



## **COVID -19 PRIVATE & PUBLIC FAMILY LAW INTERIM PROCEDURES**

On an urgent basis and **until 3 April 2020** the following procedures will apply to hearings in private and public family law cases in the courts in the Central, East and West London DFJ areas.

Following the guidance from the President of the Family Division issued yesterday:

1. All hearings as set out in paragraph 8 of the President's Guidance including directions hearings in adoption and urgent Family Law Act 1996 will be heard remotely. Arrangements will be made so that parties do not need to attend.
2. The hearings will be held by telephone, video or skype with the judge in court and the hearing recorded on the court recording equipment. Each court may have slightly different equipment, but the intention is for the main methods of proceeding to be either BT Conferencing or Skype for Business.
3. The arrangements for the virtual hearing will be made in liaison between the court and the responsible party in each case as identified in para 16 of the Guidance.
4. All other cases to which paragraph 11 of the President's Guidance applies will be vacated and listed for directions hearings within 28 days. Unless on a case by case basis a judge agrees to a proposal for that hearing to become a virtual hearing. The directions hearings to be conducted remotely.
5. All adoption celebration hearings are cancelled until further notice.
6. It is hoped that Judges will be trained and their computers facilitated for hearings to be conducted by Skype for Business post 3 April 2020.
7. This is subject to the DFJs reviewing the circumstances and issuing further guidance after 3 April 2020.
8. The situation changes from day to day, hour to hour, and will be reviewed.

9. For East London Family Court only, BT conferencing will be, but is not yet fully in place at Westferry so different arrangements will need to be made in the very short term until that is set up.

Central London

HHJ Brasse Acting Designated Family Judge

East London

HHJ Atkinson Designated Family Judge

West London

HHJ Rowe QC Designated Family Judge

20 March 2020