

# Vulnerable victims in London and Kent to be given new courtroom protections

- vulnerable victims and witnesses will have the option to pre-record their evidence, removing the need to attend the trial
- all Crown courts in London and Kent to offer this new protection from today
- new service to be available in every Crown Court by the end of the year

Available immediately in these regions, the new technology allows vulnerable witnesses and victims to have their cross-examination video-recorded earlier in the process and played during the trial. This is to ensure they can provide their best evidence, away from the courtroom which many can often find intimidating.

The recording is carried out as close to the time of the offence as possible in order to help memory recall, and reduce the stress of giving evidence to a full courtroom at trial.

The move follows successful pilots in Liverpool, Leeds, and Kingston-upon-Thames, where victims felt less pressure than attending court.

In November last year, a Primark security guard from Kingston-upon-Thames was jailed after the four girls he sexually assaulted gave their evidence in a pre-recorded session prior to the trial taking place. The victims were spared having to tell the story of their horrific abuse in front of the perpetrator, who showed no remorse for his actions.

Justice Minister, Alex Chalk MP, said:

Vulnerable victims show great courage by coming forward, and it's vital they can do so in the least traumatic way possible.

This technology ensures they are protected and are able to give their best possible evidence, without reducing a defendant's right to a fair trial.

But this is just one part of our efforts to boost the support on offer for victims at every stage of the justice system, which includes consulting on a Victims' Law.

Victims' Commissioner, Dame Vera Baird, says:

I very much welcome this further rollout ensuring that more vulnerable victims and witnesses have the option to pre-record their evidence. I have long been concerned that children who complained of victimisation should not spend a long part of their

childhood beset with the worry of ultimately giving an account of what happened. If they can give their evidence at an early stage, they will then be free to get on with their lives. There is also a further point that therapy is often delayed whilst a complainant is a witness.

I congratulate HMCTS and the Ministry of Justice in driving this forward and being so responsive. The sooner these arrangements are in place the better. This has the potential to transform the criminal justice experience for so many vulnerable victims.

The decision to pre-record evidence is made by judges on a case-by-case basis.

Crown Courts in Basildon and Chelmsford, Essex, Lewes in East Sussex and Stafford in the West Midlands will also be included in today's rollout.

## **Notes to editors**

- Vulnerable witnesses and victims are defined as all child witnesses under 18 and any witness whose quality of evidence is likely to be diminished because they are suffering from a mental disorder or physical disability or has significant impairment of intelligence and social functioning.
- Both the defence and prosecution lawyers will be present in court during the pre-recording as will the judge and the defendant.
- Feedback from the courts already operating the system shows that victims felt less pressure and that witnesses were better able to recall events.
- The full list of crown courts who have commenced pre-recording evidence sessions today are:
  - Basildon Crown Court
  - Canterbury Crown Court
  - Central Criminal Court
  - Chelmsford Crown Court
  - Croydon Crown Court
  - Guildford Crown Court
  - Harrow Crown Court
  - Inner London Crown Court
  - Isleworth Crown Court
  - Lewes Crown Court
  - Maidstone Crown Court
  - Snaresbrook Crown Court
  - Southwark Crown Court
  - Stafford Crown Court
  - Wood Green Crown Court
  - Woolwich Crown Court
- Pre-recorded video evidence is already available at Crown Courts in Aylesbury, Bradford, Bristol, Carlisle, Chester, Durham, Kingston-upon-Thames, Leeds, Leicester, Liverpool, Mold, Northampton, Oxford, Portsmouth, Reading, Sheffield, Swansea, Wolverhampton.
- Last year we commenced a pilot of the technology for intimidated

witnesses (victims of sexual offences and modern slavery offences) in three Early Adopter Courts (Liverpool, Leeds and Kingston upon Thames). There may be wider rollouts to intimidated witnesses pending the evaluation of this pilot.

---

## Prime Minister's statement on returning children to school

Press release

Prime Minister Boris Johnson has today made a direct appeal to parents to return their children to the classroom when schools reopen next week.



Prime Minister Boris Johnson has today made a direct appeal to parents to return their children to the classroom when schools reopen next week.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson said:

I have previously spoken about the moral duty to reopen schools to all pupils safely, and I would like to thank the school staff who have spent the summer months making classrooms Covid-secure in preparation for a full return in September.

We have always been guided by our scientific and medical experts, and we now know far more about coronavirus than we did earlier this year.

As the Chief Medical Officer has said, the risk of contracting Covid-19 in school is very small and it is far more damaging for a child's development and their health and well-being to be away from school any longer.

This is why it's vitally important that we get our children back into the classroom to learn and to be with their friends. Nothing

will have a greater effect on the life chances of our children than returning to school.

## **Background**

Chief Medical Officers and Deputy Chief Medical Officers of England, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales have made a statement on the evidence of risks and benefits to health from schools and childcare settings reopening, which says:

- We are confident in the extensive evidence that there is an exceptionally small risk of children of primary or secondary school age dying from COVID-19. The infection fatality rate (proportion of those who are infected who die) for those aged 5 to 14 is estimated at 14 per million, lower than for most seasonal flu infections.
- We are confident that there is clear evidence of a very low rate of severe disease in children of primary and secondary school ages compared to adults, even if they catch COVID-19. The percentage of symptomatic cases requiring hospitalisation is estimated to be 0.1% for children aged 0 to 9 and 0.3% among those aged 10 to 19, compared to a hospitalisation rate of over 4% in the UK for the general population. Most of these children make a rapid recovery.
- We are confident that there is clear evidence from many studies that the great majority of children and teenagers who catch COVID-19 have mild symptoms or no symptoms at all.
- Control measures such as hand and surface hygiene, cohorting to reduce number of daily contacts, and directional controls to reduce face-to-face contact remain key elements of maintaining COVID-19 secure school environments and minimising risk.

Published 24 August 2020

---

## **[Study finds very low numbers of COVID-19 outbreaks in schools](#)**

- only 0.01% of open educational settings had an outbreak
- out of more than 1 million children attending pre-school and primary

school in June, just 70 children were affected

- infections in the wider community likely driving cases in schools
- children were more likely to acquire SARS-CoV-2 infection at home than in school

Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreaks and infections in schools are rare, a new study by Public Health England (PHE) shows.

Just 67 individual cases were detected and 30 outbreaks among students and staff after schools reopened in June until they closed for the summer. Only 0.01% of pre-schools and primary schools had an outbreak, all of which were successfully contained and 70 children and 128 staff were affected. Over the same period, there were 25,470 cases recorded in England as a whole.

Reported COVID-19 cases, clusters and outbreaks were reviewed daily across all educational settings in England until the end of July.

PHE found that there were more likely to be outbreaks in those areas that also had a high COVID-19 incidence, suggesting transmission in the community was driving the spread in schools. This demonstrates the continued need to control the spread of infection in the community to help keep schools open, with all playing their part by washing their hands, wearing face coverings, keeping distance and getting a test if they have symptoms.

Staff members were more likely to be affected by the virus than students, though not more likely than the general population as a whole. Where children did contract the infection, they were most likely to catch COVID-19 at home, usually from a parent. Half the outbreaks did not involve any students at all and transmission between students was very rare.

The research, [SARS-CoV-2 infection and transmission in educational settings: cross-sectional analysis of clusters and outbreaks in England](#), has been submitted to the Lancet.

Dr Shamez Ladhani, Public Health England, said:

SARS-CoV2 infections and outbreaks were uncommon in educational settings during the first month after the easing of national lockdown in England. The strong correlation with regional SARS-CoV-2 incidence emphasises the importance of controlling community transmission to protect educational settings. Additional interventions should focus on reducing transmission in and among staff members.

## **Background**

The probable source in 20 of the 30 outbreaks was staff-to-staff or staff-to-student transmission. Student-to-staff transmission was the likely source in 6 cases, and student-to-student in 2. The transmission source could not be established in 2 outbreaks.

Although not all school years were open during the study period, the number of open educational settings in England rose from 20,500 to 23,400 between 1 and 30 June, and the number of children attending any educational setting increased from 475,000 to 1,646,000.

The results of this study are consistent with other research into the extent to which children are affected by COVID-19. PHE's school serosurveillance study (sKIDs) will examine rates of antibody prevalence across educational settings. Preliminary results of that study are expected in the coming weeks.

---

## **Statement from the UK Chief Medical Officers on schools and childcare reopening**

This is a consensus statement from the Chief Medical Officers and Deputy Chief Medical Officers of England, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales on the current evidence of risks and benefits to health from schools and childcare settings reopening.

It takes into account UK and international studies, and summaries of the scientific literature from SAGE, the DELVE Group of the Royal Society, the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health, and data from the Office for National Statistics.

The current global pandemic means that there are no risk-free options, but it is important that parents and teachers understand the balance of risks to achieve the best course of action for their children.

### **Children**

We are confident that multiple sources of evidence show that a lack of schooling increases inequalities, reduces the life chances of children and can exacerbate physical and mental health issues. School improves health, learning, socialisation and opportunities throughout the life course including employment. It has not been possible to reduce societal inequalities through the provision of home-based education alone. School attendance is very important for children and young people.

We are confident in the extensive evidence that there is an exceptionally small risk of children of primary or secondary school age dying from COVID-19. The infection fatality rate (proportion of those who are infected who die) for those aged 5 to 14 is estimated at 14 per million, lower than for most seasonal flu infections. Every death of a child is a tragedy but COVID-19 deaths in children and teenagers are fortunately extremely rare and

almost all deaths are in children with significant pre-existing health conditions.

We are confident that there is clear evidence of a very low rate of severe disease in children of primary and secondary school ages compared to adults, even if they catch COVID-19. The percentage of symptomatic cases requiring hospitalisation is estimated to be 0.1% for children aged 0 to 9 and 0.3% among those aged 10 to 19, compared to a hospitalisation rate of over 4% in the UK for the general population. Most of these children make a rapid recovery.

We are confident that there is clear evidence from many studies that the great majority of children and teenagers who catch COVID-19 have mild symptoms or no symptoms at all.

There is reasonable, but not yet conclusive, evidence that primary school age children have a significantly lower rate of infection than adults (they are less likely to catch it).

Evidence that older children and teenagers are at lower risk of catching COVID-19 is mixed. They are either less likely to catch COVID-19 than adults or have the same risk as adults.

Transmission of COVID-19 to children in schools does occur. On current evidence it is probably not a common route of transmission. It may be lower in primary age children than secondary age children.

Control measures such as hand and surface hygiene, cohorting to reduce number of daily contacts, and directional controls to reduce face-to-face contact remain key elements of maintaining COVID-19 secure school environments and minimising risk.

Children and young people who were previously shielding were identified on a precautionary basis at a stage when we had less data on the effects of COVID-19 in children than we do now. Based on our better understanding of COVID-19 the great majority have now been advised they do not need to do so again, and that they should return to school. A small number of children under paediatric care (such as recent transplant or very immunosuppressed children) have been or will be given individual advice about any ongoing need to avoid infection.

Our overall consensus is that, compared to adults, children may have a lower risk of catching COVID-19 (lowest in younger children), definitely have a much lower rate of hospitalisation and severe disease, and an exceptionally low risk of dying from COVID-19. Very few, if any, children or teenagers will come to long-term harm from COVID-19 due solely to attending school. This has to be set against a certainty of long-term harm to many children and young people from not attending school.

## **Teachers, other school staff and parents**

Data from the UK (Office for National Statistics (ONS)) suggest teachers are

not at increased risk of dying from COVID-19 compared to the general working-age population. ONS data identifies teaching as a lower risk profession (no profession is zero risk). International data support this.

Transmission of COVID-19 to staff members in school does occur, and data from UK and international studies suggest it may largely be staff to staff (like other workplaces) rather than pupil to staff. This reinforces the need to maintain social distancing and good infection control inside and outside classroom settings, particularly between staff members and between older children and adults.

If teachers, other school staff, parents or wider family catch COVID-19 their risks of severe illness are similar to those of other adults of the same age, ethnicity and health status. Younger adults have a much lower risk of severe COVID-19 than older adults. The greatest risk is to those over 80 years old.

Current international evidence suggests transmission of COVID-19 from children of school age to parents or other adult family members is relatively rare compared to transmission from adults, but this evidence is weak. Teenagers may be more likely to transmit to adults than younger children.

Children and young people should be engaged in the process of establishing COVID-19 secure measures as key participants and promoters of safe communities to help protect their wider families, teachers and other school staff and other social networks. This will help reduce the risk of school outbreaks.

## **Impact of opening schools on wider transmission (R)**

Because schools connect households it is likely opening schools will put some upward pressure on transmission more widely and therefore increase R. We have confidence in the current evidence that schools are much less important in the transmission of COVID-19 than for influenza or some other respiratory infections. Other work and social environments also increase risk and are likely to be more important for transmission of COVID-19.

The international real-world evidence suggests that reopening of schools has usually not been followed by a surge of COVID-19 in a timescale that implies schools are the principal reason for the surge. There has, however, not been sufficient time to say this with confidence.

On the other hand, a local or national surge in transmission in the community may lead to an increased risk of school outbreaks occurring.

Opening schools may be as important in linking households indirectly as through direct transmission in school. For example allowing parents to go back to work, or meeting at the school gates, on public transport or in shared private vehicles, via after school social or sport activities or wrap-around care may be as important as what happens within the school.

It is possible that opening schools will provide enough upward pressure on R that it goes above 1 having previously been below it, at least in some local



areas. This will require local action and could mean societal choices that weigh up the implications of imposing limitations on different parts of the community and the economy.

Early identification and quickly managing outbreaks of COVID-19 in schools is essential as part of a local response to COVID-19. Clear advice for pupils and staff not to attend school with symptoms, and prompt availability of testing, appropriate isolation advice, and careful public health surveillance and monitoring of educational establishments are key to support the safe return to schools.

From:

- Prof Chris Whitty, Chief Medical Officer, England
- Dr Michael McBride, Chief Medical Officer, Northern Ireland
- Dr Gregor Smith, Chief Medical Officer, Scotland
- Dr Frank Atherton, Chief Medical Officer, Wales
- Dr Lourda Geoghegan, Deputy Chief Medical Officer, Northern Ireland
- Dr Nicola Steedman, Deputy Chief Medical Officer, Scotland
- Prof Jonathan Van Tam, Deputy Chief Medical Officer, England
- Dr Jenny Harries, Deputy Chief Medical Officer, England
- Prof Chris Jones, Deputy Chief Medical Officer, Wales
- Dr Naresh Chada, Deputy Chief Medical Officer, Northern Ireland
- Dr Aidan Fowler, Deputy Chief Medical Officer, England
- Prof Marion Bain, Deputy Chief Medical Officer, Scotland

---

## [Finalists revealed in competition to find homes of the future](#)

- Six finalists announced in competition to find the leading design for the low-carbon, age-friendly homes of the future
- Boost for low-carbon, modern home manufacturing as warranty providers work on shared standard for homes built using modern methods of construction
- Announcement follows overhaul of the planning system to deliver tree-lined streets and environmentally sustainable homes

Housing Minister Christopher Pincher has today (23 August 2020) announced 6 finalists in a competition to design the homes of the future.

The Home of 2030 competition has encouraged the best and brightest talents of the housing industry to design environmentally friendly homes that support people in leading independent, fulfilling lives as our society ages.

The 6 finalists and their designs are:

- **changebuilding with Perpendicular Architecture, Humblebee, ECOSystems Technologies and Arup:** Homes that seek to reduce carbon emissions and social interaction, including through food grown in communal spaces and areas such as ponds to promote biodiversity.
- **HLM Architects with the Advanced Manufacturing Research Centre and Green Build:** Homes built using interchangeable parts with other homes, creating a circular economy in which little is wasted.
- **Igloo Regeneration with Useful Projects, Expedition Engineers and Mawson Kerr Architects:** Homes with simple frame structures and standardised components set amidst walkable, vibrant neighbourhoods.
- **Openstudio Architects Ltd:** Three building elements (a standardised housing module, an open 'Loft' and a circulation, storage and shared module) are used in combination with 3 landscape elements (communal green space, small private gardens or upper level balconies and terraces, and front gardens) to create combinations of sustainable, age-friendly spaces.
- **Outpost Architects and team:** Janus, a home constructed from 98% organic biomass material (primarily timber and straw).
- **Studio OPEN:** Promoting community and caring for others through a central garden shared between 4 homes that are built with locally sourced materials and timber construction methods to reduce environmental impact.

A winner will be chosen and together with other selected finalists will be introduced to Homes England development partners to explore the possibility of developing bids for a series of homes on Homes England land. The 6 finalists have each received £40,000 of funding to help them develop detailed plans.

Today's announcements follow last week's launch of [Planning for the future](#) – the government's overhaul of the planning system to deliver more high-quality, sustainable homes.

The reforms include our commitment to making tree-lined streets the norm and an ambition that new 'zero carbon ready' homes delivered under the new system will not require any future retrofitting.

Housing Minister Rt Hon Christopher Pincher MP said:

This competition demonstrates the best of British design being brought to bear on a key issue for today, and future generations: delivering homes that are good for the planet and that promote healthy, independent living for older generations.

The winner of this competition will set the standard for the homes of the future and all 6 finalists have already made an exciting contribution to the designs we will need in the UK and around the world.

Minister for Clean Growth and Energy, Kwasi Kwarteng MP said:

Cutting homeowners' heating bills and making buildings greener is the next step in our plans to reach net zero emissions by 2050, and pioneering low-carbon initiatives like these will futureproof our housing stock for years to come.

Alongside our nationwide £320 million heat network investment and our upcoming £2 billion Green Homes Grant scheme, these projects will pave the way for the UK's green homes revolution.

Minister for Care, Helen Whately said:

We want everyone, regardless of their age, to lead healthy, active lives in communities that work for them. As the population of the UK ages, our housing and infrastructure must be adaptable to our changing needs.

The innovation and talent shown by the finalists in designing solutions to meet the needs of our future population has been very exciting and I look forward to seeing what comes next.

Alan Jones, President of the Royal Institute of British Architects, said:

The UK urgently needs a broad mix of affordable, age-friendly and sustainable housing – and these shortlisted proposals provide exactly that. Through the clever configuration of private and public space, natural light and ventilation, intelligent use of materials and technologies – these cost-effective, low carbon homes show what's possible when architects collaborate.

The winning Home of 2030 entry will be announced this autumn.

Home of 2030 applicants had to submit an outline design for homes that are:

- Age-friendly and inclusive – appealing to a variety of age groups and adaptable to how needs will change as people become older.
- Have low environmental impact – applying technology and construction techniques to deliver net zero carbon emissions.
- Promote healthy living – promoting better health and wellbeing, such as through access to green spaces and communal areas.
- Deliverable and scalable – homes that can be rolled-out across the country.

Separately, in a boost for the manufacture of low-carbon homes, today the government announces that warranty providers have agreed to work towards a shared standard for assessing homes built using modern methods of construction (MMC).

Once delivered, the new standard will boost the MMC industry by making it

simpler to secure a warranty for these homes. Industry research suggests these homes have the potential to be more environmentally sustainable, reducing heating bills by up to 70%.

Last year the United Kingdom became the first major economy in the world to sign a commitment to net-zero emissions into law, leading the way in tackling climate change. Homes are responsible for 25% of carbon emissions in the United Kingdom, and the new competition will place energy efficiency at the forefront of new home design.

As part of the government's modern [Industrial Strategy](#), the government is committed to ensuring that people can enjoy at least 5 extra years of healthy independent living by 2035. More than 10 million people in the UK today can expect to see their 100th birthday, compared to 15,000 current centenarians.

## Home of 2030 finalists

**changebuilding with Perpendicular Architecture, Humblebee, ECOSystems Technologies and Arup:** Positive+ House seeks to maximise our positive contribution to society and the environment, not just to minimise construction's negative impacts. The scheme attempts to balance inclusivity, health and environmental benefits with economic value through the use of adaptable solid timber panels made off-site from home-grown timber, and the use of very low energy systems.

---

**HLM Architects with the Advanced Manufacturing Research Centre and Green Build:** An ambition to develop a design standard that enables any Modern Methods of Construction system to deliver the same high quality, sustainable design, with parts that are interchangeable.

---

**Igloo Regeneration with Useful Projects, Expedition Engineers and Mawson Kerr Architects:** +Home helps communities to build green, walkable, vibrant neighbourhoods themselves, bypassing traditional housebuilders. Instead of standard house designs, it proposes community-led and self-build homes that people can design themselves. The homes are simple to build with affordable frames and components, and are climate friendly to build and run.

---

**Openstudio Architects Ltd:** Homes are proposed to build a sense of identity and place from a simple kit of parts. Flexible and adaptable houses, apartments, external terraces and gardens can be combined at different scales and densities to develop multi-generational communities which provide a sustainable environment in which people can thrive.

---

**Outpost Architects with Milk structures, EcoCocon, Barbara Jones, Gaia Group**

**Ltd, Propagating Dan, and Atelier Replica:** Janus is a modular housing system inspired by traditional biomass materials and construction. Janus House uses these materials in modern ways to create a house that is zero waste, sequesters carbon, and enables a healthy lifestyle for its occupants.

---

**Studio OPEN:** By simplifying and standardising a characteristic 'kit of parts' of both internal and external spaces, each site is intended to be adapted to the scale and needs of the community, generating connected, sustainable, age-friendly and inclusive neighbourhoods.