

Ministry of Justice

Covid-19 Update

20.03.2020

MESSAGE FROM THE LORD CHANCELLOR

It is clear that COVID-19 is affecting every part of our society and the justice system is no exception. We are living through an unprecedented time and it requires an unprecedented response.

Our normal ways of working have already and will continue to be affected as we rise to this extraordinary challenge. Weathering it requires us to understand each other's needs, do things differently, and find new solutions to age old problems.

As the situation develops, my ministers and I are in regular contact with the chief executives of HMPPS and HMCTS, but also the leaderships of the Bar Council, the Law Society, and the prisons and probation trades unions.

Social distancing means that courts are necessarily changing the way they operate, including revising timetables and utilising the technology available to us, so that some hearings and trials can continue to go ahead.

That obviously has implications for victims, witnesses, claimants, defendants, and legal professionals.

A new criminal justice system legal practitioners' working group has been set up specifically so that concerns can be fed back to us at the Ministry of Justice and the wider system so we can act on them accordingly. Following a successful workshop today, we will be setting up similar groups for the civil, family and administrative practitioners too.

It is a testament to our world-class courts and legal professions that justice continues to be done.

Yesterday the government set out how we will continue to keep classes running for the children of keyworkers. There were discussions about who that should include and I was clear that everyone critical to the running of the justice system must be on the list.

I realise that many colleagues are working around the clock and providers are under pressure to deliver. I am so grateful to everyone who is playing their part to ensure that the public continue to be protected from harm.

There is no doubt that the next few months will be challenging, not just for us but for everyone in our country and around the world. I will do everything I can to support you but we must keep in touch and ensure that we are pulling in the same direction throughout.

I have every faith that by working together in that spirit we will get through this difficult period. Please know that I greatly value each of your individual contributions in keeping the wheels of justice in motion.

Rt Hon Robert Buckland MP

Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice

KEY WORKER UPDATE

The Government has confirmed the key workers required to run the justice system during the COVID-19 outbreak.

The listed key workers include a full range of front-line and support staff working in roles across the justice system, as well as members of the public acting as jurors and witnesses.

This follows an announcement on Wednesday that UK schools will close from the end of Friday 20 March until further notice, but will continue to operate for children of workers considered key in the ongoing response to the COVID-19 coronavirus. Full guidance can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-maintaining-educational-provision/guidance-for-schools-colleges-and-local-authorities-on-maintaining-educational-provision>

- All staff working in prisons
- Probation staff including:
 - NPS and CRC staff
 - Probation staff in Courts
- HMCTS staff in essential frontline roles:
 - Contractors supporting the administration of court services e.g. interpreters, electronic monitoring etc
 - Court security
- Advocates required to appear before a court or tribunal, including prosecutors
- Other professionals require to support the administration of justice, including duty solicitors, solicitors, legal executives and paralegals
- Coronial Court staff
- Members of the public required to appear before a court or tribunal, including claimants, defendants, respondents and witnesses
- Jurors
- Judicial office holders, including magistrates; coroners; and Tribunal panel members
- Bailiffs, Civil Enforcement Officers & Tipstaff
- Approved Premises and Bail Accommodation & Support Service (BASS) staff including:
 - Double Waking Night Cover (DWNC)
 - Contracted services
- Electronic Monitoring staff
- Prisoner/immigration detainee transportation
- Victim support providers – contract or grant-funded
- Catering, cleaning and essential maintenance including contracted services
- Essential IT support and deployment staff for operational and public-facing digital services
- Essential Parole Board staff
- Cafcass Social Workers
- Youth Offending Teams
- Essential LAA staff
- Essential OPG staff
- Essential OSPT staff
- Staff engaged in work on COVID-19
- Essential policy officials