

New 'Nightingale court' opens in Taunton

- Taunton Nightingale court begins hearing cases this week
- 42 temporary courtrooms now in operation nationwide
- part of government's plan to ensure justice continues throughout the pandemic

The council-owned space conveniently adjoins Taunton Magistrates' Court and was previously used to train councillors in how to write budgets and deliver speeches. The venue will host both a magistrates' and a Crown courtroom – providing vital capacity to minimise delays.

Temporary Nightingale courts, have been set up across the country to enable more socially distanced trials to take place, ensuring justice continues to be served.

This is because more space is required than was previously the case due to the need to keep everyone distanced in court buildings – such as jurors, witnesses, staff, legal professionals and judges.

Courts Minister, Chris Philp MP, said:

This new Nightingale court will help to reduce delays and deliver speedier justice for victims in Taunton, and I'm grateful to Somerset County Council for providing the building.

This is part of our efforts to ensure courts recover as quickly as possible from the pandemic – building on progress which has already seen magistrates' backlogs fall and the number of cases being dealt with in the crown court reach pre-pandemic levels in December.

The Ministry of Justice has spared no expense in its continued efforts to keep the justice system running during this pandemic.

£142m has been spent on upgrading court buildings and technology, alongside £110m to increase capacity – making over a quarter of a billion-pound investment in court recovery this year.

1,600 extra staff are being hired, plexiglass screens set up in more than 450 rooms, 20,000 remote hearings take place each week, and over 290 covid-safe jury trial courtrooms are now in operation.

The impact of these measures is already being seen. The backlog in the magistrates' courts has fallen consistently since August last year and in the full week before Christmas, Crown Courts resolved more cases than they received for the first time since the covid pandemic began.

These efforts will be supported by an extra £337m announced in the recent Spending Review to deliver swifter justice and support victims in 2021 to 2022, while £76m will further increase capacity in family courts and tribunals.

Every HMCTS building – including Nightingale courts – meets the government's covid-secure guidelines, and public health experts have confirmed the arrangements remain sufficient to deal with the current strains of the virus.

1. More than £110m is being invested in a range of measures to tackle the impact of coronavirus (COVID-19), including the recruitment of 1,600 additional staff and opening more Nightingale courts.
2. We're also spending £153m to improve court and tribunal buildings – the biggest single investment in court estate maintenance for more than 20 years.
3. This progress will be bolstered by an extra [£337m the government is spending next year](#) to deliver swifter justice and support victims, while an additional £76 million will further increase capacity in family courts and tribunals.
4. [Details on measures to keep courts safe, secure and clean.](#)
5. More details on the [Nightingale courtrooms in operation.](#)