

Manchester Arena Inquiry COVID-19: Summary Risk Assessment

31.08.20 v1.0

Location:	Manchester Magistrates' Court Hearing Rooms 7/8 and Courts 9 and 10
Date:	31 August 2020
Name:	Steve Hickman, Inquiry Secretary
Other accompanying person(s):	Sue Curran
	Mike Draper (Home Office H&S)

Introduction

The Chairman is committed to making progress on the Inquiry but also needs to ensure that public hearings are only held when it is safe to do so. Following the outbreak of Covid earlier this year, the hearings were adjourned from June to 7 September. Since the adjournment we have been in a constant process of assessing whether it would be safe to hold a public inquiry and in consultation with the core participants. The families have continued to express a strong preference for holding the hearings in person as far as possible.

Following the sharp increase of Covid cases in Greater Manchester and the introduction of new restrictions¹ in the North of England at the end of July we needed to fundamentally reassess the risks around holding public hearings. This resulted in very significant changes to our plans for the hearings which we believe reduce the level of risk to a very low level - particularly if all attendees adhere to the local guidance - and therefore is safe to begin the hearings on 7 September.

We will however continue to monitor the position very closely (through our Working Group with Greater Manchester public health practitioners) and if the assessment of risk changes will take appropriate action.

Summary of measures

- Keeping numbers down in each venue to a minimum. For the first five chapters we will limit the numbers in the hearing room to a maximum of 30 (against its original capacity of over 100). This will still enable 13 family members to sit in the hearing room each day. In Spinningfields we will limit family numbers to 30 (it could fit 90 with 2m distancing);
- Supporting the use of virtual participation. We have invested in the technology to ensure we can seamlessly run a hybrid of in-person and virtual hearings. The public will be able to follow proceedings on YouTube and lawyers will be able to ask questions from their offices or chambers;
- We have invested in additional room space to ensure the media are able to safely watch the hearings from a venue close to the Magistrates' Court;
- Effective communication to remind people that the hearings are by invite only (web and social media) and that attendees need to abide by the local restrictions (not only in the court, but before and after) and should not attend the court if they are feeling unwell. Trained ushers are also on hand across all venues to ensure social distancing;

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/north-west-of-england-local-restrictions-what-you-can-and-cannot-do>

- Beyond 2m. Recognizing that hearing days are long, in addition to 2m distancing in all rooms, we have installed plexiglass in the hearing room wherever possible;
- We will have a single point of contact for Covid on the Inquiry website. In the event of someone reporting Covid symptoms, or a positive test, the Tracing team will be informed immediately and will coordinate the response (we will record all attendees in the hearing room and annexes);
- Working with experts. We have set up a working group with Greater Manchester health practitioners to monitor the position in Manchester and ensure we are taking the right measures to keep people safe;
- Risk assessment. We have carried out thorough risk assessments across all our venues (externally accredited) and will continue to do so throughout the Inquiry. Working with HMCTS we have put in place measures to keep people safe while in the Magistrates' Court (see Annex A).

Annex A: Manchester Magistrates' Court

We have carried out a risk assessment of the court in 9 sections. The level of risk is assessed in each against the following scale:

RAG Definitions

- **Green:** measures are in place and no issues for action.
- **Green*:** any local adaptations in use, are as good as the measures outlined.
- **Amber:** the issue(s) identified have an action plan and timescales for resolution in place. Any interim workarounds in use e.g. closing specific rooms or sections of the building, can be sustained without needing to close the whole building.
- **Red:** issue(s) affecting safety, requires closure of the building

As at 31 August 2020 all 9 sections have been assessed as Green given the measures we have put in place. If attendees have any concerns over whether these measures are being applied properly in practice or their effectiveness, they should immediately contact the Inquiry Secretary at the following address:

secretary@manchesterarenainquiry.org.uk

We will notify attendees of any changes in the level of risk.

Section 1: Queuing and entry to the building (public areas)

1. We are starting hearings earlier than the Magistrates' Court sittings to reduce numbers at the front door.
2. To ensure people are kept 2m apart the Court Security Officer will ask that people do not enter the building until called. Space markings on the floor will indicate where people should safely stand.
3. All Inquiry attendees, including legal professionals, personnel from stakeholder agencies and those signed up to the Professional User Access Scheme will be asked to confirm that they do not have any symptoms of coronavirus in line with PH guidelines i.e. persistent cough and/or a fever And/or anosmia (lack of or change in sense of smell and taste). If anyone appears to have, or discloses that they have, symptoms consistent with COVID-19, they will be refused entry to the building by Court Security Officers and will be advised to return home and arrange to be tested.

4. Attendees are advised to wear face coverings unless there is a valid reason not to, and to wear in public/communal areas - wef 27th July 2020. Attendees are encouraged to bring their own however there are Covid compliant supplies if users so wish.

Section 2: Bag searches

1. Attendees are advised not to bring bags if possible, to speed up the process.
2. X-ray machine in operation. If required contents to be emptied into a tray for examinations in a separate area. Area marked to allow 2 metre social distancing. Security should not touch people's items and should invite the attendee to step forward (whilst security step back) and be asked to organise the items so they can be easily seen. The attendee will then step back, guard to step to visually inspect.
3. The Court Security Officer will have access to and will don protective gloves and use hand sanitisers to maintain hand hygiene. In these cases where a search is required, the protective gloves will be disposed of safely and new pair donned in readiness for the next user.
4. The Court Security Officer will then step back to a safe distance and advise the Inquiry attendee to collect their belongings.
5. The trays used will be cleaned with the appropriate cleaner for COVID-19, between use and stocks for cleaning material will be kept up to date.

Section 3: Use of hand-held detectors

1. To minimize the risk of exposure (the potential risk of individuals sneezing or coughing directly at each other) the following measures will be implemented:
 - Inquiry attendees will be asked to confirm they agree to the search procedure before it begins, with those who decline being advised the 'wanding' is necessary to comply with security requirements.
 - If an attendee refuses, they will be asked to leave the building and make contact to the Inquiry by phone or email.
 - The Court Security Officer will announce they will have to reduce the two metre distance and communicate their actions out loud before carrying them out.
 - Attendees will be asked to turn away from the Court Security Officer so that they are not face-to-face at any point during the search.
2. As the two metre distance has been reduced the 'wanding' will be conducted as promptly and effectively as possible by the Court Security Officer, starting at the back of the individual, working forward to cover their front. They will not touch the person's body.

Section 4: Social Distancing (public areas)

1. Signage: HM Government and HMCTS social distancing posters to be displayed in prominent locations throughout the building including the interior and exterior doors from the entrances and throughout the building;
2. Social distancing will need to be regularly assessed in public areas ensuring the two metre social distancing is maintained across all floorspace, as well as the likely busy areas.
3. One-way system is in operation and where this does not prove practical feet markers are in position to show direction of travel
4. In the event of social distancing is compromised by congestion, marshalling will be used to direct people appropriately. If necessary, a one in one out system may be required.
5. Lifts: to maintain social distancing in lifts and in the waiting, areas around lifts the following measures should be considered:
 - A one-in, one-out, system to be used for lift entry and exit. Posters are displayed.
 - Distancing markings to be used to maintain two metre spacing for queueing.
6. Toilets: to maintain social distancing in toilets and in the waiting areas around toilets the following measures will be in place:
 - A one-in, one-out, system for toilet entry and exit is in operation. Posters are clearly displayed
 - Distancing markings to be used to maintain two metre spacing for queueing.
7. Corridors and waiting areas: to maintain social distancing in corridors and waiting areas the following measures should be considered:
 - Inquiry attendees to only enter or exit courtrooms when instructed to do so to avoid cross-traffic in doorways and to ensure a safe number of people in hearing room and the public galleries.
 - A selected number of seats in seating areas to be removed, taped off or otherwise clearly marked as 'not for use' to maintain two metre separation.
 - One-way flow measures are in operation where practical ie one way up and down stairways Clearly marked
8. Consultation rooms: to maintain social distancing in consultation rooms the following measures should be considered:
 - Signage to indicate maximum occupancy in the room e.g. only suitable for 1:1.
 - Floor markings indicating where seats should be positioned and not moved.
 - Removal of desks and chairs according to maximum occupancy numbers.

Section 5: Social distancing - Courtrooms and hearing rooms (public areas)

1. 2m distancing

There will be at least 2m gaps between people across the hearing room and courtrooms 9 and 10. The majority of seating in the hearing room faces the same direction (exceptions are the Chair and CTI). Any seats not in use will be removed;

2. Plexiglass

Recognizing the amount of time in court, we have installed plexiglass in the hearing room around the fixed legal benches. In the family area where we were not able to install plexiglass we have ensured a safe distance between the households.

3. Entry and exit:

The hearing room is divided into 3 zones (inquiry legal team, legal benches and public). Each zone has its own door and people will enter the room beginning with those seated furthest away. Each person will have the same seat for the whole day (if on occasion we do need to move someone we will ensure the desk is cleaned). Each room has an usher to ensure safe entry and exit and that social distance is maintained throughout the day.

4. Other hygiene measures:

- Will be available on entry to the room and on each desk.
- The use of documents and laptops in the hearings is such that they are used by only one person and no double handling takes place. This may also include provision of wipes.
- Holy books/scriptures, oath or affirmation cards/laminated sheets are not shared. The oath or affirmation is instead read out and then repeated. Witnesses can bring their own holy books

5. Face coverings

As an additional safety measure family member, or anyone not speaking in the court, will be encouraged to wear face coverings - particularly on entry to or exiting the hearing room or during any break in proceedings.

Section 6- Hygiene and cleaning (public and staffed areas)

1. Signage:HM Government hand washing posters will be displayed in prominent locations, particularly in and near toilets and waiting areas.

2. **Cleaning the building:** to help reduce the spread of the virus and maintain the cleanliness of court the following measures should be considered
 - Cleaned throughout the day and at night.
 - Cleaners returning at frequent intervals, preferably minimum hourly to common touch points such as lift buttons, public waiting areas, staff reception etc.
 - Shared items such as leaflets, magazines, children's toys, books, TV remotes etc are removed from waiting and general areas.
 - Rubbish is promptly disposed of. There are an adequate number of bins and they are emptied at regular intervals.

3. **Toilets:** to help reduce the spread of the virus and maintain the cleanliness of court and tribunal buildings the following measures should be considered
 - Soap and hand drying facilities are available, and easily located for court users.
 - Staff monitor these regularly throughout the day, checking that taps, sinks and toilets function as expected.
 - Cleaners can respond promptly to any maintenance or replenishment requirements.

4. **Responding to incidents:** to help reduce the spread of the virus and maintain the cleanliness of court the following measures should be considered:
 - Responding swiftly to complaints received of any areas of poor hygiene or people not abiding by social distancing guidance.
 - In any suspected cases of infection, we would carry out an immediate deep cleanse.

Section 7: Provision of food and water:

To comply with the Public Health advice and guidance the following measures should be considered

- Glass bottles are not permitted and should be confiscated or disposed of by security before entering the building.
- Carafes and glasses are not in use in courtrooms/hearing rooms.
- Bottled water is provided, by exception, in the courtroom/hearing room.
- All refreshment facilities and canteens will remain closed.
- Lunch boxes will be provided at Spinningfields for family members.

Section 8 - Face coverings and the use of PPE (mask and/or gloves) in public areas

- Covid compliant face coverings are available for front line staff and anyone attending the Inquiry now that attendees are encouraged to wear face coverings unless they

have a valid reason why not to in public/communal areas - this was introduced on 27th July 2020

- First Aiders, masks and gloves are available. There is a defibrillator on premises and trained users, ensuring Covid compliant procedures.
- Face coverings can be made available to users on request.
- Gloves and hand sanitiser to be made available for staff.
- Hand sanitiser is available at the entrance and in the Hearing rooms.
- Sensor hand dispensers are required for around the buildings to provide hand sanitiser to the public and reduce the risk of bottles being used as weapons in the public areas.
- Face coverings and gloves can be disposed of in no touch bins/lids removed.

Section 9 - Ventilation

- There is a 4no Ventilation System installed and G4S have confirmed there are no issues with it.
- G4S have provided Camfil Air Hygiene Clean Report from 16 June 2019 – No remedial action required.
- G4S have provided HBI Evidence of Clean Air from August 2019 – No remedial actions identified.
- Public Health England advice is that there is a very low risk of the transmission of COVID-19 through air handling systems, air conditioning and air handling units are a key part of a buildings infrastructure and should continue to be used to ensure clean fresh air is available in the buildings.
- Systems have been changed to ensure only fresh air from outside is recirculated into the building.