

More courts to speed up justice

- Further temporary court rooms set up across the country in hotels and conference centres
- First 'super courtroom' in Manchester to hear complex cases, such as gang trials
- 4000% increase in remote hearings – keeping justice moving in the pandemic

Manchester Hilton hotel, and event spaces in London and Birmingham are among the next 14 venues to be confirmed and will be transformed into so-called 'Nightingale courts' – helping to reduce delays and deliver speedier justice for victims while also providing a financial boost to the venues.

The sites will hear mostly non-custodial Crown Court cases, with the total number of Nightingale courtrooms set up across the country to enable more socially distanced trials increasing to 60 by the end of March 2021.

Ministers have also confirmed today that a 'super courtroom' will be created at Manchester Crown Court, Crown Square to deal with so-called 'multi-hander' cases, which typically require more space as they involve multiple defendants being tried together – such as gang murder trials.

The Lord Chancellor, Robert Buckland, said:

We have achieved an immense amount in our battle to keep justice moving 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 courts are the latest step in that effort, and I am determined to minimise delays and ensure justice is served for victims, defendants and the public.

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

The move forms part of a £113m investment to alleviate pressures on courts and tribunals, including recruiting 1,600 extra staff, 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 is 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 over 50,000

since the peak last summer

- The number of cases resolved in the Crown Courts reached pre-pandemic levels in December 2020, with more courtrooms for jury trials now open than before the pandemic
- More than 20,000 hearings using remote technology are taking place each week – compared to around 550 in March 2020 – a 4000% 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 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.

Caroline Bull, CEO of CCT Venues, London, said:

We are delighted to be supporting the work of HM Courts and Tribunal Service (HMCTS) through the provision of space for two temporary Nightingale courtrooms at our CCT Venues-Barbican location. Although the majority of our traditional business is corporate meetings and events, this has been severely curtailed during the pandemic, so supporting this important project has created a win-win situation.

This contract is great for the morale of our team and frankly also for saving jobs. Contributing to such worthwhile projects helps us to feel connected and valuable at a time when many are not so fortunate.

Dominic James, Venues Director, etc venues who operate Maple House, said:

Our relationship with HM Courts and Tribunal Service (HMCTS) goes back to the middle of 2020; working in partnership with HMCTS at our Prospero House venue in London, which was the first Nightingale Court to mobilise in early August 2020.

It is testimony to our Maple House venue in Birmingham that it also been selected, to further assist the Ministry of Justice to reduce the backlog of trials, whilst our core business of providing inspiring space for events, meetings and conferences is suppressed.

Notes to editors:

1. The confirmed Nightingale Court locations are:

- Aldersgate House (Barbican), London – 2 additional hearing spaces
 - Maple House, Birmingham – 3 additional hearing spaces
 - Manchester Hilton Deansgate – 2 additional hearing spaces
 - Croydon – 2 additional hearing spaces
 - Wolverhampton – 2 additional hearing spaces for Crown
 - Liverpool 1 additional hearing space
 - Chichester – 2 additional hearing spaces for Crown
2. Courts continue to prioritise cases of the utmost seriousness, where the safety of the public and individuals is a concern. This includes the judiciary prioritising hearings involving vulnerable victims and witnesses and urgent applications for matters such as domestic violence.
 3. The ‘super courtroom’ to be created at Manchester Crown Court to deal with ‘multi-hander’ cases, will be a modification to the existing building at Crown Square.
 4. We have invested £113m into a range of measures to boost recovery and ensure justice continues to be served:
 - [23 Nightingale Courts are now up and running](#) – the Nightingale programme has provided 44 courtrooms across the estate which enables more crime work to be dealt with.
 - We’ve installed plexiglass screens into more than 450 courtrooms and jury deliberation rooms.
 - Over 290 courtrooms have been assessed as being routinely available to hold jury trials – more than before the pandemic.
 - 20,000 hearings using remote technology are taking place each week – compared to around 550 in March 2020 – a 4000% rise.
 - We are in a much stronger position to manage the impact of the pandemic compared to last spring, and public health experts have confirmed our measures remain sufficient to deal with the current variants of the virus.
 5. These efforts will be [bolstered by a £337m Spending Review settlement](#) to deliver speedier justice to convict offenders, support victims, and protect the wider public.
 6. Every HM Courts & Tribunals 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.
 7. Meanwhile, a rapid testing pilot is being launched in Southwark Crown Court, to determine how the government can test people on their way to a hearing. A [rapid testing pilot launched at Manchester Civic Justice Centre in January 2021](#).
 8. On 1 February 2021 the [Ministry of Justice announced an extra £40m to help victims during pandemic and beyond](#), building on the unprecedented

£76m the government has pledged to help the most vulnerable in society during this challenging time.

9. The latest [HMCTS Management Information was published last week.](#)

[Letter from Lord Chancellor to the Chair of the Senior Salaries Review Body](#)

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[UK holds learning series for safe COVID-19 vaccine delivery in PH](#)

World news story

British Embassy Manila has launched the UK-Philippines Vaccine Clinic in partnership with the University of the Philippines – College of Public Health.



British Embassy
Manila

17 February 2021 – The British Embassy Manila has launched the UK-Philippines

Vaccine Clinic in partnership with the University of the Philippines – College of Public Health. The knowledge-exchange runs until March 2021 and pools technical resources between the UK and the Philippines to share learning on safely delivering a COVID-19 vaccine.

During the inaugural session on 10 February, Ambassador Daniel Pruce said:

Echoing the Philippine government's 'one of society' approach in tackling COVID-19, this learning series hopes to demonstrate the Filipino value of 'walang iwanan'. Nobody is left behind. It is only by working together that we can end this global pandemic. And the UK, through the British Embassy in Manila, remains committed to supporting Filipinos access to vaccines, developed under transparent mechanisms and delivered safely and effectively.

Secretary Carlito Galvez Jr., Chief of the National Task Force (NTF), commented in response:

The Philippines is one of 18 countries to receive the first batch of vaccine donations from COVAX. We thank the British government for its support in our vaccination programme, helping vaccinate 8 to 9 million Filipinos in the first half of 2021.

League of Cities Vaccine Procurement Committee Chair and Iloilo City Mayor Jerry Treñas encouraged local governments to participate in the learning exchange:

These webinars will be of great help for local governments to inform strategies in administering vaccines through local health systems." Iloilo City is also the pilot local government partner of the UK's Better Health Programme (BHP) in the Philippines.

The UK has allocated £548m to the UN-led COVAX Advance Market Commitment, which is working to distribute 1 billion doses of coronavirus vaccines to 92 developing countries this year.

In a recent announcement by the Global Vaccine Alliance (Gavi), the Philippines was designated amongst the first countries that could receive an indicative distribution of up to 10 million doses of COVID-19 vaccines; mostly of the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine developed in the United Kingdom through the COVAX Global Vaccines Facility. The Facility expects doses will start being available for delivery from Q1 of 2021.

Supported by the UK's Prosperity Fund, the series will convene technical, scientific, and policy experts from the UK Vaccine Task Force, the Scientific Advisory Group on Emergencies, Health Education England and the National Health Service in sessions covering: deployment and procurement strategies;

community-based vaccine delivery and administration; and tackling vaccine hesitancy.

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[UK calls for ceasefires to vaccinate people against Covid-19](#)

Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab will today call for local ceasefires across the globe so vulnerable people living in conflict zones can be vaccinated against Covid-19.

He will chair a meeting of the UN Security Council today and urge members to unite and agree a resolution for negotiated vaccine ceasefires, and to support equitable access to vaccines so that the most vulnerable people can be protected from the virus.

The Foreign Secretary will say allowing the virus to spread in areas without vaccination campaigns means a greater risk of new variants taking hold – risking further waves across the world.

More than 160 million people are at risk of being excluded from coronavirus vaccinations because of instability and conflict, including in Yemen, South Sudan, Somalia and Ethiopia.

Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab said:

Global vaccination coverage is essential to beating coronavirus. That is why the UK is calling for a vaccination ceasefire to allow Covid-19 vaccines to reach people living in conflict zones and for a greater global team effort to deliver equitable access. We have a moral duty to act, and a strategic necessity to come together to defeat this virus.

The UK has been leading the international response to the pandemic, using its diplomatic weight and development expertise to help develop and distribute vaccines, support the global economy and encourage international collaboration. Global equitable access to coronavirus vaccines is the key to eliminating the threat of the virus in the UK as well as overseas. In today's interconnected world, the only way to be protected from Covid-19 is by making vaccinations available to all.

Temporary ceasefires would allow charities and healthcare workers to safely provide jabs to people living in active conflict zones. Alongside this, the

UK is pushing for more funding for the UN's response to the pandemic, for the World Health Organisation and for the COVAX Advance Market Commitment (AMC), which will distribute 1.3 billion doses of coronavirus vaccines to developing countries this year.

The UK is one of the largest donors to the COVAX AMC, providing £548 million for the scheme which was launched at the UK-hosted Global Vaccine Summit in June 2020. In addition to this, the UK has used match funding to help raise \$1 billion from other donors for the COVAX AMC.

At the meeting today, the Foreign Secretary will also underline the importance of agreeing international co-operation to resolve long-term logistical barriers to equitable access, such as vaccine storage, delays in regulatory approval and managing complex supply chains.

He will push for sustained protection of humanitarian and health workers in conflict zones to make sure humanitarian help can get to those who need it and will say the international community must be allowed to monitor the progress of vaccination delivery and how well people are protected from violence during the process. He will call on governments worldwide to leave no one behind as they roll out vaccination programmes, so that vulnerable groups such as refugees and people living in conflict zones can be vaccinated.

The UK is using its presidency of the Security Council this month to drive further progress on global access to vaccines and the Prime Minister will be setting out further details at the virtual G7 leaders' meeting on Friday, as we work to build back better together.

Delivering free and fair elections, combatting terrorism and building back better in Iraq

- UK underlines importance of free, fair and credible elections in Iraq in October.
- UK reiterates support for the Government of Iraq's work "to combat terrorism and to implement crucial economic reform".

Remarks by Ambassador Barbara Woodward at Security Council briefing on UNAMI, 16 February 2021

The UK welcomes the work of the UN Assistance Mission in Iraq and the work of

SRSB Hennis-Plasschaert, and thanks the Deputy SRSB Walpole for her service.

Iraq is at a critical juncture. It is essential that the elections in October are free, fair, and credible. Our commitment to the democratic process in Iraq remains steadfast and we look forward to further discussions on how the UN can support the elections following Iraq's request for UN observation.

Iraq faces an economic crisis: increased unemployment, poverty and food insecurity. The Government of Iraq's proposals for economic reform are welcome. We now call on all parties to put aside their differences and agree a sustainable budget that allows Iraq to build back better from the Covid-19 pandemic.

Last month's devastating attack in Baghdad demonstrates the importance of the ongoing work of the Global Coalition to defeat Daesh in close partnership with the Iraq Security Forces. We also condemn last night's attack on coalition forces and civilians in Erbil.

We are deeply troubled by the short notice and uncoordinated closure of camps for Internally Displaced Persons. We urge the Government of Iraq to coordinate with the UN to ensure that all returns are safe, dignified and voluntary.

We welcome the Government of Iraq's continued efforts to strengthen relations with regional neighbours. We continue to reiterate the importance of dialogue and cooperation between Iraq and Turkey to combat terrorism, ensure regional security, and protect civilians. We commend the shared commitment of the Iraqi and Kuwaiti Governments to make progress on the file of missing Kuwaiti persons and property pursuant to Security Council resolution 2107 (2013).

The United Kingdom continues to support the Government of Iraq as it seeks to deliver free, fair and inclusive elections, to combat terrorism and to implement crucial economic reform.