

NIGEL S. MEADOWS
H.M. SENIOR CORONER

FIONA BORRILL
H.M. AREA CORONER

ZAK GOLOMBECK
H.M. AREA CORONER



H.M. CORONER'S OFFICE

Manchester City Area
Exchange Floor
The Royal Exchange
Cross Street
Manchester, M2 7EF

Telephone 0161 219 2222
Fax 0161 274 7329

Email: coroners.office@manchester.gov.uk
www.manchester.gov.uk/coroners

Guidance on Video and Audio link court hearings

Usually court hearings take place when interested persons (family members), witnesses and any legal representatives can physically attend the court.

However, the law allows them to be conducted by what is known as an Audio link or Video link or a combination of both these methods and also, where absolutely necessary when some people attend the court in person. The Coroner has to decide in each case how the hearing is conducted.

In this case the Coroner considers the best way of dealing with the hearing is by **video link**. You will need a laptop or PC with sound transmission and a good internet signal. A mobile phone can also be used if you do not have a laptop. If you have any difficulty or be unable to deal with the hearing in this way please notify the court as soon as possible. The court can arrange a test transmission if this helps to demonstrate exactly how it works.

Video link is undertaken by what is known as Microsoft Teams. This allows participation by a number of people in different locations at the same time. They all appear on screen. The Coroner has to be physically in court themselves. The courtroom has a video link system which facilitates this. This means that the Coroner can see all the participants and they can see the Coroner.

This works well even in complex cases. The court is required to keep an audio recording of what is said in court and any interested person is entitled to have a copy of the recording after any hearing.

However, the law has very strict rules about this. Firstly, the Coroner has to give specific permission for the hearing to be conducted by audio/video link. This only applies to that specific hearing. It is a contempt of court and also a criminal offence (both of which are punishable with imprisonment) for anyone else to make or attempt to make an audio recording of the proceedings by using any device or mechanism. Nor play, dispose of, publish a recording or transcript of the hearing. This also applies to making or attempting to make a visual recording or copy of the hearing. The Coroner is required by law to explain this at the beginning of any hearing when a Video or Audio link is used.

Court hearings are held like this in order to minimise the risk of transmission of the Covid 19 virus. A Video link hearing is conducted in exactly the same way as if those participating were physically in court. The law regards wherever you may be when participating in this manner as simply being an extension of the court and is an attendance before the court. The law regards "Participants" for these hearings as only the interested persons, witnesses and legal representatives. If there is no possibility of the media/press and members of the public being able to attend the court hearing in person they can only access the hearing by Audio link telephone dial in system and not

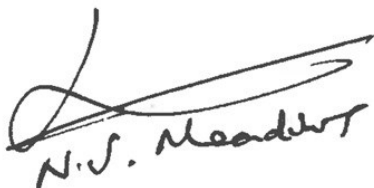
Video link. They can only listen to the proceedings and are also subject to the strict rules about recording or attempting to record the proceedings.

How does a Video or Audio link hearing work in practice and what do you have to do to participate by these methods?

In the case of an Audio link hearing the court will supply a specific phone number to dial and also a password number that also has to be entered on your phone keypad so that you can join the hearing.

In the case of a Video link hearing the court will send you a specific link by email so that you can join the hearing. You should not copy or send the link to any other person without the permission of the court. There is no need to download the Microsoft Teams App.

If you have any queries or questions about the position please contact the court as soon as possible



N.J. Meadows

Mr. Nigel Meadows

**Her Majesty's Senior Coroner
Manchester City Area**