

Position Statement on Victim Observers

Taking notes during the observation

In the Board's [Guidance on Observers](#) at paragraph 11.4 it states:

Observers should request permission from the panel chair in advance, with reasons, before taking notes. Where permission is granted, notes containing details of the proceedings must be stored and disposed of securely.

The Board took a slightly different approach for victims who observe as there were concerns that information could inadvertently make its way into the public domain. Victims were therefore not permitted to take notes when observing private parole hearings during the testing period.

However, it is acknowledged that victims may wish to take some notes to remind themselves of key points once the hearing is over. During the proceedings, victims may not fully absorb or retain information. Keeping a note may assist them in processing the events and can support discussions with the HMPPS Victim Representative or Victim Liaison Officer once the proceedings have concluded.

A change has therefore been agreed whereby victims can apply to the panel chair to be permitted to take notes during the observation. **Where the panel chair agrees**, the victim will be permitted to take notes. Seeking permission to take notes **must** take place before the date of the oral hearing, ideally at the point of application.

Victims may be permitted to take notes away with them, but they must be reminded of the Confidentiality Agreement that they are required to sign, which stipulates that any notes must be stored and disposed of securely. Sharing of these notes would constitute a breach of confidentiality, which may give rise to legal action. **It is a statutory requirement for hearings to remain private. Ensuring that victims are aware of the potential consequences for breaching this is very important.**

This change will also apply to anyone supporting the victim on the day who is also observing or an Official Representative of victims who observe on their behalf and are permitted to take notes. These individuals must also sign a Confidentiality Agreement.

This change will come into effect on 1 April 2025 and guidance will be updated in due course.

Comprehensive information about victims observing parole oral hearings can be read here: [Guidance on Victims](#)

