

## Arrangements during coronavirus (COVID-19) to keep our buildings safe, secure and clean

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All our court and tribunal buildings are open with access restricted to only those with a direct involvement with proceedings, and journalists. Public counters remain closed. Members of the public are asked not to attend unless they have been specifically requested to by a court or tribunal official. This restriction will be regularly reviewed in line with Public Health Scotland advice.

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We ask for your assistance to minimise the risk of infection spread to those attending our buildings. We all need to take personal responsibility for our actions. Please follow the guidance and any instructions given to you by court or tribunal staff to help keep yourself and others safe.

### FINES CAN BE PAID BY PHONE OR ONLINE.

This guidance is for those physically attending our buildings. The use of virtual hearings is being expanded, reducing the footfall in our buildings. Specific guidance for virtual court participants will follow.

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## 1. Safety in court and tribunal buildings

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We are complying with Public Health Scotland [COVID-19 - guidance for non-healthcare settings](#).

### RISK ASSESSMENT

Detailed risk assessments have been carried out in all of our buildings. These have led to a range of additional health and safety measures being put in place. The risk assessments have been developed in consultation with PCS, the Union representing SCTS staff and are based on a comprehensive [risk assessment framework](#).

Our guiding principle throughout the coronavirus outbreak has been to:

- maintain public trust and confidence in the justice system, prioritising action to preserve safety and order, and
- support the public health response – protecting the life and safety of all justice system users, the judiciary and staff

The additional measures we have put in place across our premises are designed to reduce the risk of infection. We all need to act sensibly and responsibly to support these measures.

**DO NOT ENTER ANY BUILDING IF YOU HAVE ANY COVID-19 SYMPTOMS OR HAVE BEEN ASKED TO SELF-ISOLATE.**

Within our buildings, we have put in place arrangements to help people maintain two-metre (2m) physical distancing. These arrangements are specific to each building but may include:

- managing entry and exits to the building and rooms, directing the flow of people, one-way systems, floor marking and tape to indicate boundaries
- marking seats and areas as being out of use or restricted
- restricting occupancy of rooms and galleries, providing advice on arrangements that apply
- using 'one-in, one-out' systems for lift entry and exit
- promoting single occupancy of toilet facilities
- clear signage and advisory posters

Please note, if you require further information in relation to any of these measures or have any queries please speak to a member of staff.

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## 2. On arrival

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Currently, our buildings are closed to members of the public. For those that have been asked or cited to attend, on arrival, the arrangements in place are:

- You should keep a 2m gap between others while queuing and on entering the building. This may mean waiting outside until you are called to enter.
- You should follow any instructions given to you by any SCTS staff.
- Where security officers are present, they may carry out a 'hands off' bag search, keeping 2m away. You'll need to open your bag and place items in a tray, so that security officers can check you're not carrying any items you're not allowed to take in, such as sharp objects or work tools. You may be asked to empty the items in a tray and step back. Trays are cleaned between users.
- If you do not agree to the search, you'll be asked to leave the building.
- Hand sanitiser will be available in court and tribunal buildings.

**WASH YOUR HANDS**

- We have ensured that good hand-washing and sanitising facilities are available at all premises.

Frequent handwashing at every opportunity is essential and there are plenty of handwashing facilities at our buildings. If soap supplies are running low, please bring this to the attention of a member of staff. Additionally we have provided hand sanitiser in waiting areas, inside courts and hearing rooms, and in other places where it may be difficult to wash your hands. However, if you prefer you are welcome to bring your own hand sanitiser. You may be asked to demonstrate that it is not harmful by applying some to your hands.

### **WEARING FACE COVERINGS**

We strongly advise that you bring and wear a face covering when entering and leaving the building, while moving from one part of the building to another, or while waiting in communal areas such as reception points, witness rooms or outside a court or hearing room. This is in addition to observing the 2m physical distancing arrangements we have in place in our premises.

You will not need to wear a face covering if, under government guidance, you are exempt from doing so in other locations (such as in shops or on public transport).

You may be asked by a presiding judge or sheriff to remove a face covering in a court room when physical distancing measures are in place.

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## **3. Cleanliness and hygiene measures for coronavirus**

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### **WHAT ARE THE ARRANGEMENTS FOR CLEANING IN SCTS BUILDINGS?**

We have enhanced our cleaning regime to ensure cleaning standards set out by British Institute of Cleaning Science (BICS) are met. In addition:

- our cleaners carry out regular cleaning of frequently touched surfaces such as doors, railings and lift panels
- we are supplying sanitising wipes close to vending machines, lift controls, etc. and in shared areas.
- toilets/washrooms are regularly cleaned and have adequate supplies of soap

Any concerns in relation to cleaning or supplies should be raised with any member of staff so the issue can be rectified.

### **HOW IS PHYSICAL DISTANCING MAINTAINED IN TOILET FACILITIES?**

This will vary depending on the building and the number and size of the toilet/washroom facilities, but arrangements might include restricting the number of individuals allowed to use facilities at any one time e.g. one in, one out. Signage will indicate the arrangements in place for each facility.

#### **WHAT ARE THE ARRANGEMENTS FOR WASHING, DRYING AND SANITISING HANDS IN SCTS BUILDINGS?**

We recognise that regular and thorough hand-washing is one of the most important steps that individuals can take to prevent catching or spreading coronavirus. We're displaying handwashing posters in prominent places to remind users to wash their hands.

#### **WHAT ARE THE ARRANGEMENTS FOR DEEP CLEANING IN COURTROOMS AND BUILDINGS?**

We will carry out appropriate cleaning within all relevant parts of a building if we have a confirmed case of coronavirus, in line with Public Health Scotland guidance

We'll close any building, or part of a building, where we have any safety concerns about standards.

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## **4. Arrangements for court and tribunal users**

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#### **WHAT HAPPENS IF SOMEONE WHO HAS SYMPTOMS OF CORONAVIRUS, OR IS SELF-ISOLATING BECAUSE THEY LIVE WITH SOMEONE WHO DOES, IS ASKED TO COME TO A COURT OR TRIBUNAL?**

In line with public health guidance individuals must not attend a court or tribunal if they have symptoms of coronavirus, or are self-isolating because they live with, or have been in contact with someone that does. Let the court or tribunal know if this is the case.

#### **WHAT SHOULD SOMEONE DO IF THEY ARE ASKED TO ATTEND A COURT OR TRIBUNAL BUT THEY ARE CLASSED AS BEING EXTREMELY VULNERABLE OR CLINICALLY VULNERABLE TO CORONAVIRUS?**

Where an individual is shielding because they have a health condition that makes them extremely vulnerable to coronavirus, then they should let the court or tribunal know ahead of their hearing date. This will allow alternative arrangements to be made, or for the case to be postponed.

Similarly, those individuals that are clinically vulnerable – such as those over the age of 70, or those that are pregnant or with certain health conditions – should also let the court or tribunal know. Alternative arrangements may be possible.

#### **WHAT HAPPENS IF SOMEONE ATTENDING A COURT OR TRIBUNAL DISPLAYS SYMPTOMS OF CORONAVIRUS?**

If an individual appears to have symptoms of coronavirus, they will not be allowed to enter the court or tribunal building. If they develop symptoms in the buildings clear instructions are in place to safely isolate the individual until medical assistance can be secured, if appropriate, or arrangements can be made for the individual to travel home safely where they should follow advice from NHS Inform, including arranging to be tested.

#### **SELF- ISOLATING ON RETURN FROM TRAVEL**

If you have recently returned from a country where you are required to quarantine for 14 days you should not attend a court or tribunal building. Depending on who has asked you to attend, you should contact them for advice. That could be COPFS, your solicitor or the court or tribunal directly.

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## **5. Supporting accused persons at court**

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### **IN CUSTODY**

In custody areas, we have worked with GeoAmey and the Scottish Prison Service monitors to ensure physical distancing is in place. GeoAmey will ensure that visits are conducted safely and practically within the confines of the custody suite. Sanitising products are available for individual use in these areas. Where a client has COVID-19, or is suspected of having COVID-19, arrangements will be made for appearance via video link from police facilities. Arrangements to allow solicitors to represent their clients remotely can be put in place on request.

See [Attendance by Electronic Means for Custody Cases](#).

Accused persons who are in Prison will, wherever possible, appear in court via video link.

### **HOW DO SOLICITORS CONFER WITH A CLIENT IN THE CUSTODY SUITE?**

This will depend on the building. Where possible, we will provide facilities so that legal professionals can communicate remotely (by secure phone or other secure device) with the accused in the custody suite. We will encourage the use of the secure custodial interview room which has physical segregation available.

### **SHARING DOCUMENTS OR CASE PAPERS**

Wherever possible any exchange of documents will be made using secure email.

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## **6. Arrangements for witnesses at court**

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We are working with those who cite witnesses to ensure they are only asked to come to court on days when they are needed. COPFS has advice for witnesses on their [website](#) and if you are appearing as a defence or civil witness you should seek instruction from the solicitor who contacted you.

Witnesses will only be asked to attend if no other alternative method of giving evidence is considered suitable. If you do need to attend, you will be shown to a waiting area that facilitates 2m physical distancing. Drinking water will be available but there will be no catering facilities. Please bring anything that you think you might need e.g. light refreshments and reading material.

We are programming business to ensure that the minimum number of people are asked to attend at a given time, aligning to the physical space available in courts and waiting areas. We will sometimes give specific time slots and stagger arrival times to help keep the number of witnesses down at any one time.

#### **ARE WITNESSES ALLOWED TO BRING ANYONE WITH THEM?**

Space in waiting areas and the public gallery will be limited due to the need to observe physical distancing arrangements, but we know many witnesses may feel anxious giving evidence. Witnesses may request that they bring someone with them for support, however, that must be approved by the court in advance. Some witnesses may also have specialist support. Speak with the person who is liaising with you to attend court.

#### **HOW WILL A WITNESS SWEAR AN OATH OR MAKE AN AFFIRMATION?**

The presiding judge or sheriff will ask the witness to swear an oath or affirm according to their religious beliefs and certain holy books will be available.

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## **7. Arrangements for jurors**

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Currently there are only a small number of trials with jurors scheduled to take place. As the jury trial programme is rescheduled, information will be available at:

<https://www.scotcourts.gov.uk/coming-to-court/jurors> and in the leaflet [Jury Trials – Your Safety is Our Priority](#)

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## **8. Ventilation in buildings**

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**WHAT KIND OF VENTILATION IS BEING USED IN COURT AND TRIBUNAL BUILDINGS? IS AIR CONDITIONING SAFE TO USE IN COURT AND TRIBUNAL BUILDINGS?**

Pre-opening checks were carried out on all our ventilation systems and our building ventilation system air handling units are circulating 100% clean fresh air. This makes it more difficult to regulate temperature so consider clothing to suit a range of temperatures. You may be aware of the sound of the fans in quiet areas.

In rooms where ventilation systems don't apply and opening windows exist, we encourage their use to promote air circulation.

**WILL PHYSICAL DISTANCING BE EFFECTIVE IF USERS ARE INSIDE THE SAME ROOM FOR SEVERAL HOURS AT A TIME?**

We're organising court and hearing rooms to make sure that physical distancing can be maintained for all users. Where appropriate, we are scheduling cases to time slots, to reduce the time necessity for users to be within the building.

**HOW WILL SHARED EQUIPMENT BE SANITISED BETWEEN USERS?**

We will make sure personal sanitising wipes are available for items such as TV remote controls, keypads for doors and any shared equipment to ensure they can be wiped before and after use.

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**9. Food and drink**

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**IS FOOD AND DRINK AVAILABLE IN COURT AND TRIBUNAL BUILDINGS?**

Our cafes and canteens are currently closed.

We recommend you bring sufficient food and bottled water with you for your visit. You'll be able to take bottled water into the court or hearing room.

Water dispensers and food and drink vending machines may still be in operation in certain buildings. We will clean these frequently and sanitising wipes are available, but you should wash your hands after use.

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**10. If you have a concern**

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If you see something that's not right, please tell a member of staff as soon as possible so that they can take appropriate action.

Updated 24 August 2020

## Remember **FACTS** for a safer Scotland

- F** Face coverings 
- A** Avoid crowded places 
- C** Clean your hands regularly 
- T** Two metre distance 
- S** Self isolate and book a test if you have symptoms 

[nhsinform.scot/coronavirus](https://nhsinform.scot/coronavirus)  
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