



COVID-19 safety arrangements - wearing of Fluid Resistant Surgical Masks in custody suites

Introduction

1. There are several safety measures in place in custody suites to minimise the risk of transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19). We are now introducing the use of Fluid Resistant Surgical Masks as an added assurance for professional users.

Background

2. 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.
3. 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.
4. Existing safety measures are outlined below along with further details about use of Fluid Resistant Surgical Masks. This policy will also apply to intermediaries and interpreters visiting custody suites.

Existing safety measures

5. Every court custody suite is different in size, layout and facilities. PECS has completed risk assessments in every court custody suite to make sure we have the right measures to keep custody users safe and minimise the risk of transmission of coronavirus.
6. The following measures are already in place:
 - PECS is restricting access to court custody areas to a limited number of known persons
 - PECS will only use consultation rooms that support social distancing
 - there is regular touchpoint cleaning in court custody suites, in addition to daily cleaning routines
 - custody staff have cleaning materials for use as appropriate.
 - intensive cleans (Section 16 cleans) will be organised in all frequented areas following a confirmed COVID-19 case within the custody suite
 - 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 are risk-based and intelligence led
 - defendants are strongly encouraged to wear face coverings

- 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.

Introducing Fluid Resistant Surgical Masks

7. Fluid Resistant Surgical Masks protect the wearer from aerosol exposure as the masks are resistant to droplets of fluids and splashes. Their use outside of clinical settings must be approved by Public Health to protect supplies for healthcare.
8. PECS introduced mandatory use of Fluid Resistant Surgical Masks for all Custody Officers in October 2020. This was approved by Public Health and in recognition of the difficult working environments within the custody suites, and the need for Custody Officers to have potential unplanned close contact with defendants.
9. We now have agreement from Public Health that we may additionally supply Fluid Resistant Surgical Masks to professional users to wear while they are providing legal consultation in custody suites. This is as an **added assurance** to the existing safety measures that are already in place.
10. Fluid Resistant Surgical Masks will also be made available to intermediaries and interpreters visiting custody suites.

Obtaining a Fluid Resistant Surgical Mask

11. There are different makes of Fluid Resistant Surgical Masks, but all must conform with the European Standards, EN 14683, and will carry a CE mark. Masks are often white and blue triple-layer masks with elastic ear loops or tie strings and are intended for single use. Their use outside healthcare must be approved by Public Health, to protect supplies for healthcare.
12. **Professional users, intermediaries and interpreters will be provided with a Fluid Resistant Surgical Mask from a member of staff** on entry to the custody suite. As a reminder, posters will be on display.

Wearing and taking off a Fluid Resistant Surgical Mask

13. We ask professional users to follow our guidance on how to correctly wear, take off and dispose of their Fluid Resistant Surgical Masks. This guidance will be on display in the custody suite.
14. Professional users should also keep these points in mind:
 - Fluid Resistant Surgical Masks need to be replaced every four hours, or if they are wet on the inside.

- Professional users should not eat while in the custody suite. They may sip a drink, but to minimise risk this will need to be done in a way that minimises time spent without having the mask fully on. To do this, professional users should remove the mask on one side by the loop, and then hook the mask back on.

15. We recognise certain professional users - such as those wearing religious headdress - may not be able to use their ears to secure a Fluid Resistant Surgical Mask. We will have supplies of extenders available for these individuals so that they can secure a Fluid Resistant Surgical Mask at the back of their head, if they do not already have an extender they can use.

