

Update from Susan Acland-Hood, CEO of HMCTS, to Amanda Pinto QC, Chair of the Bar, on Cloud Video Platform (CVP) - 28 April 2020

Use of CVP in criminal courts

CVP rooms are being rolled out across all open Crown Courts, in conjunction with prisons, to provide support in managing the demand on the CVP room capacity. Leeds Crown Court was the first Crown Court to use CVP rooms this week for three cases listed before the Recorder of Leeds. As of 24th April, CVP is now live in four Crown Courts where hearings this week have been mentions, committals for sentence and a 9- handed sentencing case, the feedback has been positive from practitioners and the judiciary. The current focus is on priority 1 cases, including convicted unsentenced defendants and custody time limit cases. We have developed a 9 tranche roll out plan which will provide coverage across initially all open criminal court estate. The south east courts are the next region due to go live with CVP w/c 27th April 2020 followed by the London region w/c 11th May 2020. We intend to extend the allocation of CVP rooms to staffed and suspended courts and will be developing an additional roll-out plan with the Judiciary.

For non-live testing, a CVP room will be allocated to the Leader of each Circuit for a period of up to 7 days so that counsel can familiarise themselves with the technology and test out the functionality in readiness for joining live hearings as we roll out nationally. HMCTS staff will be available to support this testing and deliver training/provide guidance in using a CVP room where required. Information around CVP is being shared with legal professionals through dedicated channels as well as updates on Gov.uk.

Use of CVP in tribunals

Across various tribunals including Mental Health, SEND, Employment, SSCS, Property and Tax CVP has been rolled out for use. The decision to use CVP is for each judge to make and we are receiving positive feedback from judges across the jurisdiction. We are aiming to have full coverage of the tribunals jurisdiction using CVP by the end of week commencing 27th April.

Use of CVP in the civil and family jurisdictions

In civil and family where there is greater need for recording, we are aiming to roll-out CVP rooms to all regions as soon as an inbuilt recording functionality has been developed. This is currently estimated for delivery on the 15th of May. While we wait CVP rooms are available for judges to use for those hearings that do not have a recording requirement but a fully supported roll-out will start once we have delivered the inbuilt recording functionality. In the meantime, we are using Skype for Business to support video hearings and BT Meet me for audio. We know that additional tools such as Microsoft teams are being used across the Civil, Family and Tribunals jurisdictions and where possible we are asking judges to transition to the currently supported tools such as CVP or Skype, in order that recordings can be captured and stored easily where necessary. CVP allows participants to join hearings through Skype or Teams which allows us to facilitate participants' preferred tooling while managing a single platform for hosting.