

Journalists allowed to use Twitter in English courts

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The Twitter homepage appears on a screen in Washington in 2010. Reporters can now use Twitter, text messages and email in courtrooms in England and Wales without needing to ask permission, the head of the judiciary said Wednesday.

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"[Twitter](#) as much as you like from today," Lord Chief Justice Igor Judge told [journalists](#) as he handed down new guidelines on using laptops and hand-held devices.

Under interim guidance issued in December 2010, reporters could apply to the judge for permission to use live text-based communications in

court.

That came after journalists covering the extradition hearings of WikiLeaks founder [Julian Assange](#) asked to be allowed to tweet live news of proceedings.

Following a year-long consultation, the need to make an application has now been lifted for journalists and legal commentators. However, members of the public will still need to do so.

The taking of photographs in court and using sound recording equipment remains outlawed, while regular court reporting restrictions still apply.

Judges have the discretion to limit use of live text-based communications if they feel it would hamper the administration of justice, for example if it could be a [distraction](#), interfere with the court's [electronic equipment](#) or put pressure on witnesses.

"It is presumed that a representative of the media or a legal commentator using live, text-based communications from court does not pose a danger of interference to the proper administration of justice," Lord Judge said.

"This is because the most obvious purpose of permitting the use of live, text-based communications would be to enable the media to produce fair and accurate reports of the proceedings.

"As such, a representative of the media or a legal commentator who wishes to use live, text-based communications from court may do so without making an application to the court."

He said the use of "an unobtrusive, hand held, silent piece of modern equipment for the purposes of simultaneous reporting" was unlikely to interfere with proper proceedings.

Scotland and Northern Ireland are separate jurisdictions within the United Kingdom.

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