

Covid Risk assessment (23rd November 2020)

This note updates the risk assessment published on 13 November¹.

Summary:

In the week commencing 23 November, the Inquiry will be taking a planned break from oral evidence hearings.

Since 9 November, there have been no confirmed positive cases in the Manchester Magistrates' Court; one in Spinningfields and none in the media annex. A national lockdown remains in force and is due to remain in place until at least 2 December. In response to the one confirmed case within the Inquiry, all areas visited by the affected individual were fog treated and disinfected immediately.

Public health officials visited the three inquiry sites on 26 October. They were satisfied that attendees were observing social distancing and that the sites were Covid-secure.

Following the Government's announcement of a second national lockdown, the Chairman of the Inquiry stated his intention to continue with in-person hearings. The Magistrates' Court provides an essential public service and will remain open. The Chairman considers that there is legal justification for the Inquiry hearings to continue in person, because some of the Inquiry's objectives would not be achievable using virtual hearings or any other model that was substantially different from in-person hearings.

Key points:

- There has been one reported positive case across the Magistrates' Court and Spinningfields since 9 November. The single case was an individual that works supporting the Inquiry across various areas in Spinningfields Conference Centre.
- Full details on every positive or suspected case has been provided to PHE who have carried out an independent assessment of whether the cases are linked and whether this presents a risk to the inquiry. No evidence has been found of transmission at the Inquiry or within any of the venues used by the Inquiry;
- Attendees are reminded to let the inquiry know as soon as possible if they are symptomatic or have had a positive test.

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 the Court operator or the Inquiry if you become

¹ <https://manchesterarenainquiry.org.uk/covid-19-information/#1570026477238-8b03847f-8254>

symptomatic with any of the main symptoms of Covid-19. [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?

The Inquiry has taken measures to ensure the hearings can take place safely in person. The room has been arranged to allow at least two metres of space between individuals and as an additional measure plexiglass has been installed. Public health officials approved highly of 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 two metres apart, 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 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.

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 has a very thorough cleaning process in place. In the last two weeks there have been no confirmed positive cases from within the Magistrates' Court.

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 one household per table.
Social-distancing in the courtroom	Attendees need to remain at 2m plus at all times or take additional steps (e.g. face coverings where this is not possible).
Hygiene and cleaning (public area)	Following the reporting of a positive case at Spinningfields, all affected areas were fog

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	treated the same day. Regular touchpoint cleaning continues to take place.
Provision of food and water	No issues reported.
Face coverings and provision of PPE	No issues reported.
Ventilation	The rooms are well ventilated.

Inquiry Secretary

Manchester Arena Inquiry