

## Providing a safe place of work for all court users

Covid-secure courts, safe buildings, Public Health approved mitigations

### Summary

- You should come to court if you are required to do so in the interests of justice or to be effective in your work.
- From the moment you arrive, our buildings are safe for those that need to use them. They meet all Public Health and government Covid-secure guidelines.
- You must always rigorously follow hands-face-space guidance. Everyone has a personal responsibility to follow the guidance in our buildings, just as they do everywhere else in the community.

### Detail

1. We fully comply with the government's [Covid-secure guidelines](#). We have a duty to keep our premises safe, and to control risks to health and safety in a suitable and sufficient manner. In the context of Covid-security, we help to achieve this by observing and embedding the latest guidance on Covid-19 safety to the letter and keep the arrangements in place under regular and frequent review.
2. Public Health consultants are clear that our buildings are not close contact settings.
3. Everyone on site must follow hands-space-face guidance at all times. We display clear signage to this effect.
4. Our approach to [assessing risk](#) – the means by which we assure ourselves that we are Covid-secure – is endorsed by Public Health England and Public Health Wales.
5. In the first week of January we sought confirmation from Public Health experts that the policies we have in place to mitigate against the risks of transmission continue to be satisfactory. [They have confirmed that they are](#).
6. Site-specific risk assessments are reviewed every week and are available to see, on request, from your local court or tribunal.
7. We have rigorous processes in place to ensure our risk assessment and policy framework (validated against public health standards) is embedded and operating effectively on the ground. This includes:
  - management checks at a local level
  - spot checks performed by our HQ Assurance team to ensure local compliance
  - independent audits provided through an expert third party supplier as a further measure of reassurance.

We have invited Public Health England to check our arrangements are appropriately embedded at specific venues. Two visits have taken place and four more are planned.

8. We want court users to tell us if they see something that is a cause for concern. We prominently display signage to this effect in our buildings, as well as including details online. We've published an [escalation guide](#) to explain what to do if something doesn't look right.
9. From the evidence amassed via management checks, internal spot checks, external audits and from public health and regulatory visits, we are confident both that our approach to risk assessment is fit for purpose, and that our policies and processes are embedded effectively across our national

estate. There are inevitably isolated examples where standards have not been met in a particular location at a particular time and we are very far from complacent. We always act on suggestions for improvements, and regularly and routinely review standards and implementation.

10. We ask everybody to use the contact tracing app and QR code in our buildings. Contact tracing should only be paused within our buildings in those areas defined in [NHS guidance](#), which includes when behind a fixed Perspex (or equivalent) screen and fully protected from other people, or if storing your phone in a locker or communal area.
11. We initiate contact tracing ourselves, in line with public health guidance, and in addition to the NHS test and trace system.
12. We keep a central record of all reported suspected and confirmed Covid cases so that we know, at all times, if there is an emerging trend.
13. We record Covid cases among our own staff, contractors and judges. When other court users notify us that they have tested positive and have visited one of our buildings in any capacity, we record that too (and act on it). This is a record of people who are known to have tested positive for Covid-19 and who are known to have been to one of our sites. It is not accurate to interpret this as a record of people that contracted Covid-19 in our buildings.
14. We recognise the need to keep court users updated on positive cases (and in some circumstances, suspected cases). The information HMCTS shares in updates follows public health guidance, and therefore specific care will be taken to ensure the individual(s) who test positive are not identifiable. Updates may contain a combination of the following pieces of information, depending upon the circumstances of each incident:
  - Date we were informed of suspected incidents and/or positive cases.
  - Date those involved were last in the building (only if it is not shared in a way/with other information which could lead to identification).
  - Areas of the building in which the individuals concerned have worked for a sustained period of time and/or where they are likely to have come into contact with the public (only if it is not shared in a way/with other information which could lead to identification).
  - Action taken, for example if a section 16 clean was completed, or if part or all the building will be closed temporarily.
15. In line with what is required of us, we alert local authority public health teams whenever the threshold for reporting is reached and act on their advice. This means that our policies, and how they are implemented at an operational level, are repeatedly reviewed by multiple experts who are independent of HMCTS.
16. When two or more positive cases are reported within 14 days, we investigate to determine the likely source of transmission.
17. In the vast majority of investigations, community transmission was the most likely scenario.
18. In consultation with local public health teams, only five outbreaks have been considered most likely attributable to court-based transmission. All of these have come about as a result of individuals – not all of them court staff – breaching hands-space-face guidance.
19. Transmission in our buildings is extremely limited due to the mitigations we have in place.
20. There is no evidence, whatsoever, that our buildings are inherently unsafe or that the number of cases reported at our sites are any higher than in the wider community.