

ICC Belfast

Operational Guidance



**A guide for users of the waiting and
consultation facilities at NICTS
Nightingale Lagan**

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Background

Court and tribunal capacity has been significantly reduced due to the coronavirus pandemic and the associated public health restrictions. By floor area, the NICTS properties in Belfast City Centre are greater than the rest of the court estate combined, and it was inevitable the impact of the coronavirus pandemic would be felt most severely in this area. The very successful deployment of remote working and virtual hearings, has only partially mitigated the impact of social distancing.

The NICTS *Nightingale Project* was established to provide additional capacity by better supporting the delivery of court and tribunal business within the existing NICTS venues, and also to provide additional hearing rooms.

Following a trawl of central and local government property, NICTS reached an agreement with Belfast Waterfront Ulster Hall (BWUH) Limited, to establish its first *Nightingale* venue in this renowned conference venue.

1.2 Purpose of this document

Currently a substantial amount of NICTS business is being conducted using virtual or hybrid hearings. While this has been instrumental in maintaining essential services and latterly increasing throughput of business, the ability to better support covid-secure physical attendance will greatly assist to deal with more complex business which is not ideally suited to virtual and hybrid hearings.

NICTS recognises the importance of being able to facilitate consultation, between legal representatives and their clients and between parties on the day of hearing. Given the current constraints on consultation facilities within court buildings, this new facility will provide much needed additional space. At the same time, we are working on options to safely manage consultation in the existing court estate.

This document has been designed as companion guidance for those members of the legal professions who wish to avail of the consultation or waiting facilities for themselves or their clients. A brief introduction to the venue is followed by more detailed descriptions of the consultation facilities available, and the processes that we have put in place to allow the reservation and allocation of spaces. The latter half of this guide provides information on the more general arrangements for the venue, and includes a checklist outlining the measures that have been introduced to minimise the risks of viral transmission.

1.3 Risk Assessment

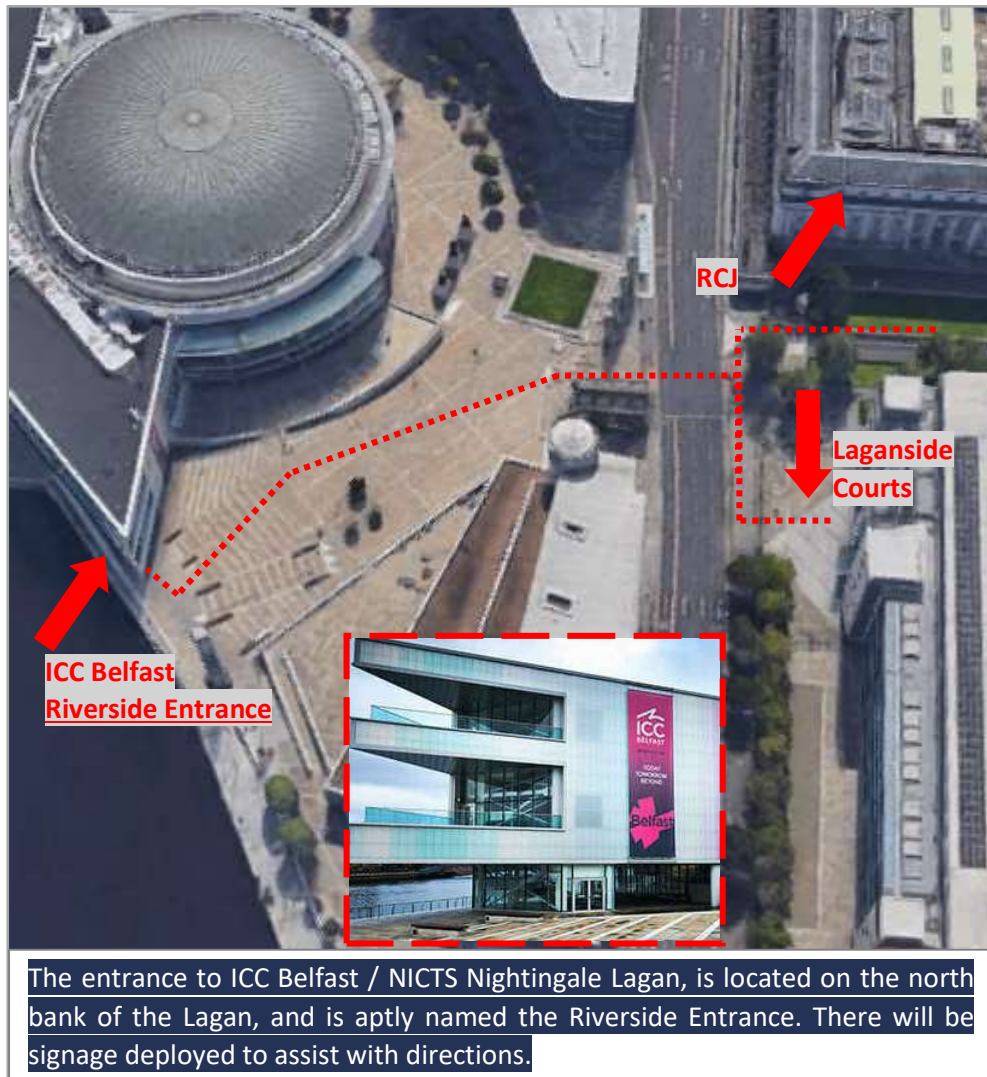
In compliance with NI Executive requirements around workplace safety, the Covid Secure risk assessment for this venue has been published at:

<https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/publications/covid-secure-risk-assessments>

2.0 NICTS Nightingale Lagan @ ICC Belfast

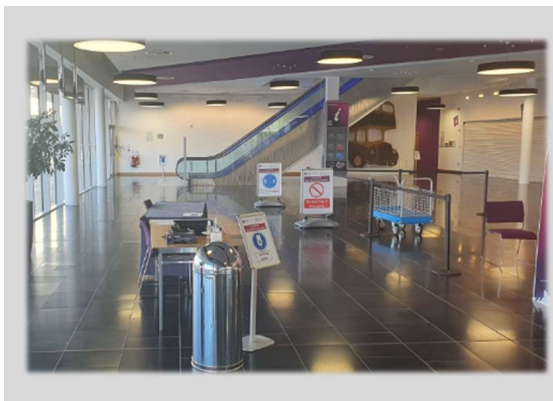
2.1 Location

Adjoining Belfast's Waterfront Hall, and opened in 2016, ICC (International Convention Centre) Belfast is a 7,000m² purpose-built conference facility, which is only a short walk from the Royal Courts of Justice or Laganside Courts



2.2 Venue details

As part of its agreement with BWUH Ltd, NICTS has acquired accommodation on all four floors of the Riverside facility at ICC Belfast. By comparison, the space available is equivalent to that of the Courthouses at Newtownards or Coleraine. An overview of the venue layout is as follows.

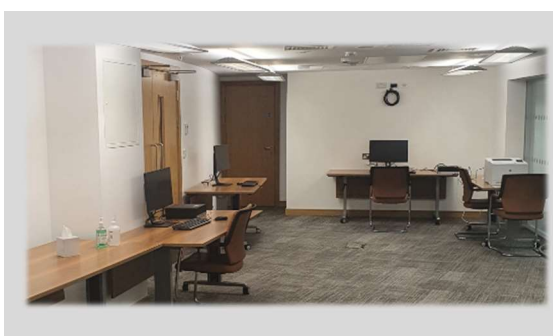
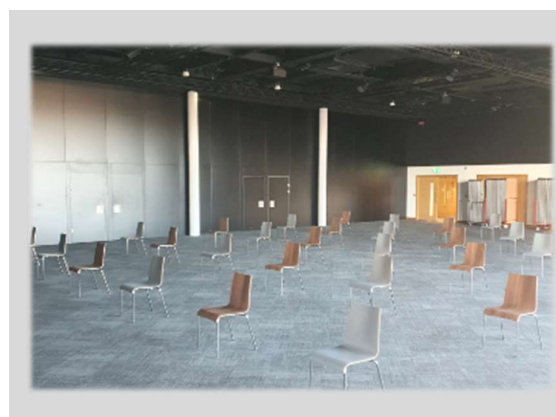


Ground: Entrance Lobby

The entrance concourse provides an abundance of space for users of the facility to enter and pass through security in a safe, socially distanced manner. All users must sign in and sign out in this area.

Level 1: Hall 1D and Hall 2A

The large exhibition halls at ICC are used to support Crown Court business, by allowing Jury panel selection to be conducted in a safe, socially distanced fashion. This is in addition to the waiting and consultation facilities described in more detail in Sections 3 and 4 overleaf.



Level 2: Staff Rooms

NICTS has reconfigured the Boardrooms on this level to provide additional staff accommodation, thereby increasing workplace safety within other venues in Belfast City Centre.

Level 3: Hearing Rooms

Level 3 consists of multi-functional hearing rooms designed to support a range of Courts and Tribunals business. The current arrangement allows for Inquests, Tribunals and Welfare Appeals. Hearing rooms can support capacities up to 22 individuals at one time.



3.0 Hall 1D – Civil & Family Consultation Space

3.1 Scope

The consultation space at Hall 1D will be available to those parties who have been directed to physically attend court, and who have completed a [Booking Form](#).

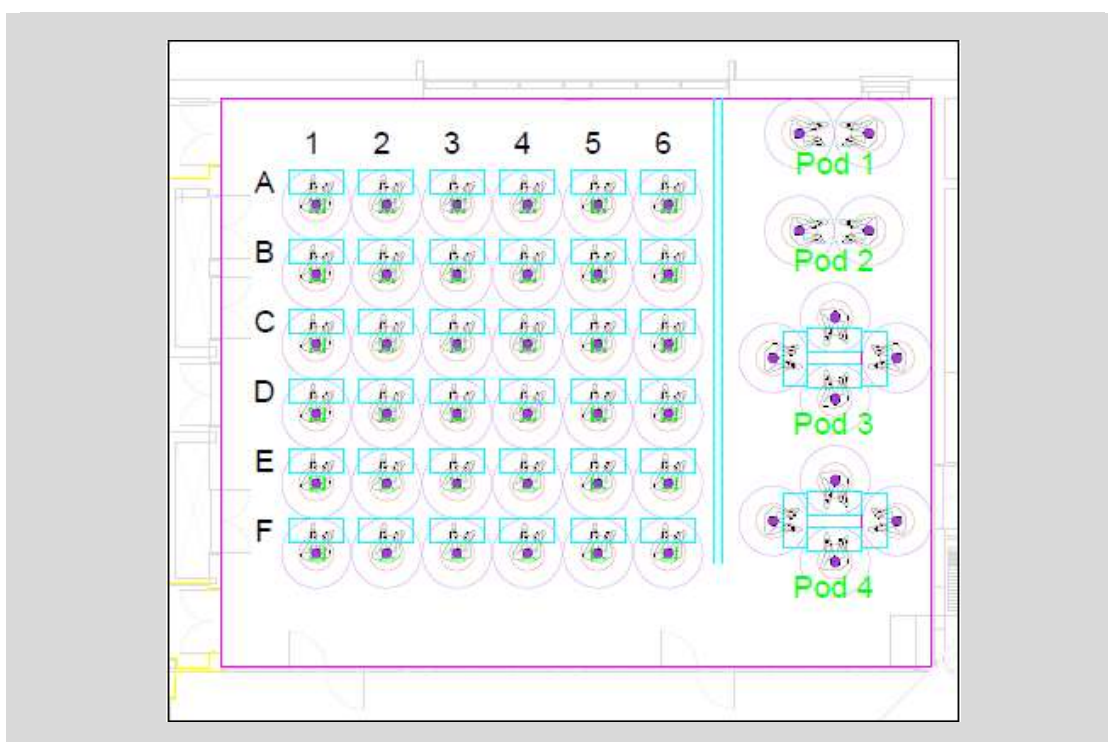
Hall 1D shall be primarily used as a waiting/consultation space for Civil and Family business that is being heard at Laganside Courts or RCJ. Use of the space might not necessarily require consultation, but can provide space to wait safely before a case is heard.

3.2 Capacity and Layout

In compliance with Public Health Guidance around droplet and aerosol transmission and social distancing, the total capacity of Hall 1D is limited to a maximum of 48, arranged as follows:

- Waiting Area -36 Seats
- Consultation Pods 1&2 – 2 seats each
- Consultation Pods 3&4 – 4 seats each

For the avoidance of doubt, a consultation pod denotes a fixed arrangement of desks and chairs. The arrangement facilitates social distancing of 2m. There are no physical barriers as part of, or between pods.



Parties will be allocated a waiting seat following completion of the [Booking Form](#), and having been directed by the Judge that physical attendance at court is appropriate.

Waiting seats will be individually numbered, and you will be directed to your seat on arrival.

Use of the 4 consultation pods will be on a first come, first served basis, for those parties seated in the waiting area. Parties should remain seated in the waiting area until a consultation pod becomes available.

3.3 Public Health Considerations

Face coverings must be worn by all parties (unless exempt) when inside the venue, even when taking part in consultation. Desks and seats will be regularly cleaned and sanitized, and materials will be available throughout the building. In addition, all individuals must sanitize their hands before entering the consultation area.

3.4 Constraints

The waiting or consultation facilities will not be equipped for the remote giving of evidence

The waiting or consultation facilities will not have power, data, or telephone connections, but public WiFi will be available

The waiting or consultation facilities are not intended to be used for consultations for proceedings listed at a future date.

4.0 Hall 2A – Additional Consultation Space

4.1 Scope

Hall 2A offers additional consultation space which can be used for a variety of business types depending on the demand. This may include criminal business, tribunal business, or additional civil and family business.

In relation to criminal court business it is proposed that the accommodation may be used by prosecution witnesses, with defendants and defence witnesses attending at the court building. The space at ICC provides additional accommodation, and we are working on options to safely manage consultation in the existing court estate.

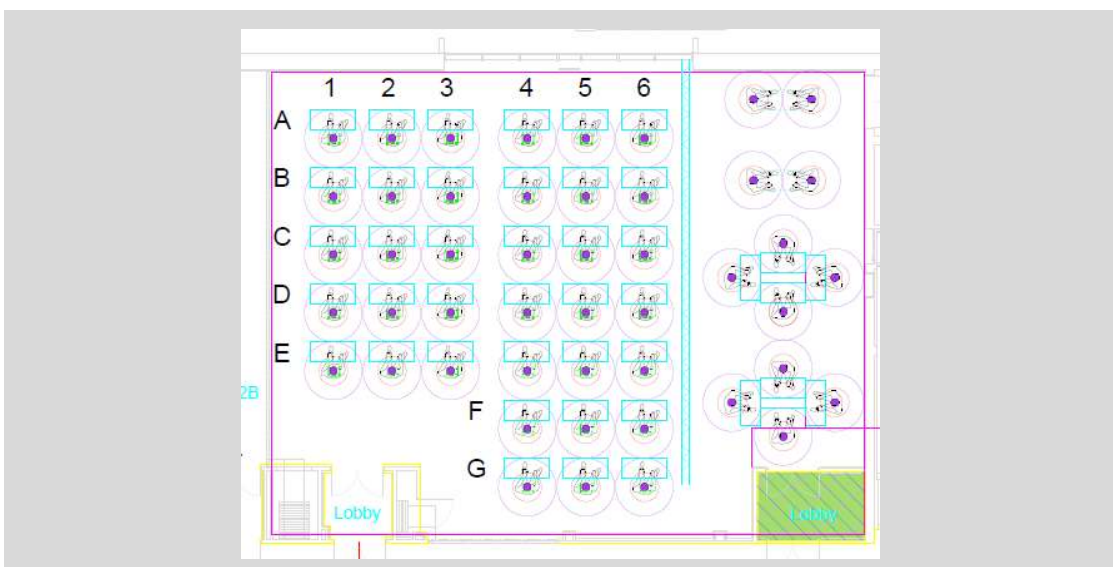
As above, the consultation space at Hall 2A will be available to those parties who have been directed to physically attend court, and who have completed a [Booking Form](#)

4.2 Capacity and Layout

In compliance with Public Health Guidance around droplet and aerosol transmission and social distancing, the total capacity of Hall 1D is limited to a maximum of 48, arranged as follows:

- Waiting Area -36 Seats
- Consultation Pods 1&2 – 2 seats each
- Consultation Pods 3&4 – 4 seats each

For the avoidance of doubt, a consultation pod denotes a fixed arrangement of desks and chairs. The arrangement facilitates social distancing of 2m. There are no physical barriers as part of, or between pods.



Parties will be allocated a waiting seat following completion of the [Booking Form](#), and having been directed by the Judge that physical attendance at court is appropriate.

Waiting seats will be individually numbered, and you will be directed to your seat on arrival.

Use of the 4 consultation pods will be on a first come, first served basis, for those parties seated in the waiting area. Parties should remain seated in the waiting area until a consultation pod becomes available.

4.3 Public Health Considerations

Face coverings must be worn by all parties (unless exempt) when inside the venue, even when taking part in consultation. Desks and seats will be regularly cleaned and sanitized, and materials will be available at each seat. In addition, all individuals must sanitize their hands before entering the consultation area.

4.4 Constraints

The waiting or consultation facilities will not be equipped for the remote giving of evidence

The waiting or consultation facilities will not have power, data, or telephone connections, but public WiFi will be available

The waiting or consultation facilities are not intended to be used for consultations for proceedings listed at a future date.

5.0 Reserving ICC Consultation Space

5.1 Physical Attendance

The facilities at ICC must only be used where this is consistent with NI Executive and Public Health Agency guidance. Particular attention is drawn to the instructions and guidance for legal representatives, which is published [here](#).

At this time courts will undertake as much business as possible remotely. **Legal representatives and those involved in proceedings should not attend court unless the judge determines in the interests of justice that their physical attendance is absolutely necessary.** Where it is necessary for people to come to court in person such hearings can only take place where it is safe to do so. Judges are sensitive to public health concerns and will be flexible wherever possible in trying to limit in-person hearings to a minimum. Only those persons who have been notified by the court as required to attend in person, shall be able to avail of the facilities at the Nightingale facility, and only then, on the date of the hearing. Further details on the application process continue below.

5.2 Application Process

- a) It is essential that NICTS are aware of the numbers who are attending court buildings or ICC on a given day and for that reason **legal representatives should complete and lodge the [Booking Form](#)** as soon as possible after the Judge has directed physical attendance at court.
- b) Parties should include on the [Booking Form](#) the names of all individuals who will require access to the ICC facility on the day of the hearing
- c) The Judge will fix the date of the hearing, and direct if a physical attendance is necessary. The [Booking Form](#) should only be completed at this time.
- d) Space at ICC is strictly limited, and waiting space will be allocated on a first come, first served basis. For this reason, it is recommended that the [Booking Form](#) is completed and emailed to NICTSICCB bookings@courtsni.gov.uk in a timely manner, **but no later than 5 working days before the court hearing.**
- e) The ICC Booking team will allocate waiting area spaces, and notify the legal representatives listed on the [Booking Form](#) via e-mail. A confirmation email will be sent to the lead contact listed on the Booking Form confirming if a booking has been successful or unsuccessful. This will include the **booking reference number** which should be included in any further correspondence from the lead contact. It is the responsibility of the lead contact to confirm with attendees, and to provide them with the booking reference number.

- f) If the booking is no longer required, the lead contact must email NICTSICCBookings@courtsni.gov.uk to cancel the booking as soon as practical to release the spaces booked to other applicants.
- g) Only those individuals whose names appear on the daily attendance schedule shall be admitted to the ICC facility.

6.0 User Protocol

6.1 Introduction

It is essential that NICTS are aware of the numbers who are attending on a given day so that appropriate arrangements can be made to manage footfall in the consultation spaces and public areas of the Nightingale Venue. As described in Section 4, attendance at this building must be arranged in advance through the [Booking Form](#). You will be notified when waiting spaces have been reserved at ICC.

6.2 Arrival

ICC Belfast is located only a short walk from RCJ and/or Laganside Courts. On arriving at the venue, you will be asked to confirm your name, and booking reference. **Only those individuals whose names appear on the daily attendance schedule shall be admitted to the ICC facility.** For the safety and security of all attendees, you will then be required to pass through a socially distanced security screening process.

6.2 Waiting / Consultation Space

From the ground floor foyer, access to the consultation spaces at Hall 1D and 2A is via a single flight of escalators. Alternatively, there are elevators, but these are restricted to single occupancy. You will be greeted at the entrance to the Waiting Space, and directed to your numbered seat. Desk and seating positions are set out to facilitate social distancing, therefore we request that you do not move any furniture. Please remain seated as much as possible.

Use of the Consultation Pods will be on a first come, first served basis, for those parties seated in the associated waiting area. Parties should remain seated in the waiting area until a consultation pod becomes available. It is envisaged that use of the Consultation Pods will be staggered according to the activities scheduled in the Court, but if necessary, this will be managed by NICTS/G4S staff.

6.3 Communications with the Court

Participants will be instructed when the court is ready to deal with their case or take their evidence. This communication may be via their legal representative or the Court Security Officers (using radio link from courtroom to ICC)

7.0 General Arrangements

7.1 Summary of principles

- a) All activity must be in compliance with PHA guidance, and kept under review, in line with NI Executive restrictions
- b) Applications to use the ICC Facility must be made through the [Booking Form](#)
- c) Consultation space can only be provided for hearings at which physical attendance has been directed, and only for hearings occurring on that day
- d) Only those individuals whose names appear on the daily attendance schedule shall be admitted to the building
- e) All parties must sign in and sign out of the venue
- f) Seats are allocated to individuals. The seating layout should not be changed, and all parties should remain seated as much as possible
- g) Communication between the consultation space and the Court will be facilitated

7.2 Housekeeping

- a) Toilets are available on the ground and first floors for parties involved in consultation
- b) In the event of an emergency, the tannoy announcements will direct you towards the safest evacuation route. Follow the instructions of G4S and ICC staff
- c) As lockdown restrictions ease and footfall increases, you may be able to purchase hot and cold drinks from a refreshment kiosk on the ground floor. Alternatively, you may bring refreshments with you.
- d) Public WiFi is available throughout the building
- e) The consultation halls will be equipped only with tables and chairs

8.0 Public Health Arrangements

8.1 Social Distancing /Droplet Transmission

- Attendance is strictly managed and footfall is limited.
- The consultation facilities can only be accessed following completion of the [Booking Form](#) and a direction from the Judge.
- Desk and seating positions are set out to facilitate social distancing
- Signage and queue barriers will facilitate social distancing in circulation areas

8.2 Aerosol Transmission

- Face Coverings are mandatory throughout the venue (unless exempt)
- The venue is fully mechanically ventilated

8.3 Surface Transmission

- Sanitizing facilities are located throughout the venue
- All furniture used for consultation will be cleaned and disinfected regularly, and in particular, between morning and afternoon sessions
- Sanitizing wipes will be available at each consultation space

8.4 Risk Assessments and Personal Responsibility

In compliance with NI Executive requirements around workplace safety, the Covid Secure risk assessment for this venue has been published at:

<https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/publications/covid-secure-risk-assessments>

The ICC venue should be treated as an extension of the Court Estate, and we anticipate that all parties will afford the Nightingale venue and staff with the same levels of professional courtesy.

The principles for keeping yourself and others safe in the ICC are identical to those elsewhere in the NICTS Estate. The Covid Secure Checklist is included in Annex B.

Annex A

ICC Booking Form

Copies of this can be downloaded at

<https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/publications/nightingale-court-icc-belfast-booking-form>

<https://www.judiciaryni.uk/coronavirus-covid-19>

ICC BELFAST – BOOKING FORM

CONSULTATION AND WAITING FACILITIES

NICTSICBookings@courtsni.gov.uk

Booking Reference (For Office Use Only)	
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A separate form must be completed in respect of each Party to the case that requires use of the ICC consultation and waiting facilities

Date of Court Hearing:	
Court Venue	
Case Title (insert full title of proceedings)	
ICOS Reference Number	
Date /Time – waiting and consultation facilities are required (Facilities at the ICC are only available on the day of the court hearing, please complete daily requirements)	
Number of Attendees	
Booking in respect of Plaintiff <input type="checkbox"/> Applicant <input type="checkbox"/> Appellant <input type="checkbox"/> or Defendant <input type="checkbox"/> Respondent <input type="checkbox"/> Please check whichever applies	

LEGAL REPRESENTATIVES - Provide the names of all legal representatives and include contact details for the lead contact only. An email confirmation, including the booking reference number, will be sent to the lead contact only. The lead contact must inform all attendees once the booking has been confirmed

Lead Contact Name: (including email, office <u>and</u> mobile telephone numbers and solicitors firm if applicable)	
Name:	
Name:	

LITIGANT IN PERSON	
Name:	
Email:	
Tel:	

ATTENDEES - Please provide the names of **ALL** attendees including legal representatives

Please note: access to the ICC facilities is restricted to those persons who have been required by the court to attend a hearing in person however, should an attendee require a person to support them, they must be included below. These facilities are only available on the day of the court hearing and must be booked in advance.

NAME:

NAME:

NAME:

NAME:

NAME:

NAME:

NAME:

DO ANY OF THE ATTENDEES REQUIRE ASSISTANCE OR ADJUSTMENTS AT THE ICC?	YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> If yes, please provide details below.

SAFETY	<p>FIRE EVACUATION - Attendees must follow all local ICC fire evacuation instructions.</p> <p>RISK ASSESSMENT for the ICC is available at the link - www.justice-ni.gov.uk/publications/covid-secure-risk-assessments</p>
<p>Attendees with a disability or mobility issue that could affect their safe exit from the ICC must inform a security official at the main reception desk on arrival so that an effective evacuation plan can be put in place.</p>	

COMPLETED BY:	
Date:	

- **Spaces are allocated on receipt of the completed form** and spaces cannot be guaranteed, therefore early booking is advisable. Please submit your completed form to NICTSICBookings@courtsni.gov.uk as soon as possible but **no later than 5 working days before the court hearing**.
- **A confirmation email will be sent to the lead contact** confirming if a booking has been successful or unsuccessful. This will include the booking reference number which should be included in any further correspondence from the lead contact.
- **Cancellations** – if the booking is no longer required, the lead contact must email NICTSICBookings@courtsni.gov.uk to cancel the booking as soon as practical to release the spaces booked to other requestors.

Annex B

NICTS arrangements for staying Covid Secure

As part of our response to coronavirus (COVID-19), we are taking additional precautions to make sure we keep our court and tribunal buildings safe, secure and clean.

In January 2021, we opened our first Nightingale venue, at the International Conference Centre, Belfast. This venue will act as a satellite venue to Laganside Courts, Royal Courts of Justice, and Laganside House, and will complement and supplement the business at these venues in a safe, socially distanced manner.

We've developed this guidance so you know what to expect, and will keep updating this over time.

NICTS has a corporate responsibility to take all reasonably practicable measures to implement a safe working environment during the current emergency, but equally, all NICTS staff and visitors have a collective responsibility to follow instructions regarding safe working practices.

As an Agency, NICTS understands how important it is to ensure that our venues are safe whenever they are open during the coronavirus outbreak. In this document, we will set out the measures that we have implemented, and describe the steps that you need to follow to be safe when visiting NICTS Nightingale Lagan.

NICTS Covid Secure Checklist

	To ensure your safety, NICTS will:	To ensure your safety, you should:
1	<p>Minimise the risk of exposure to coronavirus, by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertaking a <i>Covid Secure</i> Risk Assessments for NICTS Nightingale Lagan • Ensuring that NICTS staff who have symptoms of coronavirus will not come to work • Providing all NICTS staff with working safely guidance • Limiting footfall within NICTS Nightingale Lagan • Making face coverings mandatory (unless exempt) 	<p>Not attend NICTS Nightingale Lagan if you are displaying any of the symptoms of COVID-19</p> <p>Only visit NICTS Nightingale Lagan when you have an essential reason, and remain there for no longer than necessary</p> <p>Read the <i>Covid Secure</i> Risk Assessments for the building, and be aware of the measures that have been introduced</p> <p>Follow the direction of NICTS/ICC staff and G4S security officers</p>
2	<p>Minimise the risk of surface transmission of coronavirus, by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amending our cleaning regime to focus on touch points • Upgrading our cleaning products to meet PHA guidance • Ensuring adequate supplies of warm water and soap in our washroom facilities • Providing additional hand sanitizing facilities at key locations • Making face coverings mandatory (unless exempt) 	<p>Wash your hands with soap and water when you can. This is the most effective way of cleaning your hands. You will also be allowed to bring your own hand sanitiser in to the court.</p> <p>Use the additional hand sanitizing facilities that have been provided</p> <p>Let a member of NICTS staff know if you notice that sanitary supplies are low.</p> <p>Avoid touching anything you do not need to.</p> <p>Wear a face covering when directed to do so.</p>

	To ensure your safety, NICTS will:	To ensure your safety, you should:
3	Minimise the risk of airborne transmission of coronavirus, by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementing social distancing measures throughout our buildings to ensure 2 metre separation between individuals • Displaying signage to indicate how you can maintain social distancing • Making face coverings mandatory • Displaying signage to indicate the maximum capacities of rooms • Adjusting our mechanical ventilation systems to maximise the supply of fresh air 	Observe the social distancing measures that have been implemented, and follow the directions on the signage that is displayed Not remove any signage or hazard tape Wear a face covering when directed to do so. Maintain a safe 2 metre distance from other people in the building Follow the direction of NICTS staff and G4S security officers
4	Ensure social distancing on arrival by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing hand sanitizing facilities at entry points • Providing facilities to queue, while maintain social distance • Changing our search procedures • Undertaking manual searches from the side or rear 	Arrive with plenty of time to spare to pass through security, and allow extra time for queuing. Follow the directions to allow socially distanced searches/ hand wanding Show respect to the Court Security Officers and recognise that their work keeps us all safe

	<p>To ensure your safety, NICTS will:</p>	<p>To ensure your safety, you should:</p>
<p>5</p>	<p>Ensure social distancing within courtrooms by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indicating the maximum occupancy of courtrooms • Providing signage to indicate which seats are available • Limiting movement within the courtrooms • Designating entry and exit protocols • Issuing protocols for specific court hearings where necessary <p>We might need to use more than one courtroom where the capacity of the room does not meet the needs of the hearing. Where this is the case, we will link the courtrooms using digital technology.</p>	<p>Understand that the typical familiar courtroom seating layouts may have changed</p> <p>Follow the direction of NICTS staff and G4S security officers when entering and leaving the courtrooms</p> <p>Observe any hearing specific courtroom protocols</p> <p>Not remove any signage or hazard tape</p>
<p>6</p>	<p>Ensure social distancing within other rooms, by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indicating the maximum occupancy of rooms • Providing signage to indicate which seats are available • Removing seats where necessary <p>We might need to use more than one room where the capacity of the room does not meet the needs of the court user. Where this is the case, we will link the rooms using digital technology.</p>	<p>Understand that familiar practice and procedures may have to change to comply with social distancing</p> <p>Not remove any signage or hazard tape</p> <p>Follow the direction of ICC/NICTS staff and G4S security officers</p> <p>Observe any one way walking systems or queues</p>

	To ensure your safety, NICTS will:	To ensure your safety, you should:
7	Display clear floor markings and directional signage around the building to tell you where you should wait, sit, allow others to pass.	Follow the instructions on the signage – it is there to keep you safe.
8	Give clear directions around the building to limit the number of times you'll need to pass people. This might include a one-way system in corridors or asking you to enter lifts and toilets one at a time.	Follow directions and signage to minimise the amount of people you will pass by. We know this might mean it takes longer to move around the building, so please be patient.
9	Ensure compliance with the latest NI Executive and Public Health Agency guidance on the wearing of face coverings. We will display clear signage to inform you where face coverings must be worn.	Follow the instructions on the signage – it is there to keep you safe.

Nightingale Lagan – Location Plan

