

10 'Nightingale Courts' unveiled

- Temporary courts to begin hearing cases from next week
- Move will ease pressure on courts system and tackle the number of outstanding cases
- Part of Government plan to ensure justice continues to be served throughout pandemic

Middlesbrough Town Hall, the Knights' Chamber within the grounds of Peterborough Cathedral, and the Ministry of Justice's headquarters in London are among the venues that will soon be in use.

The 10 sites will host the so-called Nightingale Courts with ongoing work to identify more potential locations. This will start to alleviate the pressure on courts and tribunals resulting from the pandemic – ensuring that the wheels of justice keep turning.

Spanning England and Wales, they will hear civil, family and tribunals work as well as non-custodial crime cases. The move will free up room in existing courts to hear other cases, including custodial jury trials, which require cells and secure dock facilities to keep the public, victims and witnesses safe.

A court set up in East Pallant House, Chichester, is expected to begin hearing an expanded list of cases next week, with all 10 locations up and running in August.

The move forms part of government plans to ensure courts recover from the coronavirus pandemic as soon as possible and to avoid any delays getting criminals behind bars.

The confirmed sites are:

- Former county court at Telford, Shropshire
- Hertfordshire Development Centre, Stevenage
- Swansea Council Chambers, Swansea
- Cloth Hall Court, Leeds
- Middlesbrough Town Hall, Teesside
- East Pallant House, Chichester
- 102 Petty France, London
- Prospero House, London
- Former magistrates' court at Fleetwood, Lancashire
- Knights' Chamber and Visitor Centre, Bishop's Palace, Peterborough Cathedral

[Open Nightingale courts](#)

The Lord Chancellor, Robert Buckland QC MP said:

Our action to keep the justice system running throughout the pandemic has been globally recognised, with these Nightingale Courts being the latest step in this effort.

They will help boost capacity across our courts and tribunals – reducing delays and delivering speedier justice for victims.

But we won't stop there. Together with the judiciary, courts staff and legal sector, I am determined that we must pursue every available option to ensure our courts recover as quickly as possible.

In March 2020, almost half of all courts were closed and jury trials were paused to minimise social interaction between court users. Since then, court staff, legal professionals, and the judiciary have collaborated to prioritise cases and keep the justice system running throughout the lockdown – with up to 90% of all hearings using remote technology during the pandemic.

These actions have meant that, throughout the lockdown, domestic abuse victims could obtain protection orders, children could be safeguarded, and dangerous suspects dealt with.

Measures were put in place to safely resume jury trials in May 2020, and 54 Crown Courts will be hearing jury trials as of next week. More widely, almost all courts are now open to the public again – with over 300 operating this week.

Last week, the Lord Chancellor set out further measures which are being considered to help ease pressure on the courts system. These included opening courts for longer to increase the number of cases that can be heard safely on any given day, and continuing to use video technology to hear cases where appropriate. Additional potential Nightingale Courts sites are also being explored.

A major £142 million investment across the courts system has been announced to speed up technological improvements and modernise courtrooms.

Notes to Editors

1. A [major £142million investment has been announced to improve more than 100 courts](#)
2. New video technology is additionally being rolled, out having been used in up to 90% of hearings since the outbreak began.
3. See the [Lord Chancellor's statement on court recovery](#)
4. New video technology is additionally being rolled, out having been used in up to 90% of hearings since the outbreak began.
5. The courts will be carrying out the following work:
 - Former court building at Telford (Annex for the Telford Justice Centre), Shropshire – Civil and/or Family jurisdictions.
 - Former court building at Fleetwood (Annex for Preston or Blackpool Magistrates' Court), Lancashire – Civil and/or Family jurisdictions.

- Hertfordshire Development Centre, Stevenage, Hertfordshire – Civil.
- Swansea Council Chambers, Swansea – Non-custodial crime (i.e. defendant is on bail).
- Cloth Hall Court, Leeds, Yorkshire – Civil trial work and Business and Property Court.
- Middlesbrough Town Hall, Teesside – Initially Civil hearings. Later to be used for hybrid Civil hearings and Family.
- East Pallant House, Chichester, Sussex – Civil and Family work.
- 102 Petty France, Central London – Family jurisdiction.
- Prospero House, Central London – Non-custodial crime (i.e. defendant is on bail).
- The Knights' Chamber and Visitor Centre, Gatehouse, Bishops Palace, Peterborough – non-custodial corporate crime.