



Number 21

IfJ COVID-19 Updates.

03/05/20-10/06/20

These notes are a summary of information shared with IfJ and organisations involved in the justice system and those working with users of the system. In sharing these comments and providing links to resources, IfJ provides this material but does not accept responsibility for its content which may not represent the opinions of IfJ.

IfJ news

The regular Zoom meeting for IfJ members which began at the start of the pandemic continues, providing an opportunity to discuss current issues, experiences and to gain support during ongoing and evolving situation. -Notes on the meeting will be on the web site soon. The Update notes are divided in to: 'Remote process', Covid-19 transmission, children, Gov.UK, updates, other and resources.

Intermediary discussions

The ongoing discussions regarding experience and new approaches to working remotely are very informative in exploring a variety of options. Advice was sought in which a VP with literacy difficulties, attending the FC would be required to access paper documents and that this would not be practical with the need to keep social distancing. The following options were suggested:

Use of "Caseline" – an electronic bundle system it requires two computers one viewed by the VP the other computer allows pages to be turned (limitations if VP not a confident reader or unfamiliar with technology, may still be a challenge sitting 2 meters away, may take time to establish links))

Similarly, using two computers as described in practice in NZ. The VP views a computer which is connected via a vga. This method allows the intermediary to zoom in to parts of a document being discussed and can simultaneously be viewed by the VP. (cons. As above)

Take photographs of relevant parts of bundle, place relevant pages in protective plastic pockets.



Masks (intermediary discussion) intermediaries have been discussing what type of masks are suitable , the difficulties of establishing how to choose the best sort and the potential impact on communication.

Remote Process

BBC 4 Law in Action: can virtual courts deliver justice?

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m000jmtc>

Remote hearing guidance from the new **Transparency project**.

The Judicial College has published Equal Treatment Bench Book guidance on remote hearings that may be of interest to us. <https://www.judiciary.uk/publications/new-edition-of-the-equal-treatment-bench-book-launched/>

<https://twitter.com/seethrujustice/status/1269735579253702659?s=12>

[Socially distanced courts won't dent the case backlog](#)

[I have just finished defending in the first crown court trial started and completed in England since the pandemic took hold.](#)

<https://twitter.com/crimbarrister/status/1268448601648377856?s=12>

Covid-19 Transmission

The Civil Justice Council on the impact of Covid-19 on civil court users published:

<https://www.judiciary.uk/announcements/civil-justice-council-report-on-the-impact-of-covid-19-on-civil-court-users-published/>

WHO has produced new guidance on the wearing of face masks for over 60's :

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jun/05/who-changes-advice-medical-grade-masks-over-60s>

BMA discuss the need to wear face masks <https://www.bma.org.uk/news-and-opinion/face-covering-measures-are-important-now-and-should-not-be-restricted-to-public-transport-says-bma>

Laura Vickers discussing feeling safe in hearing

<https://twitter.com/LauraVickersNo5/status/1268918364002553859?s=09>

More courts opening up: HM Courts & Tribunals Service is reopening another 16 courts this week after they were assessed to be suitable to holding socially-distanced hearings. Lord Chancellor Robert Buckland QC said the latest development will give people confidence justice can continue to be done safely. Around 159 courts have remained open during the Covid-19 pandemic. A further nine opened in the last few weeks. Today, HMCTS said each building at the 16 sites reopening this week has been individually assessed and will follow strict public health guidance. <https://www.lawgazette.co.uk/news/more-courts-reopen-this-week-for-socially-distanced-business/5104554.article>

The managing director of a criminal defence firm says he is enraged that he is having to chase HM Courts & Tribunals Service for a court risk assessment so he can decide whether or not it is safe to send out his staff. <https://www.lawgazette.co.uk/practice/solicitor-enraged-by-struggle-to-see-court-risk-assessment/5104559.article>

Children

This guide explains how to keep your contact details confidential in family court proceedings. The number of people that do not know about the existence of this form continues to surprise me.: <http://www.azharhussain.co.uk/how-do-i-keep-my-contact-details-confidential-in-family-court/>

How young children think about maths and time : <https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/m000jmn3>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/technology-52944499/coronavirus-face-mask-lights-up-with-moving-mouth-shapes>

Court hearings held remotely in lockdown disadvantage vulnerable people and should not be used longer term, lawyers and charities have said.

Since the pandemic broke earlier this year, the number of virtual hearings held in England and Wales has increased five-fold. But family law practitioners said video and phone calls were not suitable for some sensitive cases: <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-52854168>

Other

Supreme court orders libel case retrial over judge's 'barrage of hostility'. Judge's use of 'immoderate, ill-tempered and at times offensive language' meant trial was unfair, court rules <https://www.google.co.uk/amp/s/amp.theguardian.com/law/2020/jun/03/supreme-court-orders-libel-case-retrial-over-judges-barrage-of-hostility>
<https://www.bailii.org/uk/cases/UKSC/2020/23.html>



A long-practising barrister has been fined £1,000 for being rude to a judge, after allegedly pulling faces at her and calling one of her decisions 'insane'.

<https://www.lawgazette.co.uk/news/barrister-fined-for-pulling-faces-at-judge/5104517.article>

Gov.UK guidance

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-courts-and-tribunals-planning-and-preparation>

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/hmcts-daily-operational-summary-on-courts-and-tribunals-during-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak>

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/hmcts-weekly-operational-summary-on-courts-and-tribunals-during-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak>

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