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## Operational Matters


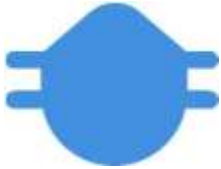

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## NEW THIS EDITION

### Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals COVID Safety Update

The Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service (NICTS) has [refreshed its guidance on COVID safety measures across its Estate](#). The updated guidance reflects recent changes in NI Executive guidance on COVID mitigation in the workplace and it outlines the practical measures that will be applied to reduce the likelihood of transmission across all courts and tribunals venues.

Below is a summary of the key mitigations that are in place across NICTS to continue to keep people safe. However, please use the above link to ensure that you are familiar with the full guidance.

<p><b>Social distancing of no less than 1m where practical</b></p> 	<p>Throughout our buildings we will continue to facilitate social distancing at 1 metre, and encourage all users of our buildings to observe safe behaviours and use personal responsibility to keep themselves safe. This approach will be complemented by the Guidance on Remote, In Person &amp; Hybrid Attendance, recently updated by The Lady Chief Justice’s Office, which seeks to balance the efficient dispatch of business and the interest of justice, and which should result in continued reductions in footfall, when compared with pre-pandemic levels.</p>
<p><b>Face Coverings</b></p> 	<p>Throughout our buildings we will continue to facilitate and encourage the use of face coverings, and we will continue to make limited numbers of face coverings available at our entrance areas.</p>
<p><b>Hand hygiene</b></p> 	<p>Throughout our buildings we will continue to promote respiratory and hand hygiene. We encourage staff and court users not to attend our buildings if they have symptoms of respiratory illness. We will encourage regular hand washing with warm water and soap. In addition, we will continue to provide sanitising liquid at easily accessible locations.</p>

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Ventilation</b></p> 	<p>Throughout our buildings we will continue to prioritise ventilation as one of the most effective mitigations against all respiratory illnesses. We will continue to maximise ventilation through both mechanical and natural means. We have assessed our buildings in line with HSE guidance, and will continue to restrict occupancy in poorly ventilated areas. We have deployed carbon dioxide monitors in all buildings, and will continue to monitor the recorded levels to ensure ventilation levels remain adequate, and can be balanced with thermal comfort and energy efficiency. We will continue to progress building works to improve ventilation.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Cleaning</b></p> 	<p>Throughout our buildings we will continue to use our cleaning resource to focus activities on cleaning touch points and sanitary areas. At the outset of the pandemic, we upgraded our standard cleaning product to one which is known to be effective at eliminating enveloped shell viruses such as coronavirus. We will continue to use this product and we will supplement our contracted cleaning regime by providing sanitising wipes in key locations.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Protective Screens</b></p> 	<p>Throughout our buildings we have made extensive use of glass and Perspex screens since the onset of the pandemic as a key mitigation against droplet and fomite transmission of the virus. We will not actively seek to remove any of the screens that have been installed, except where they are an impediment to service delivery and can be replaced by an alternative mitigation, e.g. search areas where screens are hindering appropriate bag search. We will not actively seek to install additional screens at this time, unless it becomes apparent that other mitigations are not effective.</p>

The reduced social distancing requirement will enable us to increase court and hearing room capacity and consultation room provision over coming weeks while ensuring safe capacity limits continue to apply. This will occur alongside the continued use of audio and video technology to enable remote attendance. Revised capacity limits for court and hearing rooms will be clearly displayed on posters within each venue.

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Many of the mitigations that have become familiar to us during the pandemic will remain in place to varying degrees, but with an onus now on individuals to make good choices to protect our own health and those around us.

[You can read more here](#) and if you have any queries about our COVID guidance, please email these to [NICTSComms@courtsni.gov.uk](mailto:NICTSComms@courtsni.gov.uk).

## OPERATIONAL MATTERS

### COURT LISTS

The [Public Court Lists Online](#) service allows users to view civil, criminal and family court lists. Please refer to [Public Court Lists Online User Guide](#). Sightlink numbers for each courtroom can be viewed on Court Lists online. Solicitors and barristers should consult the respective members section of their websites to check specific Sightlink URL details, as they are not released publicly.

The Court of Judicature Daily Law List can be accessed [here](#)

### ICOS CASE TRACKING ONLINE

The [ICOS Tracking Case Online system](#) (ICTO) system allows solicitors to view and track progress on their cases. Solicitors should refer to the [ICOS Tracking Case User Guide](#) for assistance with how to use it.

### COURT OFFICE CONTACTS

Email addresses for court offices are available [at this link](#).

## SITTINGS AND VACATIONS OF THE COURT OF APPEAL AND THE HIGH COURT

**Long Vacation**            Friday 1 July 2022 to Friday 2 September 2022 inclusive

**Michaelmas Term**        Monday 5 September to Wednesday 21 December 2022 inclusive

### COURTROOM TECHNOLOGY

Courtroom technology has been upgraded in 61 courtrooms providing new audio and video technology to facilitate digital courts, including the display of digital evidence.

## CRIMINAL

### MAGISTRATES' COURTS

Criminal Contests: The HR2 Form (and guidance), which is used to inform the listing of criminal contests in the Magistrates' Court, can be found on the [COVID-19 page](#) of the JudiciaryNI website. Additional contest days continue to be scheduled to address the backlog resulting from the pandemic. The additional contest days are:

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- Antrim/Ballymena – 2nd and 3rd Monday and 5th Wednesday of each month;
- Belfast – Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday each week;
- Craigavon – 2nd and 5th Thursday of each month. There is also a court on the 4th Tuesday each month to deal with first appearance summonses only.
- Newtownards – every Monday;
- Downpatrick – every Wednesday;
- Londonderry Court 2 – 1st and 3rd Tuesday of each month;
- Magherafelt (sitting in Londonderry) – 2nd and 4th Tuesday of each month.

Allocated courts and schedules are available at the [following link for each venue](#).

## BAIL APPLICATIONS

The guidance on High Court and Crown Court bail applications can be found at the following links:

[High Court](#)

[Crown Court](#)

The guidance on Administrative Bail applications is [available via this link](#).

## JURY TRIALS

Jury trials are being held in courts in Laganside, Antrim, Craigavon, Newry, Dungannon and Coleraine as follows:

- Laganside Courts (Courts 11-15);
- Antrim (Courts 1 and 2);
- Coleraine (Courts 1 and 2 for Londonderry Crown Court1);
- Craigavon (Courts 1 and 2);
- Dungannon (Courts 1 and 2);
- Newry (Courts 1 and 2).

Socially distant multi-defendant trials can currently be listed in Courts 11, 12 and 13 in Laganside Courts. They can also be listed in Antrim Court 1, Coleraine Court 2, Craigavon Court 1 and Dungannon Court 1.

Jury Panel Information: Up to date information on jury service for each courthouse can be found at the following link: [Juror information guide during Covid-19](#)

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Please ensure that you ring the jury line after 5.00pm and select the venue code for that court you are attending.

Further information on each courthouse is available on the

- [Useful Information Leaflets Section](#)
- [Useful information leaflets in alternative languages](#)

## CIVIL

Guidance for all civil actions in the High Court and County Court (CCJ cases and District Judge cases) can be accessed [here](#).

Guidance and forms for all High Court Master's Courts can be accessed [here](#)

### **NEW- Creditor's Bankruptcy Petitions**

**The restriction on filing new Creditor's Bankruptcy Petitions (Non -Crown) and (Crown) will be lifted with effect from 5 September 2022.**

## Probate

The Probate Portal has been operational now since June 2021. The portal, a flagship project under the Vision 2030 modernisation portfolio, simplifies the process of applying for probate or letters of administration to deal with an estate. The portal was enhanced in November 2021 to accept caveats. Feedback has been overwhelmingly positive, with many praising the difference it has made to the application process and improved turnaround times.

- Guidance on how to **apply for Probate** via the online portal can be accessed [here](#)
- Guidance on how to **enter a Caveat** via the online portal can be accessed [here](#)

## COUNTY COURT AND DISTRICT COURTS

Details of how County Court and District Judges are allocating business is available through [this link](#).

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## FAMILY

Guidance for **Family Court Proceedings** (all court tiers) can be accessed [here](#)

- Guidance for the hearing of **High Court and County Court Divorce** cases can be accessed [here](#).
- **Office of Care & Protection** [OCP - Patients] -call answering service is available Monday – Thursday (09:00–13:00). Further information regarding OCP can be accessed [here](#)

## CORONERS COURT

The latest Coroners Court guidance is available via this [link](#).

## TRIBUNALS

The following link gives the current Tribunals update, including the availability of physical hearings for appellants who do not wish to utilise the remote hearing format introduced as a direct result of Covid-19:

<https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/topics/courts-and-tribunals/tribunals>

Planning Appeals Commission and Water Appeals Commission (PACWAC) have also introduced the flexibility of remote hearings and physical hearings when required, further information can be found by visiting the following link:

<https://www.pacni.gov.uk/>

The Parole Commissioners' website will provide you with information about who the Parole Commissioners are, the legislative framework within which they work and how the parole process works. Information can be found by visiting the following link:

<https://www.parolecomni.org.uk>

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