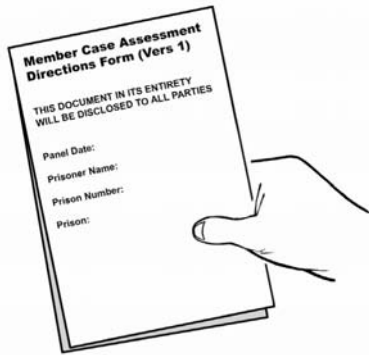
You can contact the Parole Board and ask them if you have a question about your parole oral hearing.

Telephone: **020 3334 4402**

Write:  
Parole Board for England and Wales  
52 Queen Anne's Gate  
London  
SW1H 9AJ

Email:  
**[info@paroleboard.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:info@paroleboard.gsi.gov.uk)**

# Preparing for your oral hearing



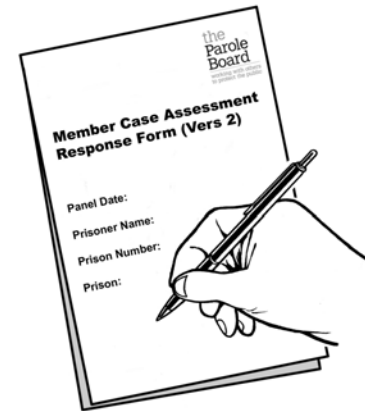
If the Parole Board have decided that you need an oral hearing they will give instructions about the oral hearing. These are called **Directions**.



You should read the Directions carefully and discuss them with your representative if you have one.



The panel will come to your prison to talk to you in a private room. The prison will have a room that is used for parole oral hearings.



If you think something in the Directions should be changed you or your representative should explain this on the **MCA Response Form**.

This form will be sent to you with the directions.



Sometimes the panel will decide that they will not come to the prison but will talk to you through a TV screen on a **videolink**. They will not be in the room if they do this.



You may want to ask on the MCA Response Form for other people to attend the oral hearing who can give the Parole Board more information about you.

These people will be known as **witnesses**. You should explain why you want these people to come to your hearing.



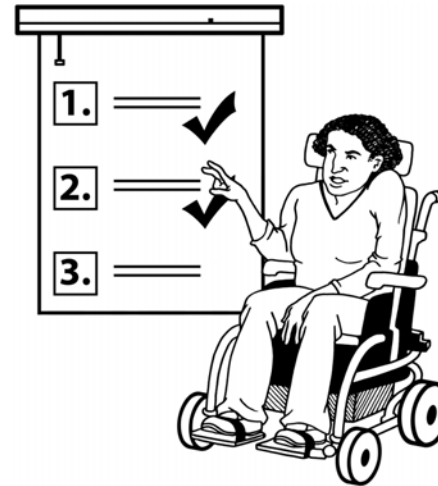
A member or members of your family can also attend your hearing. They will be known as **observers**.

This means they cannot speak but they can listen to what is being said.

You will need to ask on the MCA Response Form if they can come to your hearing.

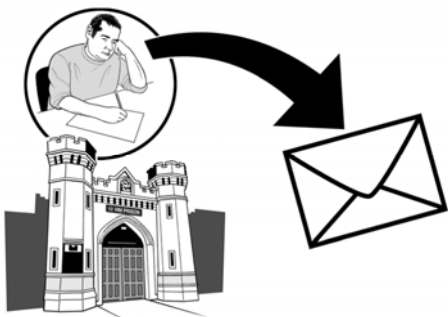


You can ask on the MCA Response Form if you think the Parole Board need to see written reports or information that they have not asked for in the Directions for your hearing.



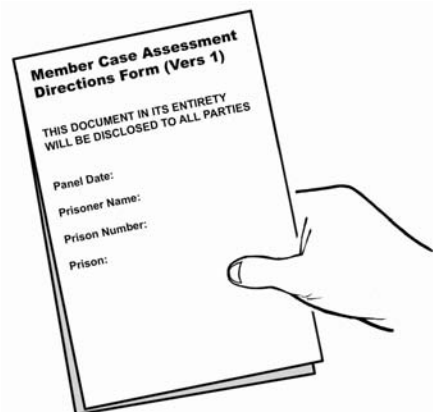
You can ask on the MCA Response Form if you need special arrangements to be made because you have medical problems or find things hard to explain or understand.

The Parole Board must always do what they can to make sure everything is fair and equal.

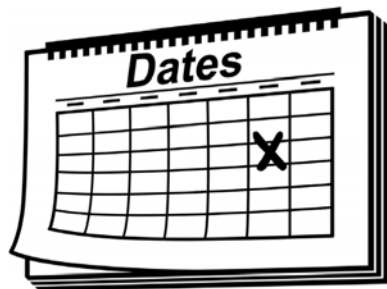


Your MCA Response Form should be sent to the Parole Board.

The prison can do this for you if you do not have a representative.



The Parole Board may make more Directions for your case after they have read any MCA Response Forms.



They will tell you the date when your hearing should happen.



You should read through the dossier of written information about you.

This will help you to prepare for your oral hearing.



You may want to write down some notes to help you remember.



You should think about the following points:

1. What are the main things you want to tell the Parole Board?



2. What might the Parole Board want to ask you about?

The kind of things they usually ask about are listed on pages 12 and 13.



3. What questions would you want the witnesses to answer? Are there things they have said in reports which you think are wrong? Are there good things they know about you which might help your case?



If you need help to prepare for your oral hearing you should speak to your representative.



If you do not have a representative you can ask for help from someone in the prison or your probation officer.

# What will happen in the oral hearing



Parole Board members will usually come to your prison to talk to you in a private room. The prison will have a room that is used for parole oral hearings.



Sometimes your oral hearing will be done by one person.



Sometimes there may be two or three people doing your oral hearing.



These people are called the **panel**.

One person is in charge and they are called the **chair**.



You will be able to come to your oral hearing.

If you have a representative they will come to the hearing too.



The witnesses may also be in the room to speak about you. This is called **giving evidence**.



Sometimes they speak through a video-link (on a TV screen) or on a telephone.



An observer may also be in the room to listen to your hearing. They cannot say anything during the hearing.

You or your representative can tell the panel if you do not want the observer to be there. The panel will decide if the observer can stay to listen to the hearing.



Sometimes the **victim** of the crime or one of their close family members may be at the hearing.

Sometimes they will speak to the panel.

They will talk about what happened to them and how they feel.

They will read this from their **Victim Personal Statement**. This usually happens at the start of the oral hearing.



You can choose if you want to hear what the victim or their family member is saying. If you do not want to be in the room when the victim is there you need to tell prison staff before the hearing.

Sometimes the victim will not want you in the room when they speak to the panel.



The victim or their family member do not stay for the rest of the hearing.



The main thing the Parole Board talk about is **risk**.

This means if people might be harmed if you are released or moved to an open prison.

The questions they ask will help them to decide this.



The Parole Board will want to know about the crimes that you have done in the past.

The Parole Board will want to know about problems you have had in the past. This might be things like drugs or alcohol or controlling your temper.



The Parole Board will want to know if you understand how your actions affected the **victims** of your crimes.



The Parole Board will want to know what the judge said about you when you were sentenced.



Parole Board will want to know what good changes you have made to yourself in prison.



The Parole Board will want to know about the things you have done in prison, such as how you behaved.



The Parole Board will want to know if you have any medical or mental health problems.



The Parole Board will want to know what help and support you would have if you were released from prison.



There might be other things the panel will want to know such as where you would like to live and what you will be doing.



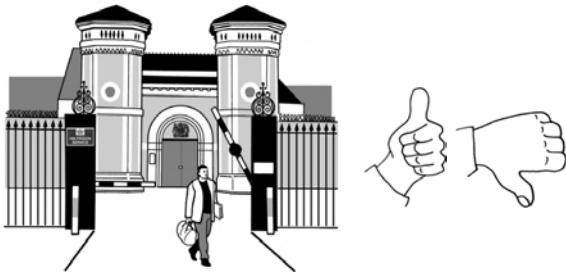
After everyone has spoken, you or your representative will be asked if you have anything else to say.

You or your representative can remind the panel of the most important things you want them to think about.

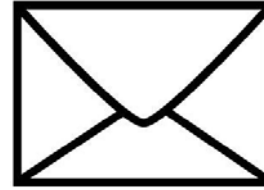
# What will happen after the oral hearing



After you and the witnesses have left the room, the panel will think and talk about everything they have heard and read about your case.



They will decide whether they think it is safe for you to leave prison or to move to an open prison.

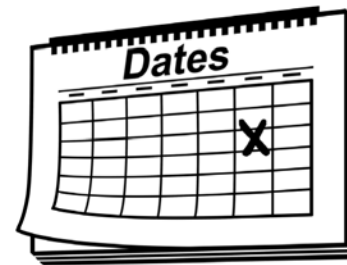


They will let you know what they have decided in a letter.

This can take up to two weeks to be sent to you. It will explain why they have made this decision.



If you need help to read this you should ask your representative or a member of prison staff.



Sometimes the panel will have to **adjourn** the oral hearing because they need more information to make a decision.

This means you will have another oral hearing when the information is ready.

# What to do if you need to complain



If you think anything was not done fairly you can complain.



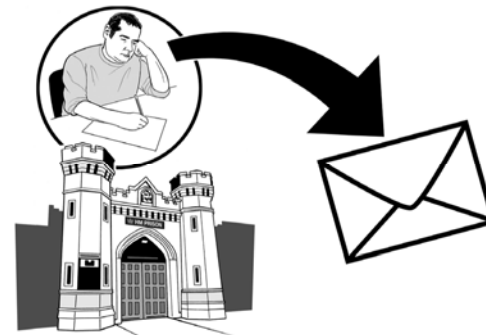
You or your legal representative should write a letter explaining why you think the hearing was unfair.

The Parole Board will decide whether you need to have another hearing.



You can say if you think the hearing was unfair.

You should ask for advice from a legal representative about this.



You will need to send the letter to:

The Complaints Officer  
Parole Board for  
England and Wales  
52 Queen Anne's Gate  
London  
SW1H 9AJ

# Glossary

Here is a list of special words about parole

<b>Adjourn</b>	This is when a hearing does not finish because the panel need more information to make a decision. It means that there will be another hearing for your case.
<b>Chair</b>	The person on the panel who is in charge.
<b>Directions</b>	<p>These are the instructions the Parole Board say need to happen to make sure the hearing is fair.</p> <p>These directions may include a list of which witnesses should be at the hearing, or any other information that the Parole Board may want to see.</p>
<b>Dossier</b>	This is the information about you that the Parole Board will look at.
<b>Giving evidence</b>	This is what you or a witness say at an oral hearing.
<b>Legal aid</b>	Free financial support to help you pay for a legal representative.

<b>Legal representative</b>	Someone who is legally qualified and can help you with your parole review.
<b>Licence conditions</b>	The rules and conditions you have agreed to follow if you are released from prison. If you break any of these conditions you might be sent back to prison.
<b>Member Case Assessment (MCA)</b>	This is the way the Parole Board first looks at a case on the papers to decide if you can have parole.
<b>MCA Response Form</b>	This form is where you can ask for things for your oral hearing
<b>Observers</b>	These are people who come to your oral hearing to listen but do not speak. They may be a member of your family or someone who is learning about how the Parole Board works.
<b>Open prison</b>	A prison that gives you more freedom and sometimes allows you to spend time out of the prison.

<b>Oral Hearing</b>	This is when the Parole Board meets the prisoner to talk about the case before they make their decision. It means they can get more information and evidence from you and other people.	<b>Prisoner reply form</b>	This is a form that will be sent to you with an initial notification. You will have to complete this form and send it back to the Parole Board. This tells them you know about your parole review.
<b>Panel</b>	The people from the Parole Board who will make a decision about your case. The panel could be one person, two people or three people.	<b>Recalled</b>	If you were released from prison but have now been put back into prison whilst you were on licence.
<b>Parole Board</b>	The people who will do your parole review and the staff that work in the Parole Board office.	<b>Representations</b>	This is information the prisoner sends to the Parole Board for them to look at. It is information that might help their case.
<b>Parole Review</b>	This is when the Parole Board decides if someone is suitable to be released from prison on licence or transferred to an open prison.	<b>Representative</b>	Someone who is helping you with your parole review. If they are not legally qualified they are called your representative. Some people cannot be your representative.
<b>Preliminary decision</b>	This is when the Parole Board have looked at all the written information and decide that the person should stay in their current prison.  They write to the person to let them know.	<b>Risk</b>	This is how much harm you might cause to people if you were released from prison.
		<b>Temporary release</b>	If you are let out of prison for a few hours or a day. You will have to return to prison when you are told to do so.

<b>Victims</b>	The person or persons who have been harmed or affected by your crime.
<b>Victim Personal Statement</b>	A report by a victim of your crime explaining how the crime affected them. It is sometimes called an 'impact statement'.
<b>Videolink</b>	This is where people can talk to you and the panel if they are not in the room. A television screen is used so that you can see the person speaking, and they can see you.
<b>Witnesses</b>	These are other people that will say things about you at an oral hearing.

This leaflet was developed with the support of the 'Working for Justice' group. This group is comprised of people with learning disabilities who have been suspects, defendants, offenders and prisoners. It is jointly managed by KeyRing Living Support Networks and the Prison Reform Trust.