



Covid19 Guidelines on the safe use of the Law Society's consultation rooms at the Four Courts

General

It has been agreed between the Law Society and the Courts Service that the Society's consultation rooms will re-open on 28 June, subject to strict adherence to the Courts Service guidelines and the Law Society's control measures. You should only attend court and you should only invite clients to attend the Four Courts if it is **absolutely necessary** (see Appendix A).

Courts Service Guidelines

Anyone attending court buildings should continue to follow the public health guidance, and the Courts Service health and safety protocols.

To help prevent the spread of the disease please:

- Do not attend court if you have symptoms or if you have been directed to restrict your movement or are waiting the results of a Covid19 test
- Wear a face covering at all times in a court building, unless directed by a judge to remove same
- Keep physical distance of 2 meters from other people
- Continue good hand and respiratory hygiene
- Avoid congregating in groups anywhere inside the building
- Comply with the directions from Courts Service staff in relation to the management of the numbers of persons in court buildings.

The Courts Service video <https://www.courts.ie/covid-19-response-updates> demonstrates what is expected of court users during the current pandemic.

Law Society Control Measures

1. Room Booking and Pre-Attendance

- Before attending yourself or inviting clients to attend you should consider whether this is absolutely necessary.
- Court applications should be done where possible via email or using drop boxes positioned at the Courts.
- The solicitor booking room(s) will be the primary contact for contact tracing purposes.
- When booking consultation room ensure you specify the number of occupants at the time of the booking.

2. Attending the Consultation Rooms

- The solicitor who booked the room (primary contact) should check-in at the Reception Desk, sign the booking form, obtain a key card and familiarize themselves with the location of the allocated room prior to the arrival of their client.
- The primary contact should meet their client at the Public Entrance at Inns Quay (see Appendix B) and bring them to their allocated consultation room. Ensure all attendees are wearing face coverings and maintain 2 metre distancing.
- All consultation room attendees should use the Hand Sanitisation units located at the public entrance.
- All consultation room attendees must adhere to all traffic/queuing signage. Incoming persons have the right of way.
- The primary contact should contact their counsel, if applicable, and invite them to their allocated consultation room.
- In the Law Society's area all consultation room attendees should follow the signage and markings.
- Where possible, corridor doors will be left ajar to reduce touch points.

3. Consultation Room

- Capacities of consultation rooms have been reduced to facilitate 2m distancing and ensure health and safety. Most rooms accommodate 2/3 pax. with the maximum being 4 pax. When booking consultation room ensure you specify the number of occupants at the time of the booking.
- The capacity of each room is reflected in the number of chairs which should not be moved from their designated position. Observe the maximum person capacity notices for each room and comply with consultation room staff directions.
- Hand sanitiser, wipes and tissues are available in each room and should be used by all attendees before commencing your meeting.
- Face masks/coverings must be worn in the corridor and consultation room at all times (unless medically exempt).
- Ensure the air conditioning is switched onto extract and windows should be opened.

4. After Your Consultation

- Once your business has finished you must go to reception and advise that you are finished.
- If you are attending at Court you should go directly to the Courtroom.
- If your business is completed you should exit the Four Courts as soon as possible.
- The primary contact and their clients must use the Chancery Place exit, if not proceeding to Court. If you are proceeding to Court without your client please direct your client to the Chancery Place exit.

5. Other General Matters to Note

- The Solicitors' Writing and Reading Rooms are not available for use at this time.
- The Friary Café remains closed. There are three tea/coffee outlets in the Four Courts, including the Legal & General shop adjacent to the consultation rooms.
- No meetings/discussions to be held in corridors/public areas.
- Cleaning of washroom facilities and communal spaces is performed at least twice a day.
- Consultation rooms and common areas are cleaned using appropriate cleaning/disinfecting products as indicated by HSE.

6. Use of Toilets Facilities

Toilets, in particular smaller ones, present challenges in relation to social distancing, so please note:

1. Gents public toilet: Max. 2 persons
 2. Ladies public toilet: Max. 2 persons
- Always check first if toilet is vacant, if not - wait outside
 - Be conscious of traffic on corridor while waiting.

Appendix A

High Court - Notice re changes commencing 28 June Physical hearings for certain categories of cases **Tuesday, 1 June**

Having regard to recent Covid19 statistics, the projected progress of the national vaccination programme and the Government's proposal to ease current Covid restrictions over the coming weeks, the High Court, with the agreement of the Courts Service, is satisfied that it can safely make some adjustments to its programme of work for the Trinity term. Please note that the proposed adjustments will relate solely to the manner in which the cases listed below will be heard and will only commence as and from 28 June 2021:

- i. Personal injuries actions in Dublin.
- ii. Personal injuries actions at the following provincial venues: Galway (28 June-9 July) and Cork (12 July-23 July).
- iii. Circuit Appeals at Galway (12-16 July), Castlebar (19 -23 July), Letterkenny (26-30 July) and Dundalk (26-30 July).
- iv. Cork Non-Jury actions 28 June-9 July.

ALL OTHER HIGH COURT WORK WILL PROCEED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE NOTICE ON THE COURTS SERVICE WEBSITE DATED 10 MAY 2021

Insofar as the four categories of work above mentioned are concerned the following procedures and health and safety precautions will apply:

1. The list each day will be called over remotely.
2. Whilst parties with cases in the above categories are strongly encouraged to opt for a remote hearing, physical hearings of non-urgent cases may resume. However, witnesses should be kept to a minimum and should only attend the courtroom when their presence is required.
3. Pre-trial consultations and negotiations should be held well in advance of the proposed hearing date to ensure that they can be carried out safely and in a socially distanced manner. They should not be left until the hearing date because it is not possible to provide facilities where these can be safely carried out in court premises.
4. Parties and their legal representatives shall only enter the premises in which the court is located when the case is due to start and all efforts at negotiation have failed. No further time will be allowed for negotiation at that point. As soon as proceedings conclude, the parties, their witnesses and legal advisors should leave the court precincts promptly.
5. All current public health guidance and the Court's own Practice Directions regarding social distancing and the wearing of face coverings continue to apply.

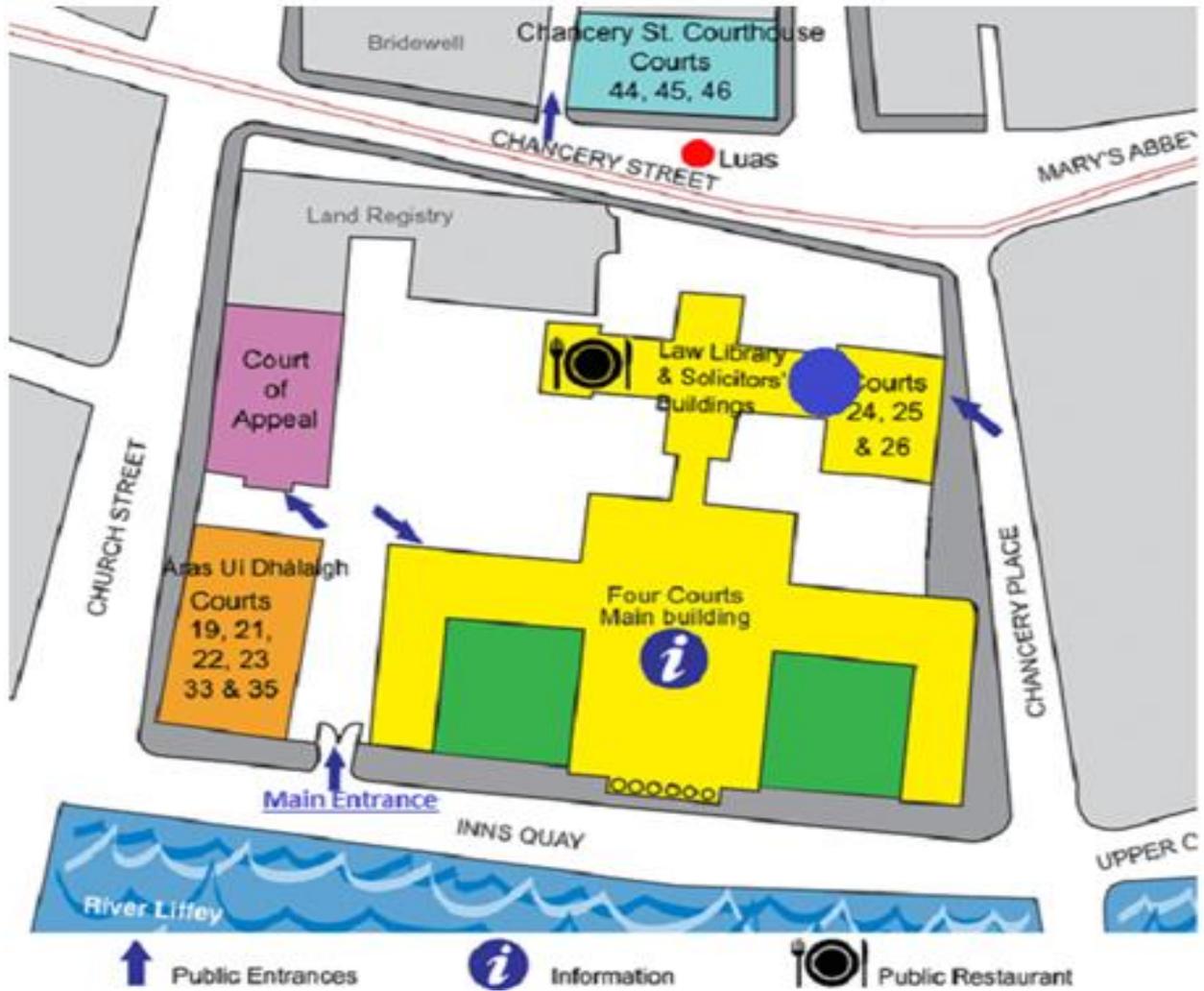
The above changes do not apply to any cases listed for hearing prior to 28 June and are **subject to alteration should there be any change in Covid19 public health guidance.**

Given the exceptionally high settlement rate of personal injuries actions and the prohibition on parties and their representatives entering upon the court premises unless a case is due to commence, the risks attendant upon increasing the footfall within the Four Courts premises to permit the easing of Covid19 restrictions insofar as they impact on this list is considered reasonable in all of the circumstances.

Mary Irvine
President of the High Court
1 June 2021

Appendix B

Public Entrance at Inns Quay



The Law Society Consultation room's location is marked with the blue dot.