

10 'Nightingale Courts' unveiled

- Temporary courts to begin hearing cases from next week
- Move will ease pressure on courts system and tackle the number of outstanding cases
- Part of Government plan to ensure justice continues to be served throughout pandemic

Middlesbrough Town Hall, the Knights' Chamber within the grounds of Peterborough Cathedral, and the Ministry of Justice's headquarters in London are among the venues that will soon be in use.

The 10 sites will host the so-called Nightingale Courts with ongoing work to identify more potential locations. This will start to alleviate the pressure on courts and tribunals resulting from the pandemic – ensuring that the wheels of justice keep turning.

Spanning England and Wales, they will hear civil, family and tribunals work as well as non-custodial crime cases. The move will free up room in existing courts to hear other cases, including custodial jury trials, which require cells and secure dock facilities to keep the public, victims and witnesses safe.

A court set up in East Pallant House, Chichester, is expected to begin hearing an expanded list of cases next week, with all 10 locations up and running in August.

The move forms part of government plans to ensure courts recover from the coronavirus pandemic as soon as possible and to avoid any delays getting criminals behind bars.

The confirmed sites are:

- Former county court at Telford, Shropshire
- Hertfordshire Development Centre, Stevenage
- Swansea Council Chambers, Swansea
- Cloth Hall Court, Leeds
- Middlesbrough Town Hall, Teesside
- East Pallant House, Chichester
- 102 Petty France, London
- Prospero House, London
- Former magistrates' court at Fleetwood, Lancashire
- Knights' Chamber and Visitor Centre, Bishop's Palace, Peterborough Cathedral

[Open Nightingale courts](#)

The Lord Chancellor, Robert Buckland QC MP said:

Our action to keep the justice system running throughout the pandemic has been globally recognised, with these Nightingale Courts being the latest step in this effort.

They will help boost capacity across our courts and tribunals – reducing delays and delivering speedier justice for victims.

But we won't stop there. Together with the judiciary, courts staff and legal sector, I am determined that we must pursue every available option to ensure our courts recover as quickly as possible.

In March 2020, almost half of all courts were closed and jury trials were paused to minimise social interaction between court users. Since then, court staff, legal professionals, and the judiciary have collaborated to prioritise cases and keep the justice system running throughout the lockdown – with up to 90% of all hearings using remote technology during the pandemic.

These actions have meant that, throughout the lockdown, domestic abuse victims could obtain protection orders, children could be safeguarded, and dangerous suspects dealt with.

Measures were put in place to safely resume jury trials in May 2020, and 54 Crown Courts will be hearing jury trials as of next week. More widely, almost all courts are now open to the public again – with over 300 operating this week.

Last week, the Lord Chancellor set out further measures which are being considered to help ease pressure on the courts system. These included opening courts for longer to increase the number of cases that can be heard safely on any given day, and continuing to use video technology to hear cases where appropriate. Additional potential Nightingale Courts sites are also being explored.

A major £142 million investment across the courts system has been announced to speed up technological improvements and modernise courtrooms.

Notes to Editors

1. A [major £142million investment has been announced to improve more than 100 courts](#)
2. New video technology is additionally being rolled, out having been used in up to 90% of hearings since the outbreak began.
3. See the [Lord Chancellor's statement on court recovery](#)
4. New video technology is additionally being rolled, out having been used in up to 90% of hearings since the outbreak began.
5. The courts will be carrying out the following work:
 - Former court building at Telford (Annex for the Telford Justice Centre), Shropshire – Civil and/or Family jurisdictions.
 - Former court building at Fleetwood (Annex for Preston or Blackpool Magistrates' Court), Lancashire – Civil and/or Family jurisdictions.

- Hertfordshire Development Centre, Stevenage, Hertfordshire – Civil.
 - Swansea Council Chambers, Swansea – Non-custodial crime (i.e. defendant is on bail).
 - Cloth Hall Court, Leeds, Yorkshire – Civil trial work and Business and Property Court.
 - Middlesbrough Town Hall, Teesside – Initially Civil hearings. Later to be used for hybrid Civil hearings and Family.
 - East Pallant House, Chichester, Sussex – Civil and Family work.
 - 102 Petty France, Central London – Family jurisdiction.
 - Prospero House, Central London – Non-custodial crime (i.e. defendant is on bail).
 - The Knights’ Chamber and Visitor Centre, Gatehouse, Bishops Palace, Peterborough – non-custodial corporate crime.
-

[Approved Document M volume 2 amendments: circular 02/2020](#)

Help us improve GOV.UK

To help us improve GOV.UK, we’d like to know more about your visit today. We’ll send you a link to a feedback form. It will take only 2 minutes to fill in. Don’t worry we won’t send you spam or share your email address with anyone.

Email address

Send me the survey

[Thousands of places created in new special free schools](#)

Up to 3,000 new school places are to be created for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), providing tailored support and specialist equipment.

Staffed by specially trained teachers, the 35 new special free schools are expected to from September 2022 onwards and will give pupils with complex needs access to equipment that supports their individual needs such as sensory equipment and communication aids.

Education Secretary Gavin Williamson has today, Sunday 19 July, announced he has approved 33 school trusts to open and run 37 new schools. Two of these will be solely for children who have been or are at risk of being excluded from mainstream education, to level up their educational outcomes and to keep them engaged in learning. The remaining 35 will help drive up standards in special education, providing support and teaching for pupils with complex needs such as autism, severe learning difficulties or mental health conditions.

The announcement builds on the success of the free school programme, which promotes innovation, with more than 500 already open across the country, including 44 special and 47 Alternative Provision (AP) free schools. These new schools will take advantage of the freedoms and opportunities provided by the free school system to ensure that children with special educational needs and in AP are receiving the tailored support they need to fulfil their potential.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson said:

Every child deserves a superb education, regardless of their background or where they grew up, and these new schools will allow those with the most complex needs get the very best start in life.

We are delivering on our promise to reform our education system to ensure the next generation reach their full potential, and have already committed to increasing funding per pupil in primary and secondary schools.

Education Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

Now more than ever we need to make sure we are putting our most disadvantaged and vulnerable children first, including those with complex needs.

We need to be more ambitious for these children, which is why we are delivering on this Government's commitment to deliver more school places for children with complex special educational needs. This will give these young people the opportunity they deserve for tailored support in a school that responds to their individual needs, making them confident learners and engaged students.

At the same time, I also want to transform the experience of children who have been permanently excluded or are at risk of being removed from the classroom. These new schools, adding to the network of excellent free schools around the country, will help level up opportunities for children from all backgrounds so they can receive a world-class education.

Free schools are new schools set up by parents, teachers, charities, academy

trusts and existing schools in response to demand from the local community. Secondary free schools are among the highest performing state-funded schools in the country.

Last month the Prime Minister set out a transformative ten-year rebuilding programme for schools across England, aimed at driving opportunity and prosperity through improvements to the country's education system. This will start in 2020-21 with the first 50 projects supported by over £1 billion in funding.

These 37 new schools add to the 44 special and 47 AP free schools already open and the 49 special and 8 AP free schools in the pipeline. On completion, it takes the total number of special free schools to 128.

The new schools will be open to some of the most vulnerable children in the country – including those with Education, Health and Care Plans, whose needs have been prioritised throughout the pandemic, with nurseries, schools and colleges remaining open for them where appropriate. Charity grants have also been provided to families on low-incomes with disabled children, to pay for specialist equipment required during the lockdown period.

Children and Families Minister Vicky Ford said:

It is vital that we unlock opportunities and improve education for all children, including those who do not attend mainstream school. The investment in new special schools and AP underlines our commitment to levelling up in education by supporting some of our most vulnerable children.

Dame Christine Lenehan, Director of the National Children's Bureau, said:

We are pleased to welcome additional schools and school places for children with some of the most complex needs. We are clear that all children have the right to the best quality education and we look forward to seeing these schools lead by example and enabling children to have the best possible outcomes.

The Government has also taken urgent action to keep children at risk of harm or exploitation safe during the coronavirus outbreak, investing to expand the work of charities on the front line.

Today's announcement builds on measures announced by the Department for Education to place social workers in more schools to help teachers identify those at risk, and to make £7 million available to pupils leaving AP after their GCSEs this year to help their transition to further education, employment or training. It comes as work on the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Review continues – a cross-governmental review to improve the support children and young people receive so the system works for everyone, in every part of the country.

The Department also has an ambitious programme of action on school behaviour and is working to rapidly improve the availability of good Alternative Provision so that permanently excluded children and children at risk of exclusion receive a high quality education, meaning fewer of them end up becoming not in Education, Employment or Training.

Of the new free schools:

- three will be in the North East, providing over 200 places in total mostly for children with social, emotional and mental health needs (SEMH);
- six will be in the North West, providing over 400 places, including for children with SEMH, Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD), Severe Learning Difficulty (SLD) and speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN);
- five will be in Yorkshire and the Humber, providing over 500 places including for children with SEMH, ASD, SLD, Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties (PMLD) and SLCN;
- one will be in the East Midlands, providing 50 places for children with SEMH;
- three will be in the West Midlands, providing over nearly 300 places including for children with SEMH, ASD and Multiple Learning Difficulties (MLD);
- three will be in the East of England, providing over 300 places including for children with SEMH, ASD and SLCN;
- four will be in London, providing over 300 places including for children with SEMH, ASD and SLCN;
- four will be in the South East, providing over 300 places including for children with SEMH and ASD;
- six will be in the South West, providing 500 places including for children with SEMH, ASD, Complex Learning Difficulties (CLD) and SLCN; and
- two Alternative Provision free schools will provide over 100 places in the West Midlands for children who have been, or are at risk of being, excluded from mainstream education.

Unity Howard, Director of New Schools Network, said:

This announcement is fantastic news for families across the country. Special and alternative provision free schools are some of the most innovative and successful providers, and I am delighted to see more of them will be opened. Children with complex needs are the most vulnerable in society and the Government's commitment to ensuring their opportunities and experiences are levelled up is very welcome. New Schools Network looks forward to working with these groups to ensure their free schools open successfully, joining the other 91 special and alternative provision free schools already adding much-needed capacity, innovation, and aspiration to the sector.

Mark Vickers, Chair of the AP and SEND MAT CEO Network, said:

Excluded children and young people and those with special educational needs and disabilities need access to local, special and alternative provision schools. Children who have experienced difficulty in learning in mainstream schools depend upon the expert support which special and AP schools can offer them. These new free schools will ensure more of our country's most vulnerable children stay in education and get the targeted support they so desperately need.

Sarah Dove, President of PRUsAP, said:

We welcome the announcement of additional free AP schools. In doing this, there is the reaffirmed commitment that AP can increase support for children who are vulnerable to exclusion and be the cornerstone of breaking the cycle of poor life chances for children who may find mainstream school challenging. We acknowledge that free schools can provide a localised support for children in areas where there is limited support for these children and provide additional options for those who may require alternatives to foster a love of education.

Changing Places toilets for severely disabled people to be compulsory in new public buildings

- Compulsory inclusion of Changing Places Toilets in new public buildings to help 250,000 people
- Shopping centres, sports stadiums and arts venues among buildings listed
- Changes will help ensure everyone in society benefits from lockdown easing

More than 250,000 severely disabled people will have greater access to public places after the government moved to make Changing Places toilets compulsory in new buildings. Changing Places toilets are larger accessible toilets for severely disabled people, with equipment such as hoists, curtains, adult-sized changing benches and space for carers.

A major change to building rules in England will require thousands of large (12m²) and well-equipped accessible toilet facilities to be designed and built into new public buildings, from next year.

The government estimates it will add the toilets to more than 150 new

buildings a year. A £30 million fund to install Changing Places in existing buildings will open in the next few months.

Shopping centres, supermarkets, cinemas, stadia and arts venues are just some of the buildings that will be required to include at least one Changing Places toilet.

Building Accessibility Minister Lord Greenhalgh said:

For too long, the lack of Changing Places toilets has meant that severely disabled people have faced severe difficulties in attending public places.

Changing Places toilets give disabled people and their carers the space and equipment they need to have the confidence to leave their homes and go out.

We are making the installation of these toilets compulsory in hundreds of new public buildings in years to come to help bring major, life enhancing freedoms to the more than 250,000 people who need them.

Rob Burley, Director of Campaigns, Care and Support at Muscular Dystrophy UK, said:

This is huge news for the quarter of a million people in the UK who need Changing Places toilets. Having access to these much-needed facilities increases independence and improves quality of life. This legislation will make it easier for disabled people and their families to enjoy activities that many take for granted, whether that's a day's shopping or attending a concert.

None of this would have been possible without the hard work of our wonderful campaigners. Thanks to everyone working together, we have taken a big step towards ensuring Changing Places toilets will be more widely available to everyone who needs them and tackling the exclusion people face.

There are more than 1,400 Changing Places toilets in the UK, up from just 140 in 2007, but more are needed to support more than a quarter of a million people who need them in the UK.

In the absence of Changing Places facilities, disabled people and/or carers face:

- limiting what they drink to avoid needing the toilet when they are out – risking dehydration and urinary tract infections
- sitting in soiled clothing or dirty nappies until a suitable toilet is found or they return home
- having to change a loved one on a dirty toilet floor
- manually lifting someone out of their wheelchair – risking safety
- reducing their time out of the house – restricting their social lives

The government remains steadfast on a commitment made by the Chancellor in the Budget on 11 March 2020 that the changes are expected to take effect early next year.

The Department for Transport, in partnership with Muscular Dystrophy UK, has also announced £1.27 million to install 37 more changing places at service stations across England. These new facilities will give people with complex needs and their carers the confidence and freedom to make more journeys by road as coronavirus restrictions ease.

With this latest round of funding, 87 of England's 118 service stations will be set to have a fully accessible Changing Places toilet in the early 2020s. This investment is part of the government's Inclusive Transport Strategy, which aims to provide equal access to transport by 2030, with assistance if physical infrastructure remains a barrier.

Transport Accessibility Minister Chris Heaton-Harris said:

It is hard to overstate the importance of something as simple as an accessible area for the over 250,000 people nationwide who have a severe disability.

I want everyone to have the confidence to travel by any means so it is incredibly important for us to work with Muscular Dystrophy UK to provide Changing Places facilities at the majority of service stations in England.

Kerry Thompson, Changing Places campaigner said:

This is incredible news. Having access to more changing places toilets means freedom. For not just myself but the 250,000 other disabled people and their families. Having this much needed change to building regulations guidance will make life easier and more fulfilling. It opens up a whole new world for everyone that needs these life changing facilities. All these changes are helping myself and thousands of others to live the life that we choose, not one that is chosen for us.

Minister for Disabled People, Health and Work Justin Tomlinson said:

This is such an important step forward for severely disabled people and their families who often find it difficult to enjoy a day out without worrying about accessing basic facilities. Our priority is to build on this by ensuring disabled people's interests are at the heart of our recovery from coronavirus.

Minister for Care, Helen Whately said:

Dignity and independence is something many of us take for granted but can be a daily challenge of people with severe disabilities, especially when there is a lack of access to adequate toilet and changing facilities. All public spaces should cater for people with disabilities so they don't have to suffer discomfort, embarrassment, or even injury without access to a Changing Place.

Compulsory Changing Places in new public buildings is a major step in reducing the health inequalities faced by so many and will mean that future generations can live with independence, without having to worry about something as simple as basic amenities.

- The [government's full response to the consultation](#) has been published.
- Places of assembly, recreation and entertainment with a capacity for 350 or more people will be required to install the facilities if they are newly built or have a major refurbishment.
 - They include art galleries, cinemas, concert halls, conference centres, further education colleges, universities, hotels that include leisure facilities, libraries, motorway services, museums, places of worship, and theatres.
 - Shopping centres or retail parks with gross floor areas of 30,000m² or more, retail premises of 2,500m² or more, sport or leisure buildings over 5,000m², and stadia, theme parks, zoos, or exhibition centres with a capacity above 2,000 people will also be included in the rules.
- Approximately 250,000 people (and their carers and families) with profound and multiple learning disabilities will benefit, as well as people with other physical disabilities such as spinal injuries, muscular dystrophy and multiple sclerosis. Without these facilities in public buildings for changing adults and larger children, these people, their carers and families are largely permanently house bound.
- We are working to increase the number of Changing Places within NHS hospitals and we announced £2m funding to improve provision in December 2018.
- So far, we have allocated over £700,000 to NHS Trusts on a matched-funding basis, to install 19 Changing Places facilities in locations across England.

UK invests extra £16 million to prevent Amazon deforestation

- UK government invests £16 million into projects to protect the Amazon rainforest
- investment will also help to restore 900 hectares of rainforest, the equivalent of over 1,680 football pitches
- £80 million now committed this year to protect the Amazon's fragile ecosystem

The UK government has today announced a new £16 million funding package to support environmentally friendly farming and replanting projects in the Amazon, taking its total investment to protecting tropical forests in Latin America this year to £80 million.

The announcement comes as part of an extension to the Partnerships for Forests (P4F) programme, which works to halt deforestation by developing eco-friendly land use in Brazil, Colombia, and Peru, protecting biodiversity, and boosting private investment in forest industries.

Part of the funding will help to prevent deforestation by working with rural farming communities in Brazil to create environmentally friendly cattle ranches. Traditional cattle farming techniques exhaust soil and cause deforestation as farmers look for new pastures to graze their cattle.

However, today's funding will combat this issue by scaling up a project, run by PESCA, promoting rotational grazing and pasture reform to fight deforestation. The UK funding will help to grow the project and attract private investment. PESCA currently manages sustainable farmland covering 27,000 hectares of land and has the potential to become the standard bearer for bovine farming throughout the tropical forests of Latin America.

Government funding will also support the Xingu network, which supports 568 indigenous seed collectors in the Xingu basin in northern Brazil to re-sow precious local tree species. Currently, Brazil lacks seed supply scale and infrastructure for mass reforestation, but today's funding will help to scale up Xingu's operation.

Thanks to this extra support, estimates suggest UK backing could grow the this industry further, which would enable it to trade as much as 30 metric tonnes of seeds annually – enough to restore 900 hectares of rainforest, the equivalent of over 1,680 football pitches.

Minister for Climate Change Lord Callanan said:

Climate change and deforestation are challenges which stretch far

beyond borders, which is why we all must act to protect our planet's biodiversity.

Our Partnerships for Forests programme will help stop tropical deforestation, protect fragile ecosystems, build up rural communities and repair damage to the worst-affected areas.

Today's announcement has been welcomed by environmental groups.

Justin Adams, Executive Director of the Tropical Forests Alliance, said:

The Partnership for Forests program provides catalytic funding for innovative enterprises that balance sustainable production and millions of livelihoods with preventing deforestation.

I applaud the UK government's support for these programmes in South America and have seen the impact of their work on the ground. I am delighted these projects will now be able to scale up their work in the years ahead.

Notes to editors

- more on the UK government's [£64 million partnership with the Colombian government](#)
- that funding is being used to strengthen Colombia's land rights and criminal justice system, controlling deforestation while building a fairer, greener and more resilient rural economy in the region
- more on the [Xingu network](#). Seed collectors search for seeds and trade them through a centralised office, receiving payment based on the scarcity and quantity of the seeds they provide. The industry currently provides an annual income of R\$4 million for the region
- further information on [Partnerships for Forests](#)
- more details on the [cattle ranching programme](#)