

Coronavirus (COVID-19) and site visits, hearings and inquiries – 12 January 2021

Only a small number of staff are working at our offices in Temple Quay House in order to undertake work that cannot be done remotely. Otherwise staff continue to work from home. However, Inspectors are undertaking site visits where it is safe to do so.

Site visits:

- We will be continuing to arrange site visits where it is safe to do so – especially unaccompanied and access required visits. As part of this Inspectors are required to undertake visits in accordance with Government guidance on working safely during the coronavirus when visiting other people's homes. As part of this social distancing should be maintained and face coverings worn. In many cases this can be achieved by just allowing the Inspector access to the site or property.
- Where access is required to a residential building Inspectors will only proceed if social distancing rules can be maintained and it is safe to do so.
- Where the visit involves entering a tenanted property (whether with single or multiple occupants), the appellant will be required to confirm in writing before the site visit that safe and, if practicable, vacant access can be provided to all internal rooms that the Inspector needs to see and that any occupants have been made aware of this prior to the date of the visit. Confirmation of these arrangements will be sought before the visit commences but it may be that such cannot currently proceed given the need to assure safety for both Inspectors and any residents.
- Similarly if the property is a commercial premises, confirmation will be sought from the appellant that the visit can be undertaken whilst maintaining social distancing before agreeing to a visit and at the start of the visit.
- Case officers will be in contact with individual parties and order making authorities as necessary in order to make any necessary arrangements. This may take longer to arrange than normal and it may not be possible to schedule visits strictly in the order that cases were submitted.

Inquiries and hearings:

Our position remains that physical events generally cannot be undertaken safely for both our staff and for participants. For the time being, therefore, our starting point is that inquiries and hearings will be arranged as virtual events.