

Covid Risk assessment v4.0 16 October 2020

This note updates the risk assessment published on 02 October¹.

Summary:

The steep upward trend in new Covid cases across the country over the last few weeks has coincided with 2 positive cases in the Magistrates' Court and clearly the risk level is increasing. Although neither of the 2 cases involved attendees of the inquiry, the view of the inquiry is that to keep people safe we need to keep numbers entering the Magistrates' Court to a minimum. **Family members will be asked to view the hearings from Spinningfields or at home, and CPs will be able to participate in the hearings remotely.**

This position will be reviewed immediately if there are any new cases and at the middle of next week if no further cases are reported.

Key points:

- 2 known positive Covid cases reported over the last 2 weeks by attendees of the Manchester Magistrates' Court. Six cases in the Magistrates' Court in total;
- As per government advice, inquiry attendees should only take a Covid test if they are symptomatic (or contacted through test and trace);
- None of the individuals involved entered the inquiry hearing room or its annexes;
- One of the most recent two of the cases used the public entrances and lifts;
- HMCTS has carried out deep cleansing and continues its program of cleaning throughout the day;
- No connection has yet been identified between the 2 cases;
- No reported cases at Spinningfields;
- We plan to maintain a reduced number of attendees in the MC and monitor the situation closely over the next 48 hours to help reduce the level of risk and keep people safe;
- Key message for attendees: don't attend if feeling unwell; ensure you use the hand sanitizers freely available and wash your hands frequently.

¹ <https://files.manchesterarenainquiry.org.uk/live/uploads/2020/10/02144906/Covid-Risk-assessment-v3.0f.pdf>

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- HMCTS are working closely with public health authorities and have not advised that the building should be closed;
- All attendees of the Magistrates' Court will be asked to inform either the court or inquiry at the same time they inform test and trace to help speed up the flow of information;
- Core participants were consulted in the week commencing 28 September, and there was a broad consensus that in-person hearings on a socially distanced basis should continue for as long as circumstances allow;
- Six spaces in the public gallery in the main hearing room will be offered to family members wishing to attend on a rotating basis if there is excess demand.

Advice for attendees of the hearings:

If you attended Manchester Magistrates' Court within the last 14 days, we ask you to closely monitor your own health and report to see if you become symptomatic with a cough or fever or lose your sense of taste/smell. [COVID-19 Public health guidance](#) is available on GOV.UK.

As per Government advice you do not need to get a Covid-19 test if you are not displaying any symptoms.

If an inquiry attendee requires a Covid-19 test they should contact the Secretariat immediately because we can then ensure that as a member of the inquiry the test is given priority.

The contact details are generalenquiries@manchesterarenainquiry.org.uk or 01618304331. Please include the words 'contact tracing' in the subject line of any email.

9 Sections of our risk assessment:

Feedback on this is actively sought from attendees:

Area	Observations
Queueing and entry to the building	Reduced attendance and 9:30 start times has meant limited queueing and people have been observing social-distancing
Bag searches	None of the reported cases involve security guards. Feedback from an attendee about lack of hand sanitizer at the search areas. Action: HMCTS to provide.
Use of handheld detectors	As above
Social-distancing in the public areas	This appears to be working well and attendees are well supported by the ushers. People are wearing face coverings and are being quickly challenged if not (in the non-inquiry areas).
Social-distancing in the courtroom	This has been well managed by both attendees and the ushers and we have at least 2m gaps.
Hygiene and cleaning (public area)	No reported issues, though grateful for feedback. Continue to remind attendees to use hand sanitizer on entry to the room given increased risk in public areas.
Provision of food and water	Plastic bottles only in the hearing room (which we are recycling). Families move to SCC for lunch which appears to be working well. Plenty of time allowed which means people are able to move safely.
Face coverings and provision of PPE	Attendees are wearing coverings, some in the courtroom which is also encouraged. We have a good supply of coverings etc.

Ventilation	The rooms appear to be well ventilated.
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Details of cases:

(the inquiry hearing rooms are on level 3 public side)

	Last date they attended court	When they were tested positive	Where in the court	Action taken
1	Saturday 12 September	16/9	Non-public side level 1. Would have used staff entrance, lifts and toilets.	Deep clean of all possibly affected areas
2	Tuesday 15 September	19/9	Level 3 public side. Would have used public entrance, lifts and toilets.	Deep clean of all possibly affected areas
3	Wednesday 16 September	20/9	Non-public side second level. Would use staff entrance, lifts etc.	Deep clean of all possibly affected areas
4	Friday 18 September	22/9	Levels 1, 3 and 4 public side. Would have used public entrance, lifts and toilets.	Deep clean of all possibly affected areas. Decision to reduce inquiry attendance for the following week
5	Thursday 1st October	13/10	Non-public side level 1. Would have used staff entrance, lifts and toilets.	Deep clean of all possibly affected areas. The Courthouse continues to be cleaned daily, including regular touchpoint cleaning.
6	Friday 9 th October 2020	13/10	Custody suite	Deep clean of all possibly affected areas. The Courthouse

				continues to be cleaned daily, including regular touchpoint cleaning.
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Details of risk assessment:

We assessed whether hearings could safely continue in the light of the reported cases. The factors we considered were:

- Advice from public health – at this stage is not to close the court;
- The number of cases – 2 cases within 14 days increases the level of risk, particularly in the light of the sharp increase in new cases seen across the country;
- The extent to which those infected could have come into contact with hearing attendees. This would have most likely been indirectly through cases 2 and 4, but not through more direct contact (for example in the case of a security guard being infected). Given HMCTS regular cleaning regime of touchpoints, and the time elapsed since their attendance in court this was deemed to be fairly low risk;
- Are the cases connected – as yet no evidence has been established to draw a link between the cases;
- Is the infection likely to have spread in the court – there is no evidence of this yet, however given the increase in numbers we need to be mindful;
- Covid security of the venue – regular cleaning (throughout the day) is in place across all the MC and measures are in place to ensure attendees observe social-distancing guidance. Levels of compliance are generally high;

Our view was that we could safely continue but should look at how we could reduce the level of risk and concluded that:

- Increase slightly numbers in the MC. There will be space for six family members in the public seating in the main hearing room. Otherwise, families will be able to watch proceedings from Spinningfields or from home, and CPs can participate via video-link;
- Remind attendees of the need to wash hands, wear masks and ensure 2m space;
- Wherever possible inquiry staff should not walk into the legal adviser’s section of the 3rd floor.

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The inquiry team also considered the impact of the PM's recent announcements on Covid restrictions and the tier system. In particular, we discussed the guidance to work from home where ever possible. We concluded that, as a legal proceeding that should where possible be held in person, then it would be essential for core participants to travel to the hearings.

The situation is being kept under close review.

Inquiry Secretary

Manchester Arena Inquiry