

The Supreme Court of the United Kingdom (UKSC)

Policy on the use of live text-based communications from Court

The legislation which applies to the UKSC, and the types of cases heard, are materially different from that which applies to the courts in England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

The UKSC has been specifically exempted from the statutory prohibitions on broadcasting and photography which apply in England and Wales and Northern Ireland. There is no such prohibition in Scotland. This is to allow for the broadcast of proceedings via the permanent camera equipment installed in the UKSC courtrooms. Court visitors themselves are prohibited from taking photographs, filming or recording proceedings in the UKSC, and nothing in this policy should be read as relaxing that rule.

The cases which come before the UKSC do not involve interaction with witnesses or jurors; and it is rare for evidence to be adduced which may then be heard in other courts.

In addition the building used by the UKSC has been fully Wi Fi enabled, including all the courtrooms, in order to facilitate use of technology in and outside court.

Subject to the exceptions which are outlined below, any member of a legal team or member of the public is permitted to use text-based communications from court, providing (i) these are silent; and (ii) there is no disruption to the proceedings in court. No one present in a courtroom is permitted to use a mobile device to make a telephone call, or to receive such a call. If any telephone or other device rings in court the person may be asked to leave by a security guard.

The exceptions are:

1. Where reporting restrictions have been put in place by the court, those must be observed by everyone present in the court. Under these circumstances, the use of live text-based communications which makes information about proceedings public will not be permitted.
2. In a case involving a child, where anonymity is of the essence, text-based communications will be permitted, but any breach of the anonymity will be treated as a contempt of court.
3. In rare cases, the UKSC may order that a judgment should not be reported in order not to influence other proceedings taking place in the lower court. In such instances, no live text-based communication about the outcome will be permitted.

Such exceptions will be notified to court visitors by a notice at the door of the courtroom, and, where appropriate, by verbal instructions from a Justice.

MARK ORMEROD
Chief Executive
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