

Ministry of Justice

Covid-19 Stakeholder Update (23.03.20)

This is the Ministry of Justice's regular stakeholder communications update service. This is intended to signpost the latest Covid-19 guidance and central government updates.

We would find it helpful to know about your own communications plans and any intel that will help inform our communications moving forwards. If you know an organisation which should be added to the list please do get in touch at samantha.abrahams@justice.gov.uk or thomas.cracknell@justice.gov.uk.

Please find today's update below.

- [We have robust and well-established plans to ensure we can continue to deliver key services across the justice system.](#)
- Legislation is being sought through an emergency bill in response to the virus that could extend the circumstances in which a court can direct the use of audio or video links.
- Prisons are well prepared to take immediate action wherever cases or suspected cases are identified, including the isolation of individuals where necessary.

Clarification on legal practitioners covered by key worker category

The Government has confirmed that [keyworkers](#) include those "essential to the running of the justice system". On Friday, the Ministry of Justice shared a list of key workers within this category.

We would like to provide further clarification of those legal practitioners covered within this category who are essential to the running of the justice system, and, in particular, the courts and tribunals:

- Advocates (including solicitor advocates) required to appear before a court or tribunal (remotely or in person), including prosecutors
- Other legal practitioners required to support the administration of justice including duty solicitors (police station and court) and barristers, solicitors, legal executives, paralegals and others who work on imminent or ongoing court or tribunal hearings
- Solicitors acting in connection with the execution of wills
- Solicitors and barristers advising people living in institutions or deprived of their liberty

Only legal practitioners who work on the types of matters, cases and hearings listed above, will be permitted to be classified as a keyworker.

In addition, some legal practitioners will intermittently fall into this category because they need to provide advice or attend a hearing for an urgent matter relating, for example, to safeguarding of children or vulnerable adults, or a public safety matter. For the limited time required to deliver this work, a legal practitioner will be a key worker.

As the Government has said, many parents who are key workers may be able to ensure their child is kept at home and every child that can safely be cared for at home, should be.

As events evolve this guidance may change. Please ensure you regularly check this and other Government guidance for the most up to date information.

HMPPS

HMPPS has been working closely with Public Health and NHS services, as well as criminal justice partners, to put robust contingency plans in place. The plans prioritise the safety of staff, prisoners, visitors and offenders under supervision in the community, whilst seeking to minimise disruption to normal services and ensure public protection. The following page will continue to be updated when new advice is available: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-and-prisons>

HMCTS

NEW: HMCTS have updated guidance following the Lord Chief Justice's announcement on jury trials. Following the Lord Chief Justice announcement on 23 March on jury trials, all new trials will be postponed for a short time. Full guidance is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-courts-and-tribunals-planning-and-preparation#jury-service>

During this unprecedented public health emergency, we are adjusting practices and taking steps to minimise the risk to the judiciary, court staff and users. Any changes to individual hearings will be communicated directly to those affected in the usual way, by email and/or phone. The following page will continue to be updated when new advice is available: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-courts-and-tribunals-planning-and-preparation>

Judiciary

NEW: Message from the Lord Chief Justice on court arrangements. The Lord Chief Justice has decided to pause jury trials for a short time to enable appropriate precautions to be put in place. The full message is available here: <https://www.judiciary.uk/announcements/review-of-court-arrangements-due-to-covid-19-message-from-the-lord-chief-justice/>

Latest general guidance

- **NEW: The new Business Support campaign for Covid-19 has launched today.** This is to ensure businesses are aware of the support available to them and how to access it. The new Coronavirus website page can be found here: <https://www.businesssupport.gov.uk/coronavirus-business-support/>
- **NEW: Major new measures to protect people at highest risk from Coronavirus -** <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/major-new-measures-to-protect-people-at-highest-risk-from-coronavirus>
- Guidance for businesses - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-employers-and-businesses-about-covid-19/covid-19-support-for-businesses>
- Home isolation / 'stay at home' guidance - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance>
- Social distancing / vulnerable people - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-on-social-distancing-and-for-vulnerable-people>

Please continue to refer to [GOV.UK/coronavirus](https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus) for the latest information on the situation in the UK and the Government's response. For information about the illness and symptoms visit [nhs.uk/coronavirus](https://www.nhs.uk/coronavirus)

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"Stay at home, protect the NHS, save lives."

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