

Covid Risk assessment v5.0 30th October 2020

This note updates the risk assessment published on 16 October¹.

Summary:

Since the last update there have been 18 positive cases in the Manchester Magistrate's Court including one inquiry attendee, none in Spinningfields or the media annex. Manchester moved into the very high-risk category (Tier 3) on Friday 24 October.

An independent group chaired by Public Health England has been convened to assess the level of risk in the inquiry and Magistrate's Court. It has now met twice, on both occasions concluding that the level of risk in the court and for the inquiry was low and it was safe for the hearings to continue in person. The group recognized the essential work of the inquiry and the importance to the families of holding the hearings in person and that moving to Tier 3 status did not require a change in approach.

Greater Manchester public health officials visited the 3 inquiry sites and was happy with the Covid measures in place and the amount of space available for attendees.

Key points:

- There were 18 reported positive cases in the court between 13 October and 30 October. Eight of these are GeoAmey staff who do not enter any part of the MC shared by inquiry attendees. One of the cases involved an individual who had attended the inquiry;
- Full details on every positive or suspected case has been provided to PHE who have carried out an independent assessment of whether they think the cases are linked and whether this presents a risk to the inquiry. Aside from the GeoAmey cases, no evidence has been found of any link between the cases and it is expected they are the result of community transmission given the high incidence rate in the area;
- Attendees are reminded to let the inquiry know as soon as possible if they are symptomatic or have had a positive test.

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

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 0161 830 4331. Please include the words 'contact tracing' in the subject line of any email.

Feedback from CPs on Covid safety

a. What further measures can be taken within the Court room to reduce the risk of transmission between RLRs and Counsel (Many of whom we note are not masked in court when not asking questions) and can be seen on the live stream engaging in conversation in close proximity?

A: The inquiry has taken measures to ensure the hearings can take place safely in person. The room has been arranged to allow plenty of space between individuals and as an additional measure plexiglass has been installed. Public health officials were very positive about the layout noting the amount of space people had been given.

We would however continue to remind attendees not to engage at close proximity, and if they are less than 2m apart need to use additional measures such as face coverings. The Chairman continues to remind attendees of this point.

b. What further measures can be taken within the Courtroom to reduce the risk of transmission to or between the families and others in attendance, and staff?

No further measures have been identified by the public health officials, except hand sanitizer to be made available in the kitchen. We continue to keep this under review.

c. What further steps can be taken to enforce social distancing between court attendees?

Ushers will intervene where they see any potential breaches of social distancing and the Chairman will continue to remind attendees.

d. Has consideration been given to encouraging CP counsel and RLRs to attend remotely?

We do have in place a very good video option for CPs which a number of CPs are using. For the week ending 30 October, on average 16 CPs attended the hearings, and up to 40 took part remotely.

e. How the Inquiry risk assessment reflects the reality that some of those attending hearings also then attend the Annex and then return to the court, increasing the risk of infection.

It only increases the risk of infection if people come into contact with one another. The measures we have put in place across all 3 sites mean that there is enough space for people to eat their lunch or meet their lawyer and observe social distancing.

f. Given the number of positive tests of persons who have attended within the Magistrates' Court building itself, has further consideration been given to temporarily moving the inquiry into another singular location, such as the Spinningfields annex?

The inquiry is largely self-contained within the MC. Where there is interaction, such as touch points, HMCTS have a very thorough cleaning process in place.

g. It was our submission at the outset of the inquiry that those engaged in the inquiry should have access to daily or weekly testing to identify positive cases at the earliest opportunity. Has this question been revisited since the beginning of the hearings and/or since

Yes, this was raised with PHE at our meeting on 24 October (along with the use of temperature checks). The view of the public health experts was that it would do nothing to reduce the level of risk and could encourage a false sense of confidence.

9 Sections of our risk assessment:

Area	Observations
Queueing and entry to the building	No issues reported
Bag searches	As above
Use of handheld detectors	As above
Social-distancing in the public areas	Some near misses have been observed at lunchtime in SCC. This has been addressed by reducing the number of seats per table and

	each table now has a sign reminding attendees that it should be 1 household per table.
Social-distancing in the courtroom	Attendees need to remain at 2m plus at all times or take additional steps eg face coverings where this is not possible
Hygiene and cleaning (public area)	No reported issues.
Provision of food and water	No issues reported
Face coverings and provision of PPE	No issues reported
Ventilation	The rooms appear to be well ventilated.

Inquiry Secretary

Manchester Arena Inquiry