

# Six new Nightingale courtrooms to open in London and Birmingham

News story

Rooms form part of HMCTS commitment to open 60 Nightingale courtrooms by the end of the March.



- Barbican and Maple House Nightingale courts begin hearing cases this week
- part of government's plan to ensure justice continues throughout the pandemic
- 50 courtrooms now open nationwide

From this week, Maple House in Birmingham city centre will provide four additional courtrooms, freeing up space at Birmingham Crown Court. A venue in Barbican in central London will provide two courtrooms and hear cases from across the city. This brings the total number of Nightingale courtrooms to 50.

The moves form part of a £113m investment to ease pressures on courts and tribunals, including recruiting 1,600 extra staff, further technology, and on-site safety precautions such as plexiglass screens. This is in addition to 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 jurisdictions in the world to resume jury trials, with hundreds now being listed each week
- outstanding cases in the magistrates' courts have fallen by over 50,000 since the peak last summer
- the number of cases resolved in the Crown Courts reached pre-pandemic levels in December 2020
- more than 20,000 hearings using remote technology are taking place each week – compared to around 550 in March 2020 – a 4000% rise

Courts Minister, Chris Philp MP, said:

We have achieved an immense amount in our battle to keep justice moving in during the pandemic – restarting jury trials before anyone else, turbo-charging the rollout of video technology, bringing magistrates’ backlogs down, and opening more courtrooms for jury trials.

These new courtrooms are the latest step in that effort, and I am determined to minimise delays and ensure justice is served for Londoners.

That is why we are investing hundreds of millions to drive this recovery further, deliver swifter justice and support victims.

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

Meanwhile, a major £40m investment announced last month 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.

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