

Private Children Law, Financial Remedy and Family Law Act Telephone Hearings

Dear All

We live in interesting times!

First, thank you to all of you who are doing your best to enable cases to continue in some fashion. Now that we have had some experience of remote hearings we thought it might be helpful to give a steer as to how we propose to deal with them.

The bottom line is that we welcome any help you are able to give: we are quite relaxed about how we deal with cases remotely so long as they can be made to work and we know in advance what the plan is.

Skype is great where all parties are represented (e.g. care proceedings, a minority of private law children act cases, some financial remedy cases). If you can agree with your opposite number to use Skype then just send an email to the court to confirm. The judges' Skype addresses are the same as their email addresses.

For other cases we have been trying to make orders that

- If the applicant is legally represented, the solicitors set up a conference call. That does not need to be a BT Legal Conference call (or equivalent): any means of joining the parties together will suffice. Most firms with modern telephone systems can conference external numbers together in-house – that is fine: we can record the hearings on the normal courtroom recording system at our end
- If the parties are in person (or if it's not clear) we have been using MeetMe, where the court calls the parties and conference them together. That works so long as we have reliable contact numbers for each participant.

I think the key piece of information is that we are not asking for formal Legal Conference calls which are expensive and currently a rare commodity – just get the parties together using your in house kit, and we will capture the recording.

We have had a couple of firms using third party conference calls, which incur fairly hefty costs for each person dialling in. Given the alternatives available, please avoid them: some litigants in person are put off by the cost.

If any of you spot an easy win and you think we could easily change what we are doing for the better, don't feel you can't tell us: we are all feeling our way forward.

Please also forward this email to other colleagues as our email lists are not exhaustive!

Best wishes

District Judge Ian Taylor
District Judge Jonathan Stone

District Judge Simon Middleton

The Courts of Justice, Edward Street, Truro TR1 2PB