

Press release: New media guidance issued to all court staff

- Guidance developed alongside media representatives published
- Move designed to protect and maintain principle of open justice
- Lucy Frazer MP to chair media roundtable next month

The [guidance](#), developed by a working group involving media representatives, is part of a wider effort to build stronger working relationships between courts and the press and maintain the principle of open justice as we increasingly digitise court services.

Guidance has been split into an overall summary and more detailed jurisdictional advice, so staff can find exactly what they are looking for in a more timely and straightforward manner, making it easier for journalists to cover court proceedings and access listings.

[The HMCTS staff guidance](#) has also, for the first time, been made public and will be reviewed and updated on a regular basis.

Susan Acland-Hood, HMCTS CEO, said:

Open justice is a fundamental part of our court system and impartial media reporting of the work of our courts and tribunals is an important way of maintaining public confidence.

This reshaped guidance, which we are publishing for the first time, is designed to give our staff easily accessible information so they can support all those reporting on proceedings in courts across the country. I'm incredibly grateful to everyone who helped put it together.

We will continue to work closely with stakeholders to promote good working relationships between HMCTS and regional media. Their insight and expertise will ensure our ongoing programme of reform not only maintains but, wherever possible, enhances open justice.

Santha Rasaiah, News Media Association:

Open Justice is vital to the rule of law and is achieved, in practice, by press reporting of courts and tribunals to the wider public. That depends not just on the legal framework, but the day to day practicalities of journalistic access and reporting.

The NMA therefore warmly welcomed both the opportunity to work with HMCTS on this new guidance and its wider publication. A ready reference, providing common guidance, will assist court, press and

public alike. We hope that it will promote further constructive co-operation, court reporting and public understanding of the work of our justice system.

Ian Murray, Executive Director of the Society of Editors commented:

This is an important initiative and the Society is delighted to have been able to assist in helping to reinforce these guidelines to court staff and journalists.

If the public is to have faith in the justice system it must see it in action and that means ensuring journalists have access to courts and the necessary information to do their jobs. At the same time court staff need to have simple guidelines as to what is permissible.

There is more to do but the work carried out so far is extremely important.

The existing working group is now being reshaped to consider how the reform programme can support and enhance media access while playing a pivotal role in maintaining and developing open justice.

This includes a roundtable discussion to be chaired by Courts Minister Lucy Frazer next month, which will bring together a range of representatives from newspapers, broadcasters and online media platforms to discuss ways of enhancing court access.

Notes to editors

The HMCTS working group was made up of the following:

- Ed Owen (Chair) – Director of Communications, HMCTS
- Kate Briden – Director of the Royal Courts of Justice Group, HMCTS
- Laura King – Operational Contracted Services Manager, HMCTS
- Alice Booth – Ministry of Justice Senior Press Officer, Courts desk
- Stephen Ward – Head of News and External Communications, Judicial Office
- Mike Dodd – Press Association
- Ian Murray – Society of Editors
- Santha Rasaiah – News Media Association
- Tristan Kirk – London Evening Standard
- John Battle – ITN