

## COVID 19

23<sup>rd</sup> March 2020

In light of the most recent guidance from the Government, Walnut House Chambers has now closed as a physical presence in Exeter. The safety of our clients, our members, our staff and their associated family and friends is paramount. First and foremost we hope you all remain safe and healthy in what are extremely difficult times.

We will of course keep up to date with any new guidance that is issued by the Government, Public Health England and any other relevant governing body. We will amend our working methods as quickly as possible to make sure we are doing our very best to serve our clients whilst adhering to safe practices.

This letter isn't therefore intended to be a one size fits all approach but a summary of what we can hope to do to keep providing a service to those that still require it.

All our staff have been set up to work remotely, mirroring as close as possible the normal working clerks' room, barring physical presence. So the phones will be answered as normal and our emails will be dealt with by all clerks during our normal Chambers hours. Outside of normal hours the first point of contact will be our Practice director Bernard Hayward. His details can be found on Chambers website. Clerks have also been set up with Skype and Skype for Business (Teams).

Our members are all working from home remotely. They will correspond with you as you would normally expect and need them to. In addition they will be contactable by Skype, Skype for Business (Teams) and other accepted forms of video conferencing where possible. These details will be passed on to the relevant court or appropriate person as and when they are required for court hearings. By default we will not be suggesting face to face conferences and will only consider any request for the same where it is explained that it is absolutely necessary.

We will be requesting that all case papers are sent electronically to avoid a member of Chambers or staff having to make any unnecessary travel to pick up hard copies. However where this isn't possible you should make it clear so we can discuss alternative arrangements such as posting direct to members addresses.

Where possible we would appreciate payment by BACS to Chambers central client account rather than cheque to avoid the need to make unnecessary travel to Chambers by any member of Chambers or staff and then further journey to a bank, putting that member and others at risk.

Finally and most importantly, please do not hesitate to ask for our help with anything we may be able to assist with. This may be case or non-case related. These are extremely worrying times for everyone and we will be doing our very best to be as patient and understanding of your needs as we possibly can be.