Witness Service

Royal Courts of Justice

4 March 2026

Royal Courts of Justice

The Royal Courts of Justice is a court building on the Strand in London that houses the High Court and Court of Appeal of England and Wales.

It is sometimes referred to as ‘The Law Courts’.

The Court of Appeal

The Court of Appeal is the second most senior court in England and Wales, with the Supreme Court being the highest court.

It forms part of the Senior Courts of England and Wales, along with the High Court and Crown Court.

The Court of Appeal deals with appeals from lower courts and tribunals.

(In law, an appeal is when someone asks a higher court to review whether their conviction or sentence was decided correctly.)

The Court of Appeal is made up of two divisions:

Civil Division

- **Civil Division**, which hears civil appeals as well as appeals in family law cases.

Criminal Division

- **Criminal Division**, which hears appeals relating to criminal convictions and sentences.

It hears appeals from defendants who have been convicted at Crown Court, as well as appeals challenging the sentence they were given at Crown Court.

The Court of Appeal also considers cases that have been referred by the Attorney General where a sentence may be unduly lenient.

The High Court

The High Court is one of the Senior Courts of England and Wales, along with the Court of Appeal and Crown Court.

The High Court mostly deals with high-importance civil cases, and only some criminal cases. It is made up of three parts, called divisions:

King's Bench Division

- **King’s Bench Division**: the largest of the three divisions, it deals with ‘common law’ civil claims. These include disputes relating to contracts – for example, failure to pay for goods and services – as well as claims relating to ‘civil wrongs’ or ‘torts’. For example, claims for defamation, negligence, personal injury, and property-related claims such as trespass.

There’s more information on the work of the King’s Bench Division on the Courts and Tribunals Judiciary website.

Family Division

- **Family Division**: hears complex, sensitive, and high-importance family law cases. For example:
  - child protection matters including international child abduction
  - medical treatment issue concerning children
  - cases involving domestic abuse, forced marriage, and female genital mutilation.

The Family Divisions also hears appeals from decisions made by the Family Court (that is, family courts across England and Wales).

You can find more information about the work of the Family Division on the Courts and Tribunals Judiciary website.

Chancery Division

- **Chancery Division**: hears a wide range of civil disputes in areas such as business, property and land, trusts, tax, insolvency, bankruptcy and intellectual property issues. Cases are often complex and may involve large sums of money.

You can find more information about the work of the Chancery Division on the Courts and Tribunals Judiciary website.

You can visit the following links for more information on the Royal Courts of Justice:

- GOVUK: Royal Courts of Justice
- Court and Tribunals Judiciary: Court of Appeal
- Court and Tribunals Judiciary: High Court
- HMCTS: Information about appeals for victims of crime [PDF]