

New Charter to improve media access to courts

- new agreement to cement journalists' rights when reporting trials and hearings
- Charter outlines how courts service provides help and information to media
- key move to increase public confidence in the justice system

The document brings together practical guidance for journalists attending courts and tribunals so that it will be easier for them to get the access, documents and information they are entitled to.

It has been developed by the Media Lawyers Association and HM Courts and Tribunals Service and was unveiled at the Society of Editors Annual Conference today (11 May 2022).

The Charter sets out advice on how journalists can request to observe video hearings or tune in remotely, given that there are currently around 12,500 hearings held remotely per week, compared to just a handful before the COVID-19 pandemic.

Justice Minister James Cartlidge said:

Justice has to be seen to be done to maintain public confidence and the media play a vital role as their eyes and ears in the courts.

This Charter will help ensure reporters retain the access to courts and information they require to keep the public informed.

The Charter outlines how courts and tribunals provide designated seats in courtrooms for journalists and that wi-fi is available to them so they can report live on social media platforms or news websites.

Details of the protocol for sharing court lists, documents and information about defendants with the media is also included.

John Battle, Head of Legal and Compliance at ITN and Chairman of the Media Lawyers Association, said:

The Charter is a significant step forward. It brings together in one document the basic rights reporters have when reporting the courts.

The Charter will help court reporters to carry out their vital role informing the public about the justice system. It is fundamental for justice, the rule of law and democracy that the courts are

reported.

Dawn Alford, Executive Director of the Society of Editors said:

The Society of Editors welcomes today's launch of the Reporters' Charter which will, no doubt, become an invaluable tool for journalists and court staff and ensure that the rights of reporters to attend court and receive documentation are better recognised and applied in practice.

We congratulate the Media Lawyers Association and HMCTS on this achievement. The Society is delighted to endorse, promote and distribute the Charter.

Notes to editors

- The Reporters' Charter is available to view on [GOV.UK](#) and the [Society of Editors website](#)
- Decisions on whether a hearing is public or private, and available to observe remotely, lie with independent judges.