

Dear all,

As you are all aware we are facing an unrepresented challenge at the present time.

Many have contacted the Courts for advice and guidance.

I hope you are familiar with the Guidance issued by the President of the Family Division, which is being applied in North Wales. There will therefore be no local protocol documents or practice directions issued, and we may not operate in any way that conflicts with the President's guidance.

The guidance is attached as a Word Document, as is the new standard directions for remote hearings.

Please note that ALL visits by children to meet the Judge are cancelled, as are all adoption ceremonies.

Please also note that ALL visits to meet P in Court of Protection cases are cancelled.

You will be aware from the guidance that there is a presumption that all family cases will continue to be listed and dealt with, but remotely. In some cases this will mean the Judge is in the courtroom, and in others the Judge will also be attending remotely. There is provision for some or all parties to attend hearings, but this is to be regarded as exceptional.

The general method in North Wales will be BT Conferencing. There may also be some hearings better suited to Skype or Microsoft Teams. It is a steep learning curve for all.

The Judiciary together with HMCTS staff are currently reviewing the court lists to arrange hearings and discuss practical matters, and will be in touch with court users in the coming days. As per the President's guidance, in general terms the responsibility for arranging a BT Conference will lie with the applicant's solicitor, or the respondent's solicitor if the applicant is a litigant in person. If all parties are litigants in person, they will be contacted to explain that hearings will be by telephone and how this will be facilitated.

Please be aware that all hearings will now have a specific time slot, and it is important that all interested parties are available at the allocated time.

ALL bundles are now to be submitted electronically.

Orders will continue to be submitted in the usual way.

Guidance is continually evolving, and our working practices may change again at short notice.

May I take this opportunity to thank you all for doing all that you can to keep the wheels of justice turning in North Wales. There will be regular opportunities for feedback, so that we can adapt and provide the best possible service to our court users at this difficult time.

The Family Division Liaison Judge Mr Justice Francis has asked me to express that he is happy to be consulted on any issues that may arise.

HHJ Gaynor Lloyd.