

# Our hearings venues: A guide to socially-distanced, Covid-secure physical hearings

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# Our hearings venues: A guide to socially-distanced, Covid-secure physical hearings

Covid-19 and a national lockdown meant we had to close our hearings venues in March 2020. We only held a small number of hearings where we had to manage an immediate risk to the public, and they took place virtually. From September 2020, we're now holding a limited number of face to face hearings while also continuing to run virtual hearings.

We're pleased to welcome you back to our hearings venues in London and Edinburgh. For now, our Cardiff and Belfast venues remain closed.

Before visiting our venues we'd like you to read this guide and follow the instructions in it. When you visit our venues, please follow any instructions our colleagues give and observe the notices for your safety and that of others.

Your safety is our number one priority. By following our guide and the adaptations we've made to our hearing venues, you can stay safe and help everyone else to do the same.

Before attending our hearing venues, we also recommend familiarising yourself with and following the advice of the United Kingdom Government and the devolved administrations.

You can find more information by clicking on the links below:

- [UK Government advice](#)
- [Scottish Government advice](#)
- [Welsh Assembly advice](#)
- [Northern Ireland Executive advice](#)

## Important

You must not come to any of our hearings venues if you have any one of the three key symptoms of Covid-19:

- a high temperature;
- a persistent cough;
- a change in your sense of taste or smell.

You should also not attend a hearings venue if you're otherwise too unwell.

If you are unable to attend, please let us know as soon as possible by contacting your usual NMC contact or by emailing us on [c19reporting@nmc-uk.org](mailto:c19reporting@nmc-uk.org)

If you're attending one of buildings, we'll ask you for your contact details. We'll keep these for 21 days to comply with NHS Test and Trace where required. If you develop symptoms of Covid-19 within 14 days of attending a hearing, please contact us and let us know by calling our hearing venue on 020 7681 5600.

# Before coming to our venues

## Planning your visit

Please plan and prepare in advance for attending one of our hearings venues. Please consider your health, how you'll stay safe, whether anyone else will attend with you, your travel and accommodation arrangements, and anything else that's important to you.

Once you arrive at one of our hearings venues, you'll find that we've done all we can to try and keep you as safe as possible. We're following relevant Government guidance carefully and we're making every effort to try to keep you as safe as possible.

The arrangements that we've put in place should be enough to keep all attendees safe from Covid-19, with the risk of transmission being very low, even in the event of a contagious person inadvertently attending one of our venues. The measures that we've taken should be sufficient to keep people of all backgrounds safe, including those who may face a higher risk from Covid-19. However, if you have good reason to believe that it wouldn't be safe for you to attend, you should contact us immediately.

If you will be a participant at a hearing, rather than an observer, please bring a laptop or similar electronic device with you if you have one, along with the charger. This could be helpful during the hearing if there's anything that it would be useful to look at electronically.

## Local advice and lockdown

The UK Government and each devolved administration has responsibility for public health. This includes national and local lockdowns, testing, track and tracing systems, social distancing and quarantine requirements.

At all times, we're following the advice of the UK Government and the devolved administrations. You should also follow their advice.

### Local lockdown

If you live in an area that's subject to local lockdown you must not breach lockdown to attend a hearing.

If you're subject to a local lockdown, please contact us to let us know:

- If you're the nurse, midwife, nursing associate under investigation or representing someone under investigation please contact your case coordinator;
- If you're a panel member or legal assessor please contact our panel allocation team; or
- If you're a witness, please contact your case coordinator.

You'll find details of who to contact in letters or emails we've sent you.

### Local advice

Before attending our hearing venues, you should familiarise yourself with local regulations and restrictions. You can find more information by visiting the UK Government and devolved administration websites. Links are provided above.

### Quarantine

You can't attend one of our venues if you're in quarantine or have arrived back to the UK from a country that requires you to quarantine. If you're quarantining and can't attend a planned hearing, please contact us via your usual contact or on [c19reporting@nmc-uk.org](mailto:c19reporting@nmc-uk.org)

### Check the hearing you're due to attend

If you're due to attend a virtual hearing, this will take place using our video and audio conferencing system 'GoToMeeting'. You won't need to attend our venues and can join the hearing using your own computer, tablet, smartphone or telephone. Details and information about how to join the virtual hearing will be provided to you in advance for your personal use.

If you're due to attend a hearing at one of our venues, this means you are expected to attend in person. We recognise, however, that sometimes some participants may need to attend remotely, rather than in person. This also happened prior to the pandemic, but was relatively rare.

We recommend checking any letters or emails we've sent you about the hearing. If you're unsure if the hearing that you're due to attend is taking place at one of our venues or virtually, then please contact us.

Please note that we may consider it appropriate to stagger hearing start times, to avoid congestion at the hearings venue, particularly at reception. Details regarding the time that you'll be asked to arrive for a

hearing will be confirmed by your case coordinator or by reception before the hearing.

## Attending a hearing: Travelling to our venues

Before you come to one of our venues, you'll need to be prepared to travel and to understand if there are any restrictions or requirements as a condition of your travel. For instance most public transport, including air travel, currently requires passengers to wear a face mask or visor.

We recommend you allow plenty of time for your journey as travel times may be unpredictable.

### Train travel

We recommend checking the website of the train company you're travelling with. You can also check the National Rail website [here](#).

### Air travel

We recommend checking the website of the airline you're travelling with. You should also check the website of the airport you're travelling to and from.

### Tube and London bus travel

We recommend checking the Transport for London website [here](#).

### Local buses

We recommend checking the website of your local bus provider if you're travelling on a local bus service.

### Driving and parking

If you're travelling to our hearings venues by car, the addresses of our venues are:

#### London

2 Stratford Place  
Montfichet Road  
London  
E20 1EJ

#### Edinburgh

114 – 116  
George Street  
Edinburgh  
EH2 4LH

Parking is available close to both venues. At Edinburgh there are pay and display parking bays on George St and the surrounding streets and at Stratford you can park in the Westfield Shopping Centre carpark located behind our hearings venue for a fixed fee per day.

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If you're travelling in a personal vehicle through Central London, you may need to pay the congestion charge and the Ultra Low Emission Zone charge. You can find more information [here](#).

If you're a witness in a case, your case coordinator will be in touch before the hearing to organise your travel and book this for you. If you would prefer to drive to the hearing venue, please discuss this with your case coordinator.

If you're the nurse, midwife or nursing associate due to attend your own hearing and require financial assistance to travel to your hearing, please talk to your case coordinator.

Support with travel costs isn't provided for anyone wishing to observe a hearing.

### Hotel accommodation

There are a range of accommodation options close to our venues in London and Edinburgh.

If you're getting your own accommodation, we recommend checking the hotel's website to ensure that it complies with the UK Government's or devolved administration's Covid-19 guidance as applicable depending on the location of the hearing you're attending.

If, however, we're paying for your accommodation then it will be booked through our travel and accommodation partner, Click Travel. Click Travel provides assurance of the hotel accommodation we provide, this service is called Click Cares. Click Cares ensures that the hotels we use are Covid-19 secure.



# At our hearings venues

## General information and guidance about our hearings venues

Following guidance from the UK Government and the devolved administrations, we've adapted our London and Edinburgh hearing venues to ensure we're able to hold socially-distanced, Covid-secure physical hearings.

We've outlined what you can expect when visiting our hearings venues and we recommend that you familiarise yourself with and follow our instructions to ensure you have a safe visit.

### Arriving at our venue

When you arrive at our London venue, you'll need to take the lift to the sixth floor. To ensure social distancing, only one person may use the lift at a time. Please wait and don't enter a lift in use by someone else.

When you arrive at our Edinburgh venue, you can go straight to reception and our colleagues will direct you to the relevant waiting area.



### Reception and signing in

Whether you're attending our London or Edinburgh hearing venue, you'll need to sign in at our reception. If you're attending for more than one day, please make sure you sign in each day as we'll need to know how many people are in our venues and who is there each day.

When you arrive, please go straight to reception. Tell them your name and they'll sign you in. Please follow the instructions of our staff about which room you should go to next.

You'll be given a device at reception that you can use to open doors, to avoid touching door handles. Please keep this with you during the day and

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drop it in the box by reception when you leave each evening. You can collect a clean one when you sign in each day.

When you sign in, we'll ask you for your contact details. We'll keep these for the purposes of test and trace programmes in place for Covid-19, we're required to request a contact telephone number for every visitor to our hearings venues, when you sign in at reception. We'll ensure any personal contact details are kept securely and in line with our data protection policy.

### **Bringing someone with you support**

If you're bringing a family member or friend with you to the hearing for support, you must inform your case coordinator in advance of the hearing. This is so we can check that we will have room to accommodate them.

Because of social distancing requirements, not all our hearing rooms can accommodate any extra people in addition to those necessary for the hearing. We therefore need to know if you want to bring anyone with you so we can try and accommodate them if possible. Whilst we may be able to allow them to wait with you, they may not be able to come into the hearing room with you.

### **Face masks and visors**

Anyone in our venues is expected to wear a face covering in any communal areas, such as reception, corridors and toilets, unless they're exempt.

You can also wear a face mask or visor when you're in the hearing room, although this is not required as we have added protective screens in the hearing rooms.

If you're not wearing a face covering in a communal area, our staff may ask you if you can wear one. Please explain if you have a medical reason for not wearing one.

Please don't challenge others who aren't wearing a face mask or visor, as they may have a medical reason for not doing so. If you're concerned that someone is not wearing a face mask or visor please tell our staff and we'll talk to the person.

## One way system and queuing

In our venues, you'll find a one way system in operation. This is marked on the floor with arrows. This is to minimise the flow of people and of people passing each other.

Please observe and follow the one way system at all times.

If you find that there's a queue for toilets or reception, or facilities such as tea and coffee, please always form an orderly queue, keeping at least 2 metres behind the person in front of you. Please follow the direction of the one way system in doing so.

## Hand sanitiser and desk wipes

At various point around our venues, you'll find hand sanitiser and desk wipes. Please feel free to use both as often as you like.

We recommend washing or sanitising your hands when you arrive at our hearing venues.



We also recommend continuing to wash or sanitise your hands regularly throughout the day.

In many of our rooms you'll find desk wipes. These can be used to wipe and sanitise the desk or any other area you're seated or working at. We recommend wiping the desk or area you're at when you arrive and wiping it again as you leave.

## Our rooms

Our hearings venues have rooms for various purposes, such as meetings and staff working areas, as well as rooms where we hold hearings.

Our staff will tell you which room to go to once you've signed in at reception.

We have staff at our hearings venues called 'panel secretaries'. A panel secretary will be responsible for setting up the hearing that you're going to attend and for managing access to the hearing room.

Please don't use any room other than the one that you're directed to.

If you find that you need to use a small meeting room, please follow the one way system back to reception and ask if there are any such rooms available. This is so that we can manage the available rooms and make sure they're clean and safe.

We also have a small contemplation room that is available for quiet reflection and prayer. Please let reception know if you would like to use this room.

### **Social distancing and protective screens**

We're closely following relevant Government to ensure we're able to hold socially-distanced, Covid-secure physical hearings.

The current guidance requires that we all keep two metres apart or at least one metre apart with other measures in place.

You can help us keep everyone safe by keeping two metres away from others in all communal areas. In hearing rooms, we've installed large protective screens between desks so that participants will be divided by a screen as well as being at least one metre apart.

In other rooms, we've arranged the furniture to ensure that you're socially distanced from others. We'd ask that you don't move our furniture or protective screens as they've been purposefully set up to ensure your safety and that of others.

### **Air conditioning**

Our hearing venues have air conditioning but we've ensured that the systems are now using only fresh air that is drawn in from outside, filtered and then circulated around our hearing venues. Because we're not recirculating air, you may find our hearing venues are cooler than you may expect, and may wish to bring an extra layer of clothing with you.

### **Lunch and refreshments**

Please note that we'll continue to provide sandwiches for the nurse, midwife or nursing associate attending their hearing as well as witnesses. These will be provided in separate, closed packaging. Alternatively, you can bring your own lunch or leave the building to purchase lunch.

Tea and coffee will also be available throughout the day at the hearing venues. Cups and water glasses will be provided but please feel free to bring your own to use, if you would you.

### **Cleaning**

We've implemented an enhanced, rigorous cleaning programme for our venues. We'll have cleaners at our venues undertaking regular cleaning. They'll focus on communal areas like toilets and 'touch points' - these are points that are most likely to be touched by people such as door handles and lift buttons.

# General advice

## Tips for everyone attending our hearing venues

- If you're feeling unwell, don't come to our hearing venues. Please contact us to let us know;
- Please follow the instructions given by our staff, our signage and keep two metres apart from others, except where there are screens between you;
- Please be patient if you're waiting to use our facilities that are occupied by others;
- Please wash or sanitise your hands regularly;
- Please wipe the desk you're sitting or working at when you arrive and leave;
- Please don't rearrange any furniture or move protective screens;
- Please dispose of confidential waste in the bins provided;
- Please place your personal rubbish in the bins provided; and
- Though we provide drinking water, you may feel more comfortable bringing your own water bottle. This can be refilled at our venues.

## Information for people wanting to observe our hearings

### Observing our hearings: The options

Members of the public are usually allowed to observe certain hearings, but so far during the pandemic there has generally been no public access.

We will be resuming access for observers over the next few weeks and will share information on how to request access to a virtual or physical hearing as a member of the public shortly.

In the meantime, if you would like to observe a hearing please email [observer.bookings@nmc-uk.org](mailto:observer.bookings@nmc-uk.org) at least 48 hours in advance.

Our guide on observing hearings can be found [here](#).



# Contacting us

If you have any questions, please contact us.

- If you're a nurse, midwife or nursing associate under investigation or representing someone under investigation please contact your case officer;
- If you're a panel member or legal assessor please contact the panel allocation team; and
- If you're a witness, please contact your listings officer.
- If you're someone wishing to observe a hearing, please contact [observer.bookings@nmc-uk.org](mailto:observer.bookings@nmc-uk.org).

For all other enquiries, you can also find general contact details on our website [here](#).

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## Version log

If we make changes to our guide we'll put them here. We'll let you know what section or sections of the guide changed and what date we made that change. This will help you find any new information.

Just so you know, we first published this guide on 11 September 2020.

What's changed?	What pages is that on?	What date did we make that change?