

Nightingale court opens in Bolton stadium

- temporary court set up at University of Bolton Stadium
- Nightingale court to serve local community while providing vital financial boost for the Wanderers
- part of government's plan to ensure justice continues throughout the pandemic

The £25 million all-seater University of Bolton stadium will swap referees with judges as it transformed into a Nightingale court. It will host two courtrooms that will hear non-custodial criminal cases and be able to issue fines and community service orders. Any cases deemed serious enough for time in prison will be sent back to a Crown Court for sentencing.

Cases will be heard in rooms beneath the terraces of the Nat Lofthouse Stand (East) and West Stand, which are normally used for conferences. The venue will help to free up space at the nearby Crown Court for more jury trials – reducing delays and delivering speedier justice for people across the north-west. It will also provide the club with a vital cash-injection while the turnstiles remain closed due to lockdown restrictions.

The versatile stadium has previously hosted concerts for the likes of Oasis, Elton John, and Coldplay. It will now provide some of the 60 Nightingale courtrooms which will be available nationwide by the end of the month – set up by the government to boost capacity and alleviate pressures on the courts and tribunals system caused by the pandemic.

Courts Minister, Lord Wolfson QC, said:

This new Nightingale court is in the heart of the local community and will help to deliver swifter justice for people across Bolton.

Courts have been established in cathedrals, hotels, theatres, and now football stadiums to help us tackle the delays caused by the pandemic. This innovative approach is already increasing the caseload going through our courts, while pumping much-needed cash into businesses which have taken a financial hit over the last 12 months.

A Bolton Wanderers Football Club spokesperson said:

The club is pleased to support Bolton Crown Court by enabling the University of Bolton stadium to be used as a Nightingale court.

As a versatile venue which is at the heart of Bolton, we are proud to be once again supporting our local community during what has

been a challenging 12 months for all.

The move is part of a £113m government investment to support courts and tribunals during coronavirus (COVID-19). It includes recruiting 1,600 extra staff, investment in further technology, and on-site safety precautions such as plexiglass screens. This is on top of the £142m being spent to speed up technological improvements and modernise courtrooms. The impact of these measures is already being seen:

- England and Wales are believed to be the first comparable major jurisdiction in the world to resume jury trials, with hundreds now being listed each week
- outstanding cases in the magistrates' courts have fallen by around 50,000 since the peak last summer
- while the number of disposals continues to be just under pre-COVID-19 levels, the Crown Court continues to see an increase in the number of trials listed
- more than 20,000 hearings using remote technology are taking place each week – compared to around 550 in March 2020 – a 4,000% rise

The decision to keep courts and tribunals open during the pandemic has had a tangible impact on people's lives. Over 9,000 court orders were issued to protect children from female genital mutilation, forced marriage, and domestic abuse between April and September 2020.

Meanwhile, [a major £40m investment](#) announced recently will go towards specialist help for vulnerable victims – funding helplines and the recruitment of more counsellors. This comes as an extra £337m was confirmed in the recent Spending Review to deliver swifter justice and support victims in 2021/22, while £76m will further increase capacity in family courts and tribunals.

Notes to editors

1. More than £113m is being invested in a range of measures to tackle the impact of 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](#).