

## Two more Nightingale courts open

- temporary courts open in Cirencester and Stafford
- 39 Nightingale courtrooms now open nationwide
- part of plans to ensure the courts system recovers from the pandemic as quickly as possible

Shire Hall has been provided by Staffordshire County Council, while the Cirencester site is a former magistrates' court owned by the local Police and Crime Commissioner – each venue provides two additional courtrooms.

The temporary facilities will help to free up space at their respective nearby Crown courts – allowing more hearings to be held safely and delivering speedier justice for victims.

It brings the total number of Nightingale courtrooms, set up nationwide to alleviate pressure on courts and tribunals resulting from the pandemic, to 39.

Justice Minister Chris Philp said:

These new Nightingale courts will help to boost the capacity in the system – reducing delays and ensuring speedier justice for all.

This is the latest step in our plan to work with the judiciary and legal sector in pursuing every available option to ensure our courts recover as quickly as possible.

Staffordshire County Council's deputy leader, Philip White said:

We're pleased to have been able to lend our support to HM Courts and Tribunals Service to enable it to continue with proceedings and avoid delays by using the historic courtrooms at our Shire Hall building.

It's important that we all pull together to keep services going through the pandemic period for the benefit of our communities. The Shire Hall does of course provide the perfect space in its court rooms which were last used for this purpose over 30 years ago.

As we move forward beyond Covid-19 we can look forward to bringing the former library area in the Shire Hall back into productive use as our new enterprise hub for small businesses thanks to a £2m investment.

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 courts, 20,000 remote hearings take place each week, and over 290 Covid-safe jury trial courtrooms are in operation – substantially more than before the pandemic.

The impact of these measures is already being seen. Since August, the magistrates' courts backlog has been relentlessly reducing month on month. In the last full week before Christmas, Crown Court disposals exceeded receipts for the first time since Covid started.

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

Every HMCTS building – including Nightingale courts – meet the government's Covid-secure guidelines, and public health experts have confirmed the arrangements remain sufficient to deal with the new strain 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](#)