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English Courts Give Guidance on Plans to Address COVID-19 Challenges

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The Lord Chief Justice has announced that English courts are planning to continue with court hearings. He noted that "we must make every effort to maintain a functioning court system in support of the administration of justice and rule of law."

The court manager of the Rolls Building, where the Commercial Court is based, has recently announced plans to help keep the court running.

Plans are underway to ensure court filings continue to be processed in a timely fashion in the event of the partial closure of the Rolls Building. Staff will be able to work from home using laptops that will allow them to process electronic filings received through "Ce-file." There will also be a core level of staff in the Rolls Building to process hard copy filings and deal with queries. Anyone with an urgent filing should contact the relevant team to ensure it is prioritised.

It is not yet known how hearings will be conducted if access to the Rolls Building is restricted or staff levels fall below acceptable levels. Any changes to hearings will be communicated directly to parties via email or phone. However, delays are inevitable given the likely impact of self-isolation on witnesses, parties, lawyers, judges and court officers.

Judicial advice regarding other case management issues caused by COVID-19, including difficulties complying with the requirements of the CPR and meeting procedural deadlines, is awaited.

Court and tribunal users have been asked not to contact the courts for advice but to refer to a government website for the most up to date general information.

Coronavirus resource hub

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