



Visiting court custody suites during the coronavirus outbreak

HMPPS Prisoner Escort and Custody Services (PECS) plays an important role in ensuring the safety and security of visitors to court custody suites. PECS also manages the transfer of prisoners to and from police stations, courts and prisons - as well as the provision of court custody managers and dock officers.

HMCTS and PECS have worked in partnership during coronavirus to make sure appropriate safety measures are in place to protect custody staff, detainees and visitors. We've developed this guidance so that custody suite visitors know what to expect.

Safety measures in place

Every court custody suite is different in size, layout and facilities. PECS has completed full risk assessments in every court custody suite to make sure the right measures are in place to keep custody users safe.

The assessment includes consideration of:

- the maximum number of detainees PECS can safely manage in the custody suite
- the maximum number of custody visitors PECS can accommodate at any one time
- the maximum number of court docks PECS can manage
- the suitability of consultation rooms for social distancing
- whether there are any issues with access points (stairs, corridors, lifts, and so on).

PECS will give each court custody suite an overall Red, Amber or Green status based on the above factors, and mitigations will be introduced to manage any risks. Custody suites will only be opened if they are safe.

Helpful things to know

Here's some useful things for you to know:

- PECS are restricting access to court custody areas to a limited number of known persons
- PECS will only use consultation rooms that support social distancing
- HMCTS has introduced regular touchpoint cleaning in court custody suites in addition to daily cleaning routines.
- visitors are allowed (and encouraged) to bring their own hand sanitiser into the custody suite. Antibacterial wipes may also be used



- we have suspended random searching of professional visitors while COVID-19 restrictions are in place. Searches will be risk-based and intelligence led
- visitors may wear their own face masks / coverings. You will be asked to temporarily remove these for identification purposes
- HMCTS will provide face coverings or masks on request to visitors of detainees in custody with symptoms of coronavirus
- court custody officers will not routinely wear face masks or coverings as social distancing is in place. They will only use PPE when directly handling a symptomatic detainee, or where sustained close contact to an individual is required
- where possible, we have introduced locked down phones in our custody suites meaning some consultations can be completed remotely
- custody staff will allow only one visitor through the entry point at a time to maintain social distancing
- for safety and security reasons, legal visits can only take place within the custody suite.

Please observe the restrictions we have introduced. They are for your safety.

Public Health support of operational controls

The operational controls in place are supported by Public Health England and Public Health Wales. They ensure a very low risk of transmission of coronavirus.