

# Nightingale Courts extended to support justice recovery

Press release

Thirty Nightingale Court rooms are to be extended until March next year as the government continues in its efforts to tackle the impact of COVID-19 on the justice system and secure speedier justice for victims.



- 30 Nightingale Court rooms extended
- It builds on raft of measures to speed up justice for victims after the unprecedented impact of the pandemic
- Backlog already beginning to drop in the Crown Court as a result of efforts so far

During the pandemic, sports arenas, hotels, and conference centres were rapidly transformed into court rooms to provide more space for jury trials when social distancing was in place. The continued use of some of these Nightingale Courts in areas such as the South East, London and the Midlands will help drive court recovery and reduce delays.

Justice Minister, James Cartlidge, said:

Nightingale Courts continue to be a valuable weapon in the fight against the pandemic's unprecedented impact on our courts providing temporary extra capacity.

Combined with other measures – such as removing the cap on Crown Court sitting days, more use of remote hearings, and increasing magistrate sentencing powers – we are beginning to see the backlog drop so victims can get the speedier justice they deserve.

Today's (3 March 2022) announcement builds on the significant action taken since the start of the pandemic to drive court recovery including:

- Legislating to double the sentencing powers available to magistrates from 6 months to a year to free up an estimated 2,000 extra days of Crown Court sitting time each year.
- Investing a quarter of a billion pounds to support recovery in the courts in the last financial year – plus over £50 million for victims and support services.
- Ensuring there is no limit on the number of sitting days in the Crown Court this year.
- Creating 2 ‘super courtrooms’ which can accommodate up to 12 defendants; increasing capacity for large trials.
- Opening 3,265 Cloud Video Platform virtual court rooms across all jurisdictions. These currently hold around 13,600 hearings per week using audio and/or video hearings.

The impact of these measures, alongside the re-opening of 60 Crown courtrooms since the peak of the virus, is already being seen. The latest figures show that in December 2021 the crown court backlog dropped to under 59,000. This is a fall of over 2,000 since its peak in June 2021. Meanwhile, in the magistrates’ courts, the outstanding criminal caseload has dropped by almost 70,000 cases since its peak in July 2021.

In places such as the North West where the number of outstanding cases has dropped significantly in recent months, the majority of the temporary courts are no longer needed and will wind down at the end of March 2021.

Following the relaxation of COVID-19 restrictions, courtroom capacity has returned to pre-pandemic levels.

## Notes to editors

- The sites will remain open until March next year. The locations are as follows:
  - Prospero House, London (three Crown court rooms)
  - Barbican, London (two Crown court rooms)
  - Croydon Jurys Inn, London (two Crown court rooms)
  - Mercure Hotel, Maidstone (two Crown court rooms)
  - Former court, Chichester (two Crown court rooms)
  - Former county court, Telford (three civil and family court rooms)
  - Park Hall Hotel, Wolverhampton (two Crown court rooms)
  - Maple House, Birmingham (two Crown court rooms and two civil family and/or tribunal court rooms)
  - Former Magistrates court, Fleetwood (two civil and family court rooms)
  - Cloth Hall court, Leeds (three Crown court rooms)
  - Civic Centre, Swansea (one Crown court room)
  - Former Magistrates’ court, Cirencester (one Crown court room, one Magistrates rooms)
  - Negotiations to secure a new two-courtroom venue in London to replace the Nightingale at Monument are ongoing
- The sites which are closing as planned are not needed because HMCTS has reopened existing hearing rooms as social distancing measures have eased. We now have sufficient rooms in these areas for all the available

Crown Court judges. We are hiring 1,100 new judges this year to further boost our efforts to increase capacity and tackle the backlog.

- 102 Petty France, London (four family court rooms)
  - Monument, London (two Crown court rooms)
  - Jury's Inn Hotel, Middlesbrough (two civil and family court rooms)
  - Knights' chamber and visitor Centre, Peterborough (one Crown court room)
  - Mercure Hotel, Nottingham (two Crown court rooms)
  - M40 J15 Warwick Hotel, Warwick (two Crown court rooms)
  - Hilton Hotel, Manchester (two Crown court rooms)
  - Hilton Hotel, Liverpool (one Crown court room)
  - University of Bolton Stadium, Bolton (one Crown court room)
  - Crowne Plaza, Chester (two Crown court rooms)
  - The Guildhall, Winchester (three civil family and/or tribunal court rooms)
- 470 existing courtrooms are now open
  - Our latest backlog stats are available on GOV.UK:  
[www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/hmcts-management-information-december-2021](http://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/hmcts-management-information-december-2021)
  - More information on the increase in magistrate sentencing powers is available on GOV.UK:  
[www.gov.uk/government/news/magistrates-courts-given-more-power-to-tackle-backlog](http://www.gov.uk/government/news/magistrates-courts-given-more-power-to-tackle-backlog)

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## [Reinforcing our support for the rights and freedoms of all Afghans](#)

Thank you Madam President. Let me join others in wishing you and your team all the best for your Presidency. And let me thank SRSG Lyons and Mariam Safi for their powerful and sobering briefings.

The situation in Afghanistan remains of deep concern. Afghanistan is facing the world's most severe food security crisis and more than half the population is in need of emergency assistance. The risks of a humanitarian catastrophe remain real and urgent action is needed to avert economic collapse.

So, the work of UNAMA and UN leadership in leading an adequately resourced, prioritised and coordinated international response remains absolutely

crucial.

The United Kingdom remains one of the foremost supporters of the humanitarian response.

UK aid to Afghanistan has already doubled this year to \$381 million. The UK has also agreed to co-host a Pledging Conference on 31 March to raise funds for the UN's Humanitarian Response Plan. I urge all member states to step up their support.

However, humanitarian assistance can only go so far. We welcome the UN's Transitional Engagement Framework, a whole of UN system approach to the provision of life saving assistance and support for basic human needs. The international community must act quickly to find creative solutions to address the liquidity crisis and to establish principles and mechanisms for providing assistance beyond basic humanitarian aid.

For its part, the Taliban needs to address the international community's concerns, as we set out in Security Council Resolution 2596.

We are particularly concerned by reports of increased reprisals against former security forces and government officials, as well as attacks against minority groups and detentions of civil society representatives.

The recent arrests of female activists, and members of their families, for protesting peacefully in support of women's rights were especially worrying, as were announcements that appear to further restrict women's ability to travel.

In the last few weeks in certain provinces, some women have been able to return to university, and the Taliban has made important public commitments that all girls will be able to return to secondary school at the end of March when schools reopen following winter break.

Educating healthy women and girls will contribute to peace, stability and development, and we will be watching closely to see that the Taliban meets their commitments

Madam President, it is vital that we in this Council continue to speak with one voice in support of the UN's work in the months ahead, and we look forward to discussions on the upcoming UNAMA mandate renewal.

The United Kingdom fully supports an empowered and effective UN Mission responsible for delivery of the humanitarian response; monitoring and advocating for the freedoms and rights of all Afghans; and promoting stability. We hope all members of the Security Council unite behind this in support of the people of Afghanistan.

Thank you.

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# International pressure will not relent until every Russian soldier is out of Ukraine

Thank you, Mr President, Colleagues,

The United Nations spoke clearly this morning.

141 countries voted in favour of this resolution and against Russian aggression in Ukraine.

It is a clear message:

that we condemn President Putin's war;

that we support the Ukrainian people;

that we uphold the principles of the Charter.

Russia's international isolation is clear for all to see.

The Russian people did not want this isolation. They did not want this war.

President Putin's decision to start this war has made Russia a global pariah.

We will ensure President Putin's war of choice comes at a heavy cost.

International pressure and isolation will not relent until every Russian soldier is out of Ukraine.

The free world stands with the people of Ukraine.

Our votes today are for the brave Ukrainians who are suffering the barbaric shelling of their cities and are besieged by Russian forces.

We must support the Ukrainian people with the diplomatic, economic, humanitarian and defensive military assistance they so desperately need.

And our votes today are for the sovereignty and the territorial integrity of every state.

We have stood up against those who seek to redraw the world's borders by threat or use of force.

For if President Putin's aggression against Ukraine goes unchecked, which country could be next?

Today we have shown that we will defend together the Charter and the rules we built together.

I thank you, Mr President.

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## [UK leads call for ICC to investigate Russia's war crimes](#)

The UK has galvanised allies to refer atrocities in Ukraine to the International Criminal Court.

38 nations have now grouped together to expedite an ICC investigation, through state party referral.

The ICC Prosecutor can now proceed straight to an investigation.

The UK has led efforts to bring together allies today to expedite an ICC investigation into Russian war crimes in Ukraine, through state party referral. With 37 countries joining the UK, it is the largest referral in the history of the ICC.

Following a preliminary examination of the situation in Ukraine, opened by the International Criminal Court (ICC) in 2014 after Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea, the Prosecutor has, on Monday 28 February, stated his intention to seek authorisation from the ICC judges to launch an investigation into the Situation in Ukraine.

State party referral, made by a group of 38 countries, will enable the Prosecutor to proceed straight to an investigation, without the need for judicial approval.

Russia's use of indiscriminate force against innocent civilians, in its illegal and unprovoked invasion of Ukraine, amounts to war crimes, for which the Putin regime must be held accountable.

The Foreign Secretary Liz Truss said:

Putin's military machine is targeting civilians indiscriminately and tearing through towns across Ukraine.

An investigation by the International Criminal Court into Russia's barbaric acts is urgently needed and it is right that those responsible are held to account. The UK will work closely with allies to ensure justice is done.

Deputy Prime Minister, Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice, Dominic Raab, said:

As a founder member of the International Criminal Court, the UK is willing to provide the necessary technical assistance to support successful convictions.

The critical task now is to preserve properly all evidence of war crimes.

Any Russian leader or officer carrying out orders that amount to war crimes should know they face ending up in the dock of a court and ultimately in prison.

This referral is made by the following group of States Parties: Republic of Albania, Commonwealth of Australia, Republic of Austria, Kingdom of Belgium, Republic of Bulgaria, Canada, Republic of Colombia, Republic of Costa Rica, Republic of Croatia, Republic of Cyprus, Czech Republic, Kingdom of Denmark, Republic of Estonia, Republic of Finland, Republic of France, Georgia, Federal Republic of Germany, Hellenic Republic, Hungary, Republic of Iceland, Ireland, Republic of Italy, Republic of Latvia, Principality of Liechtenstein, Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, Republic of Malta, Kingdom of Norway, Kingdom of the Netherlands, New Zealand, Republic of Poland, Republic of Portugal, Romania, Slovak Republic, Republic of Slovenia, Kingdom of Spain, Kingdom of Sweden\*, Swiss Confederation, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Lithuania have also made a coordinated referral.

ENDS

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## **PM statement on the vote at the UN General Assembly: 2 March 2022**

Press release

Prime Minister Boris Johnson's statement on the vote at the UN General Assembly.



Prime Minister Boris Johnson said:

We are united in our abhorrence to the evil actions of Putin's regime and stand side-by-side on the international stage as we deplore its aggression in the strongest possible terms.

Rarely has the contrast between right and wrong been so stark. 141 countries voted to condemn Putin's war.

Along with my almost daily conversations with President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, I have engaged world leaders in our joint mission to denounce Russia's actions and make clear – for the sake of innocent civilians – Russia should withdraw from Ukraine and Putin must fail.

We are – and will continue to be – unified in our resounding admiration for the courage and bravery of President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and the Ukrainian people.

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