



An Coimisiún um Chaidreamh san Áit Oibre
Workplace Relations Commission

Getting Ready for Your Client's WRC Hearing

A plain English guide for Lay Representatives

What to expect before, during and after the hearing

1. What this guide is for

Use this guide as a practical checklist when preparing to represent someone at a WRC hearing. It explains the main steps to take before, during and after the hearing and the key responsibilities to keep in mind. **It is not legal advice.**

You should also read:

- [The Complainant Guide](#) (if acting for a Complainant)
- [The Respondent Guide](#) (if acting for an employer/Respondent)

2. Quick checklist

- ✓ **Know your role:** be clear about what you can do as representative and what the party must still do themselves.
- ✓ **Prepare early:** identify the claims, the legal basis, the key facts, the documents and the witnesses.
- ✓ **Check the complaint and the legislation:** make sure each complaint is clear, in time, provided for in the legislation and based on the right facts and process.
- ✓ **Manage deadlines:** submissions should be filed at least 15 working days before the hearing; postponement or hearing-format requests should usually be made within 10 working days of the hearing letter date.
- ✓ **Fair procedure:** copy the other side on submissions, postponement applications, hearing-format objections and other relevant correspondence.
- ✓ **At the hearing:** be prepared by having copies of all relevant documents, be organised, respectful and focused on the relevant facts, evidence and legal issues.
- ✓ **Supports:** State on the complaint form if your client has a disability and needs a reasonable accommodation, or if they need other special facilities such as a language or Irish Sign Language (ISL) interpreter, or if they are a victim of trafficking and require some other form of special assistance.

3. Understand your role

As a lay representative, you help the party prepare and present their case. You should be familiar with the complaint, the documents, the legal issues and the practical steps in the WRC process.

- ✓ Help the party understand the process and prepare their case.
- ✓ Make sure submissions and documents are clear, relevant and filed on time.
- ✓ Tell the WRC clearly who you represent and give your contact details.
- ✓ Present the case clearly at the hearing.
- ✓ Copy relevant correspondence and documents to the other side as a matter of fair procedure.

If a party has difficulty reading, writing or completing forms, you should take extra care. The party you represent must still understand their own case. They may need to give evidence, answer questions and explain what happened in their own words.

You are an advocate for a party and have a responsibility to present an accurate account of the case and not to mislead the WRC, knowingly or otherwise. Do not take over the party's case or make assumptions about it. The complaint should come from the party's own account, the facts and the complaint that has actually been made.

4. Know the case you are representing

Before you start preparing, make sure you understand the type of complaint and what has to be proved.

- ✓ Check whether the complaint is an employment rights, equality, equal status, industrial relations or other type of matter.
- ✓ Identify the relevant legislation and the legal tests that apply.
- ✓ Check time limits, especially if you are acting for a Complainant.
- ✓ Work out who has the burden of proof. This affects who usually speaks first and what evidence is needed.
- ✓ Use the legal meanings of key words. For example, words such as discrimination, victimisation and harassment have specific legal meanings.
- ✓ Make sure each complaint is clear and gives enough detail for the WRC to deal with it.
- ✓ Check whether any form, notice or other step had to be completed before the complaint was made, and whether it was done in time.
- ✓ Use one complaint form for each Complainant. Even if the facts are the same, each Complainant should usually have their own form and their own case reference.
- ✓ In Equal Status cases, check that the Respondent was properly notified before the WRC complaint was made, where the law requires this.

5. Prepare early

Work with the party as early as possible. Do not wait until the hearing date issues before organising the case.

- ✓ Identify the key facts and prepare a simple timeline.
- ✓ Agree the theory of the case, that is, what the party says happened.
- ✓ Make sure your party is ready to give evidence on the key facts and to answer questions from the other party and the Adjudication Officer.
- ✓ Gather the relevant documents only, such as contracts, payslips, policies, letters and emails.
- ✓ Identify the witnesses needed to prove the case.
- ✓ Check whether any witness needs an interpreter or other support and tell the WRC in advance.
- ✓ Consider whether mediation or settlement may be appropriate.

Note: The WRC does not award legal costs. Each side usually pays its own costs, even if it wins.

6. Manage correspondence and fair procedure

Be clear and organised in all contact with the WRC and the other side.

- ✓ Quote the **ADJ number** in all correspondence to the WRC.
- ✓ Clearly state who you represent.
- ✓ Give the name and contact details of the person dealing with the complaint.
- ✓ Keep copies of all documents and emails.
- ✓ Copy the other side on submissions, postponement applications, hearing-format objections and other relevant correspondence.
- ✓ Only include relevant information. The WRC generally shares material between the parties.

7. When you receive the hearing date

- ✓ **Act quickly.** Time is of the essence.
- ✓ Check that the party and witnesses are available for the hearing date and time.
- ✓ If a postponement is needed, apply within the first **10 working days** after receiving the hearing date letter, with the other side's consent if possible. Contested applications, or applications made after the 10-day window, are granted only for "*substantial reasons and exceptional circumstances*".
- ✓ If the party wants to object to the hearing format, or ask for a witness to attend remotely, make the request within the first **10 working days** after receiving the hearing date letter.
- ✓ Copy the other side on the application or objection.

- ✓ If the party, a witness or representative needs support to take part in the hearing, tell the WRC as early as possible. This may include accessibility needs, an interpreter, breastfeeding facilities or other practical arrangements.

Late or contested applications are only granted in limited circumstances. **Do not delay.**

8. Prepare submissions

A submission is your written explanation of the case. It should be clear, structured and focused on the issues the Adjudication Officer has to decide.

- ✓ Keep the submission concise and relevant. Use tabs and page numbering where possible.
- ✓ Include a short summary of the facts and timeline of events.
- ✓ Identify the law you rely on.
- ✓ Explain the main evidence and legal arguments.
- ✓ Include the directly relevant documents you rely on.
- ✓ Where relevant, give the number, names and details of the witnesses you propose to call at the hearing.

Send the submission and documents to the WRC at least **15 working days** before the hearing and copy them to the other side.

If you use AI tools to help prepare a submission, check everything carefully. The party is responsible for what is submitted, and citations, case law and legal references must be checked.

Your submission should explain the complaint that is already before the WRC. It should not add new complaints for the first time. For example, if the complaint form is about unpaid wages, the written submission should not add new complaints about bullying, discrimination, racism or dismissal unless those complaints were properly made to the WRC.

9. Before the hearing

Before the hearing, make sure everyone knows what to expect and what they need to bring. Also check that the complaint form, submission, documents and witness evidence all tell the same account.

- ✓ Make sure the party understands the hearing process and the evidence they will be required to give.
- ✓ Check that witnesses are available and prepared.
- ✓ Organise documents in a clear order.
- ✓ Prepare an index and number the pages.

- ✓ If relying on many documents, bring four hard-copy sets: one for the Adjudication Officer, one for the other side, one for the witness and one for you or your client.

10. At the hearing

Arrive early, be ready on time and make sure the party and witnesses are present or available.

- ✓ Dress professionally.
- ✓ Speak and behave respectfully.
- ✓ Be clear, structured and focused.
- ✓ Stick to the relevant facts, evidence and legal issues.
- ✓ Turn off mobile phones and do not record the hearing unless the Adjudication Officer permits it.
- ✓ If anyone needs a short break during the hearing, they can ask the Adjudication Officer. The Adjudication Officer will manage the hearing and decide what is fair and practical on the day.

The hearing may include preliminary issues, opening statements, evidence from witnesses, questions from the other side and closing submissions.

- You may make opening and closing statements.
- You may guide the presentation of the case.
- You may question witnesses where appropriate.
- The party may still need to give evidence under oath or affirmation and answer questions.

11. After the hearing

After the hearing, the Adjudication Officer will issue a written decision in due course.

- In most cases, the decision is published on the WRC website.
- In most cases, both parties are named.
- Either side may appeal the decision.
- After the hearing ends, further documents or written evidence are usually accepted only if the Adjudication Officer allows it.

12. Additional supports

If the party, a witness, representative or anyone attending needs support to take part in the hearing, tell the WRC as early as possible. Do not assume the person knows what they can ask for.

- Interpreter support, including ISL where required

- Accessibility arrangements, including support for Deaf or hard of hearing people, closed captioning or hearing support where available
- Other practical supports needed to take part in the hearing, including breaks, accessible documents or facilities for breastfeeding
- Support where there are safety or privacy concerns, such as domestic violence, stalking or very sensitive personal circumstances

13. Useful WRC links

Decisions and Recommendations: [Search](#)

Core procedures: [WRC Procedures for All Cases - Workplace Relations Commission](#)

Hearing guidance: [Guidance Note for a WRC Adjudication Hearing - Workplace Relations Commission](#)

Witnesses: [WRC Witness Guidelines - Workplace Relations Commission](#)

Postponements: [Postponement Policy - Workplace Relations Commission](#)

Hearing arrangements: [Objections to Hearing Arrangements Guidelines - Workplace Relations Commission](#)

Authorities: [Frequently Cited Authorities - Workplace Relations Commission](#)

Remedies: [WRC Remedies Table - Workplace Relations Commission](#)

AI use: [Guidance for Parties on the Use of AI before WRC - Workplace Relations Commission](#)

Employment, labour and equality law: [WRC Guide to Employment, Labour and Equality Law - Workplace Relations Commission](#)

Legislation: Irish Statute Book website www.irishstatutebook.ie or see ‘The Revised Acts’ on The Law Reform Commission’s website <https://revisedacts.lawreform.ie/revacts/intro>

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This guide is intended as general information only and may be updated periodically. Readers should check the WRC website for the most current procedural guidance.