

Eight more Nightingale Courts to deliver justice

- New temporary courts to begin hearing cases from next week to further boost capacity
- Magistrates' courts now completing more cases than they receive
- Part of Government plan to ensure justice continues to be served throughout pandemic

The Lowry Theatre in Salford, Jury's Inn Middlesbrough, and the Hilton Hotel in York will begin hearing cases from next week, with the remaining five sites to be confirmed in the coming weeks. In total they will deliver 16 extra courtrooms.

This boost to capacity comes as existing measures have started to deliver real gains for the system, with magistrates' courts now hearing more cases than they receive.

The Nightingale Courts will hear non-custodial crime cases, as well as civil, family and tribunals work. The move will free up more room in existing courts to hear other cases, including custodial jury trials, which require cells and secure dock facilities to keep the public, victims and witnesses safe.

It brings the total number of Nightingales to 17, providing 32 court rooms, rapidly set up across England and Wales to alleviate the pressure on courts and tribunals resulting from the pandemic. An initial 10 opened their doors in the summer and are currently running at roughly 80% capacity – higher than the average of comparable courts in usual times.

The Lord Chancellor, Robert Buckland QC MP said:

We are beginning to see positive signs thanks to the hard work of everyone working in our system – with the number of outstanding cases in magistrates' courts now falling as a result of the measures we have introduced.

But we must keep going if we are to get our courts back up to speed. These additional eight Nightingale Courts will further boost our efforts to increase capacity – reducing delays and delivering speedier justice for all.

The remaining five announced today are located at sites in Chester, Liverpool, Bristol, Winchester and Cirencester, and will open in the coming weeks.

It comes as the measures put in place to increase the capacity of courts and tribunals are beginning to deliver significant results, helping to drive down

the number of outstanding cases:

- Magistrates' courts are seeing the number of [outstanding cases](#) fall – dealing with more than 21,000 cases a week
- Crown Courts are currently holding over 100 jury trials, and clear more than 1,700 cases a week
- Plexiglass screens are being rolled out to 300 courtrooms and jury deliberation rooms enabling 250 Crown Court rooms to safely open for jury trials. This is more than were operating before the pandemic.

Since 1 August 2020, magistrates' courts have heard 1,000 extra cases through additional Saturday sittings. Liverpool, Hull, Stafford and Snaresbrook Crown Courts are already piloting temporary 'COVID operating hours', with other crown courts to follow next week.

Today's announcement follows an [£80m boost](#) for HM Courts and Tribunals Service (HMCTS) to meet the unprecedented challenge presented by the pandemic. This includes employing [1,600 new staff](#) to support the recovery, setting up more Nightingale Courts, and a further rollout of technology across the estate.

Meanwhile, a major [£142 million investment](#) across the courts system announced in July seeks to speed up technological improvements and modernise courtrooms.

Notes to Editors

1. Our [criminal court recovery plan](#) sets out how capacity will be boosted in the criminal courts to drive down delays.
2. The [10 Nightingale Courts unveiled](#) this summer are now operational, details on a further eight will be announced in due course. The Hertfordshire Nightingale Court has since closed.
3. A [major £142million investment has been announced to improve more than 100 courts](#).
4. New video technology continues to be rolled out having been used in up to 90% of hearings since the outbreak began.
5. The timescale for each court opening is as follows:
 - The Lowry Theatre, Salford – 28 September
 - Hilton Hotel, York – 28 September
 - Jury's Inn, Middlesbrough – 28 September
 - Chester – October
 - Liverpool – October
 - Winchester – October
 - Cirencester – October
 - Bristol – October