

11th June 2020

Version 2

Parents' Guide to Remote Hearings

This document has been produced in order to help represented parents when they are attending a remote court hearing, either online or by telephone.

It is intended to help you navigate through this difficult time of remote hearings.

This document is in two sections, the first being “technical guidance” on how to join the remote hearing and then “practical guidance” on what to do during the hearing itself.

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Technical Guidance

First of all, do not worry about “how” you should be joining a hearing, whether this is by Skype, CVP or telephone. **The Court will advise you which type of hearing is going to be applicable to your case.**

How to join a Skype hearing

Joining by laptop/computer?

If you already have a NORMAL Skype account set up, then this will work with Skype for Business and you will NOT need to download anything else onto your computer.

If you do not have a Skype account, the easiest thing to do is download ‘Skype for Business’ (link below). You **do not need to set up an account**, all you have to do is have the software downloaded onto your laptop.

Here is the link for ‘Skype for Business’:

<https://www.microsoft.com/en-gb/microsoft-365/skype-for-business/download-app>



Joining from an Ipad/Iphone/Smartphone?

The same process applies, if you do not already have a Skype account, use the above link to download the app onto your device

Prior to the hearing

You will receive an email from the Court that looks like the **email below**. When you get the email with the link, try and keep it in your inbox and don't click on it until ten minutes before the hearing

On the day of the hearing

Ten minutes before the hearing is due to start click on this link and it will take you through to Skype. You may have to wait a while before it connects.

From: [sxcareclerks <sxcareclerks@justice.gov.uk>](mailto:sxcareclerks@justice.gov.uk)

Date: DATE OF EMAIL

[Join Skype Meeting](#)

Click on this link
["Join Skype Meeting"](#)

Trouble Joining? Try Skype Web App

Dear All,

Please see above skype link for this afternoon 2pm hearing


Kind regards

NAME OF CLERK

Acting Care Clerk / Usher Team Leader

NAME OF JUDGE

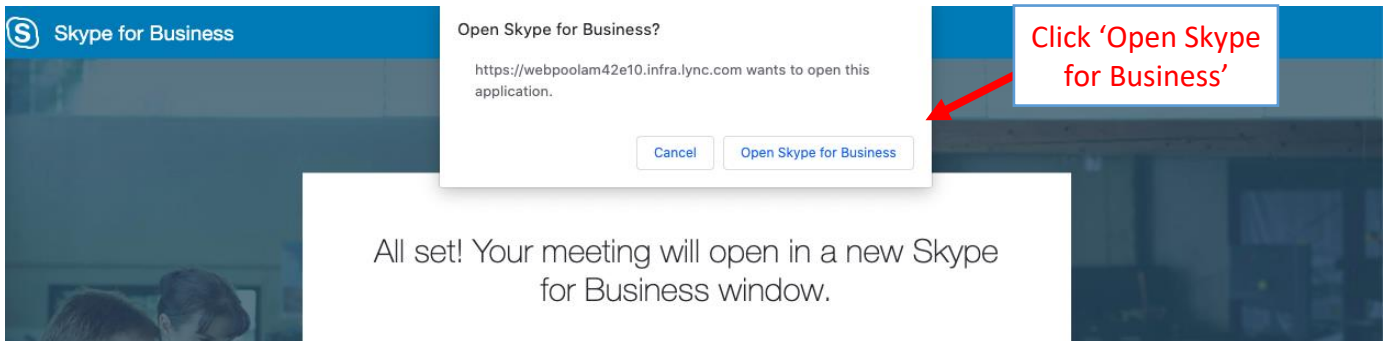
COURT DETAILS

 HM Courts & Tribunals Service

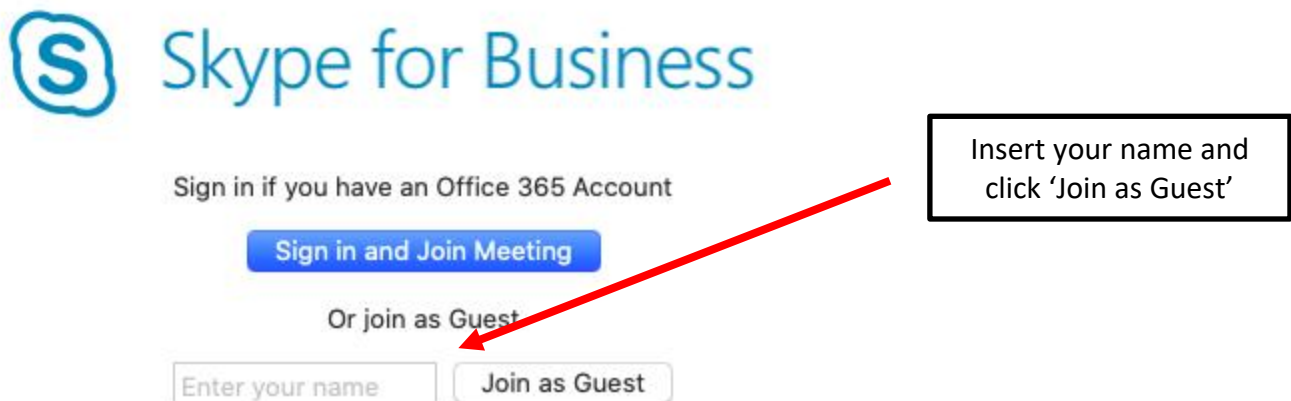
Coronavirus (COVID-19): courts and tribunals planning and preparation

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-courts-and-tribunals-planning-and-preparation>

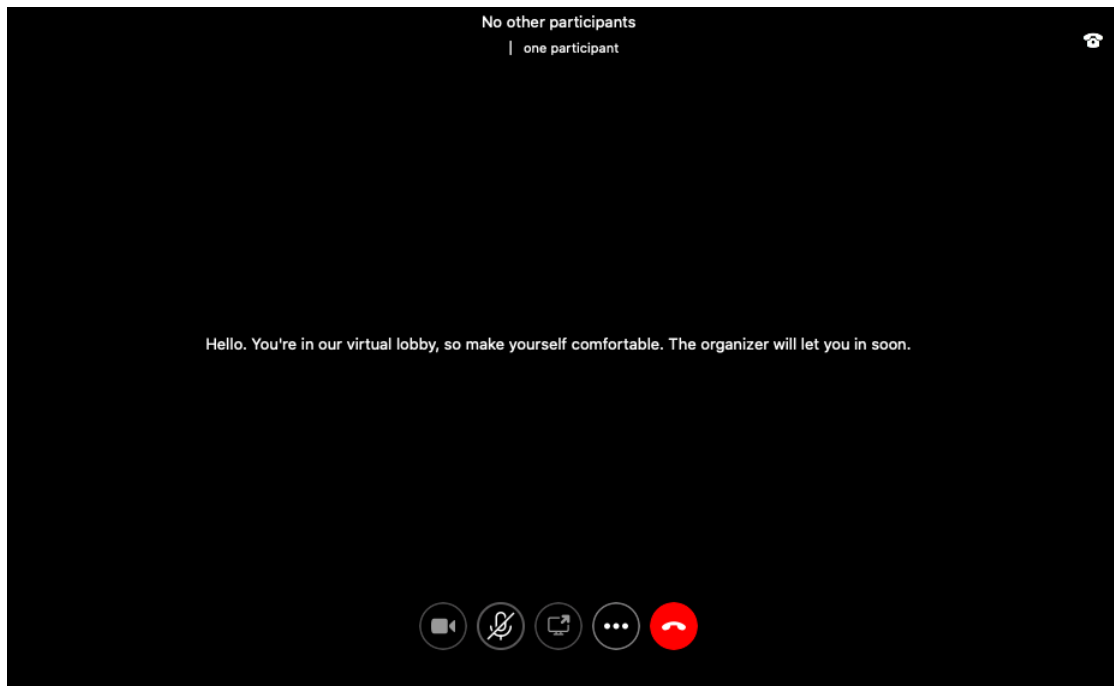
Once you have clicked “Join Skype Meeting” if you have pre-downloaded ‘Skype for Business’ you should see this pop up.



Your computer should then automatically open ‘Skype for Business’ and you will see this box come up:



You should then see the following page pop up:



You may be waiting in this 'virtual lobby' for a while. But don't worry you haven't been forgotten. When the Court is ready they will let you in to the hearing and it will start.

How to join a CVP (Cloud Video Platform) hearing

What is CVP?

Common Video Platform (CVP) is a secure digital network that gives the court the ability to manage and conduct cases, where the participants are not in court but have access to the internet and have a laptop, tablet or smartphone.

Where can CVP be used?

CVP can be accessed from any video and audio capable computer, laptop, phone and tablet that has an internet connection. Anyone using CVP should be doing so in a quiet, private location where other people will not be able to hear or see what is being said on the CVP call. Before the hearing starts, you will be asked to confirm this.

Should I use WiFi or Mobile Data?

When using CVP you should connect your device via WiFi where possible for the best call quality and strength. It is not recommended that you use open or public WiFi as it might not have the capacity to provide a strong connection.

If you cannot find a secure WiFi connection and must connect via a mobile data, please be aware that it could quickly use up data allowance depending on bandwidth selection. When connecting on mobile data, if you use a 3G connection you could see a reduced quality for both what you see and hear, a 4G connection is therefore recommended.

Before the hearing

Prior to the date of the hearing, you will have been asked to supply an email address and/or a telephone number that the court may contact you on. You will need access to the internet through a browser to join the CVP hearing

Recommended Browsers when accessing CVP

The following browsers are recommended to ensure quality sound and vision when accessing CVP:

1. Google Chrome – for Windows Laptops and PCs



2. Safari – for iPads and Macs



3. Pexip Infinity Connect (PIC) – if you are joining via a smartphone or tablet, you can either add the joining details to your browser or download PIC.

The Pexip logo, which consists of the word "pexip" in white lowercase letters inside a dark blue rectangular box with white brackets on either side.

[Link to PIC - <https://www.pexip.com/apps>]

4. Firefox – NOT compatible with CVP



Undertaking a Test Call

The court may suggest that a test call is undertaken prior to attending the hearing as this will prevent any delays/issues on the day and will provide you with sufficient time to resolve any sound/image issues.

Accessing CVP

1. Parties can connect to the conference using a web browser. This can be done through a laptop or a smart phone. If you do not have any devices which have a camera or a microphone, you can still connect to the conference via telephone.

2. Before logging in, ensure that you do not have Skype or Microsoft Teams open on your laptop/PC as the permissions for the camera and audio will be taken up on these two applications and will prevent them from working properly in CVP.
3. Before connecting, click on the Settings' tab and double check that your audio and microphone settings are on default' and that the bandwidth is set at medium .

The instructions to join a hearing will be sent to you in an email prior to the hearing and will be similar to the following:-

1. To join a hearing, enter this link into your web browser or click on the link below:

<https://join.meet.video.justice.gov.uk/default/>

It is recommended that you do this at **least 10 minutes** prior to the hearing time, so as to allow time for any issues to be rectified, if necessary

2. The following screen should then appear:



The screenshot shows the Ministry of Justice meeting join interface. It features the Ministry of Justice logo and name at the top. Below this, there are two input fields: 'Conference alias or URI' and 'Your name'. The 'Conference alias or URI' field has a placeholder text 'Enter conference alias or URI' and a dropdown arrow. The 'Your name' field has a placeholder text 'Enter your name'. At the bottom, there are two buttons: 'SETTINGS' and 'CONNECT'. A red arrow points from the 'Conference alias or URI' field to a callout box that says 'Type in your Conference Alias/URI here which was sent to you by the court'. Another red arrow points from the 'Your name' field to a callout box that says 'Make sure you type your own name into this box as well'. The background of the interface shows a building facade.

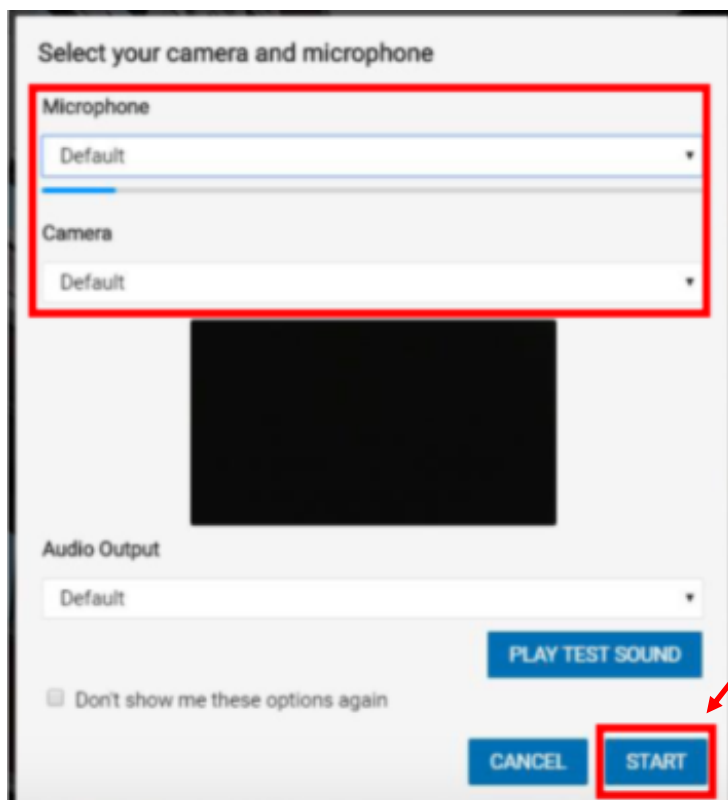
3. Once ready to log in, type in the Conference Alias/URI as specified by the court.

4. Then type your own name in the second field.

5. Click

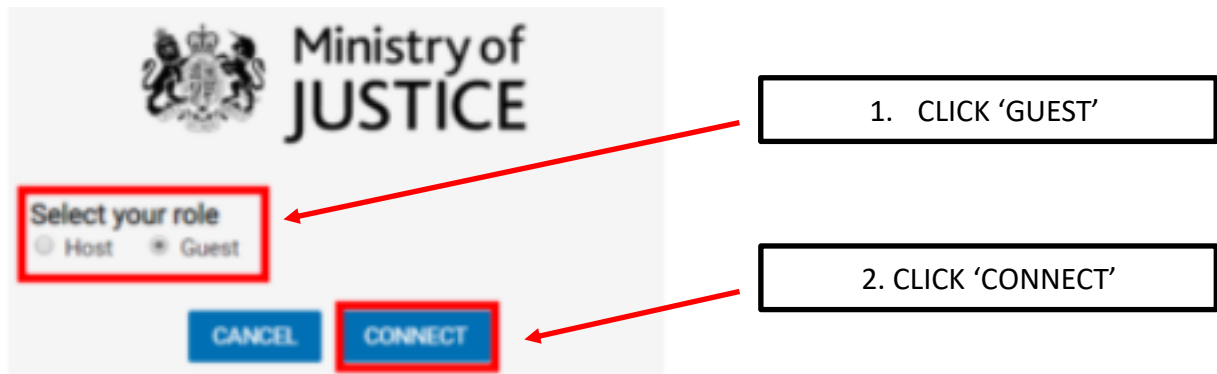


6. Before being joined to the video call you will see the screen below come up - ALL you need to do is press 'START' at the bottom of the screen.



Click 'START' to begin the video hearing

7. You then MAY see the screen below pop up all you have to do is click 'GUEST' and then click 'CONNECT'.



8. You MAY then be asked to type in a PIN into a box like the one below – you will find this pin number in the email sent to you by the court.

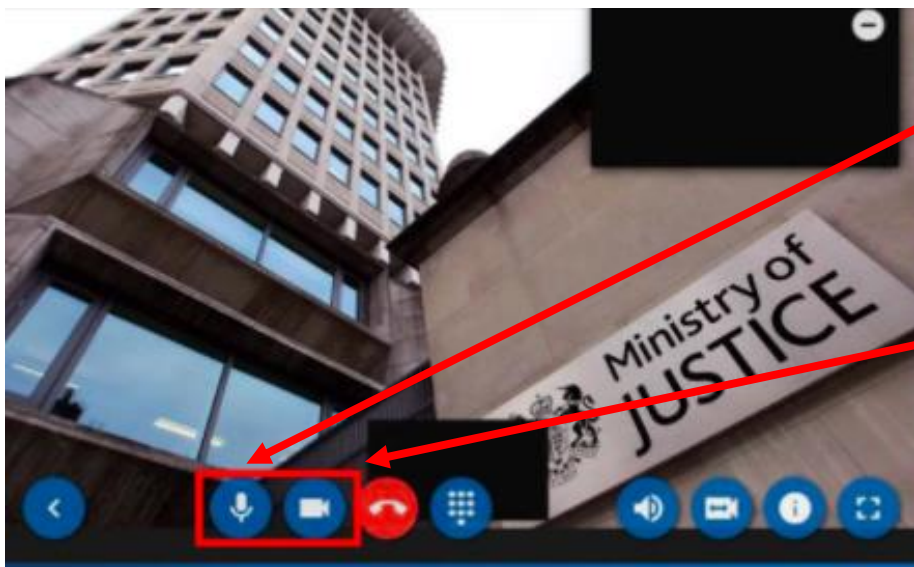


9. You will be placed in a virtual lobby and be told:

Waiting for the conference Host to join .

10. If you are struggling to connect on CVP, it is possible that you can use Skype. You will need to let the court clerk and your representative know that you are struggling. Another way to join could be through a telephone line if the Judge is happy to proceed in that way.

11. Your legal representative will most likely tell you before the hearing starts to mute yourself once entering the hearing. However, the court clerk will remind you of this. You can see from the image below where the mute button is – click this and you will be placed on mute. You can also turn your video off, IF ASKED, by clicking the icon next to the mute button.



Click on this microphone icon to mute yourself.

You can turn off your video using the icon next to it.

How to join a hearing on Microsoft Teams

What is MS Teams?

Microsoft Teams is an online video conferencing platform that may sometimes be used by courts to hold remote hearings. It works much as the other platforms do in that you will be connected to the hearing by video link and the Judge and other parties will be able to see you.

What do I need to download before the MS Teams hearing?

It is not required but if you wish to, **you can download the software before the hearing as below:**

Joining by Laptop/computer?

Microsoft Teams is available on all computers operating on Apple, Windows, or Android operating systems. Firefox or Chrome are recommended browsers. It is available to download on Mac, Windows and Linux. You can download it from the App Store or Google play, alternatively, please visit:

<https://teams.microsoft.com/downloads#allDevicesSection>

We recommend that you have Microsoft Teams installed on your tablet, desktop or laptop if you are able to. If you have not downloaded the app it should still work with an invitation which you will get from the court.

Joining from smartphone device/Ipad?

Microsoft Teams is available on all computers and mobile operating on Apple, Windows, or Android operating systems. You can download it from the App Store or Google play, alternatively, please visit:

<https://teams.microsoft.com/downloads#allDevicesSection>

Please note that using Microsoft Teams on your mobile phone will mean that you will only be able to see one screen at a time and NOT everyone who is on the hearing. If you are using your phone, please try and rest it somewhere with your face clearly visible and try and keep the camera steady. You should avoid moving around too much if possible so the screen isn't shaky.

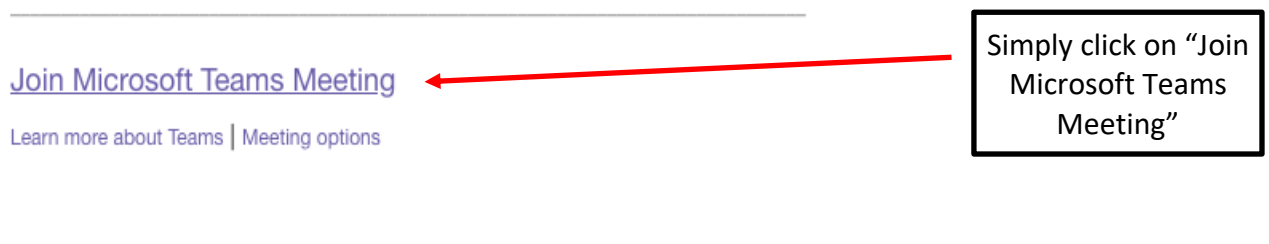
Prior to the MS Teams hearing

You will have been asked to supply your email address to the court (your solicitor will most likely do this for you in advance) and you will receive an email invitation from the court. It is suggested you click on the link at least 10 minutes before the hearing is due to start.

If you are joining via the web, please note if you press 'accept' to the invitation, this email will disappear to your trash/deleted mailbox and the meeting will be scheduled into your calendar if it is linked on your device. You do not have to 'accept' the invitation – if you want to keep the link accessible in your mailbox.

How to join the MS Teams hearing - invitation by email

To join the hearing, click on the link in the email which is your invitation to attend the hearing (as set out below).

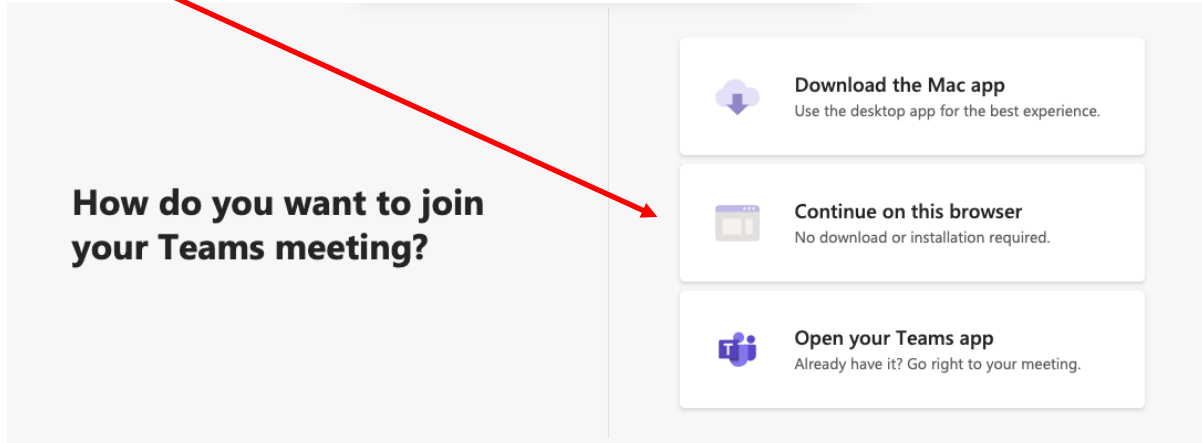


When you join the hearing by pressing the link you will be given two options:

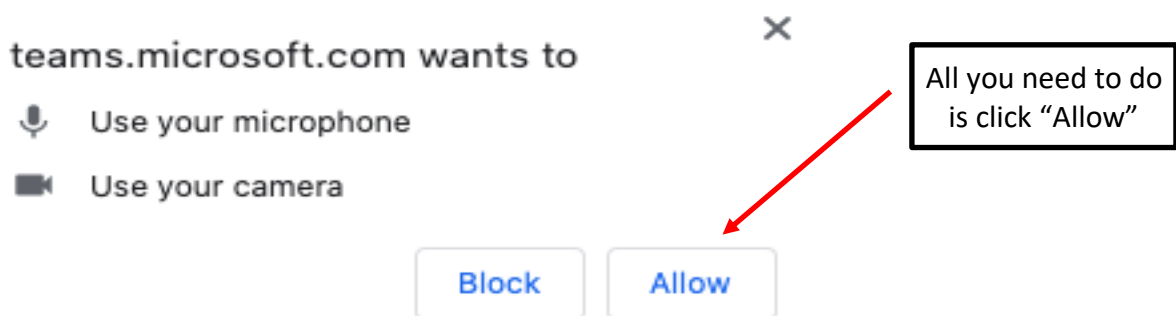
- a. Join via the web; or
- b. Download Microsoft Teams.

How to join an MS Teams hearing - joining via a web browser

If you do not have Microsoft Teams downloaded, you can simply click on “Continue on this browser”



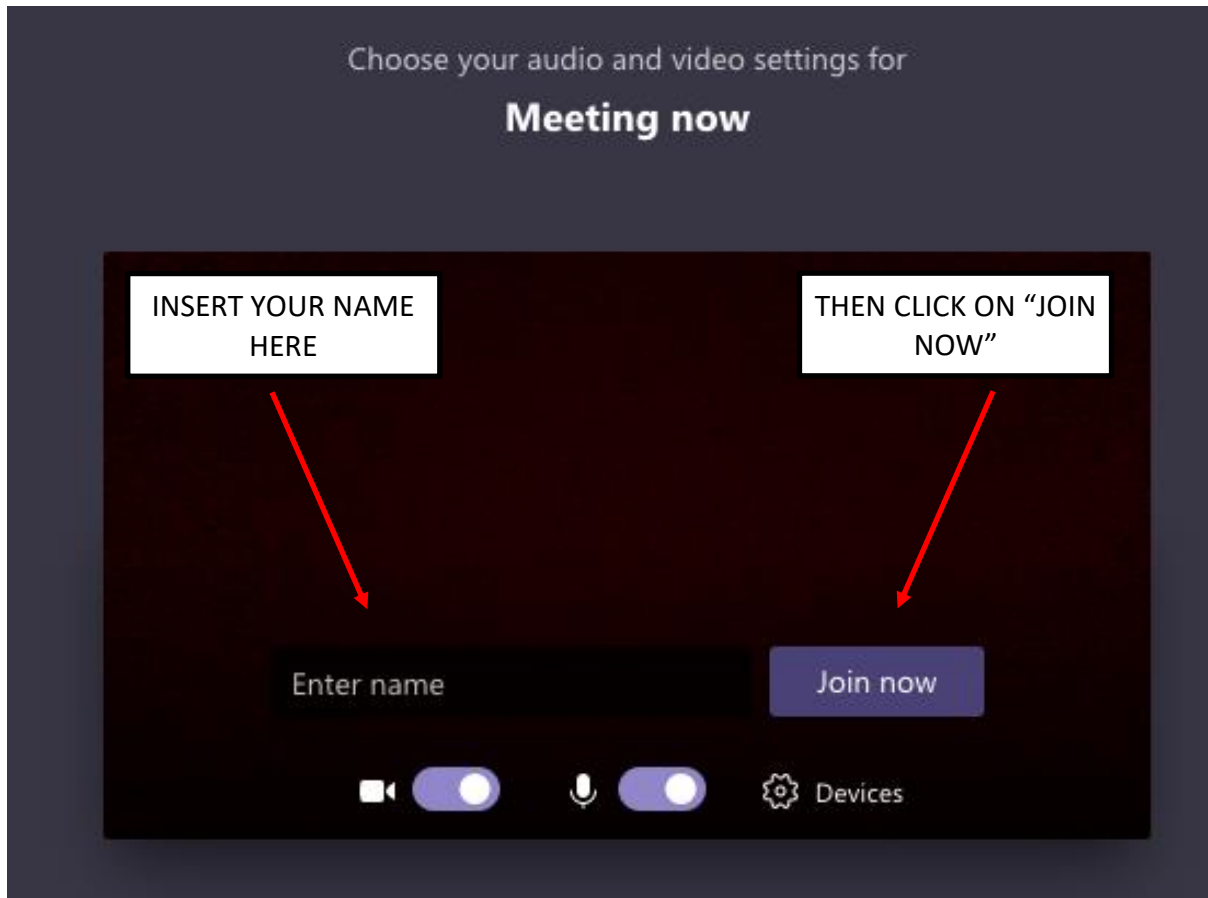
Once you have clicked on “Continue on this browser” you may see the following pop up:



Select Allow to let Microsoft Teams use your mic and camera for calls and meetings on this browser.

When you do, we'll turn your devices on for a moment to set them up.

Once you have allowed access to your video and microphone you will see the following screen pop up:



You will then be joined to the hearing – it may be that you have to wait for the ‘HOST’ to let you in, who is usually the Court Clerk.

If you can join through Wi-Fi that is the best option. Using video for hearings will use up a lot of mobile data and will be expensive for the bill payer.

On the day of an MS Teams hearing

We suggest at least ten minutes before the hearing starts, find the email with the link and click on the link entitled 'Join Microsoft Teams meeting' which looks like this:

[Join Microsoft Teams Meeting](#)

[Learn more about Teams](#) | [Meeting options](#)

Once you have clicked "Join Microsoft Teams Meeting" the following screen MAY come up:

Open Microsoft Teams?

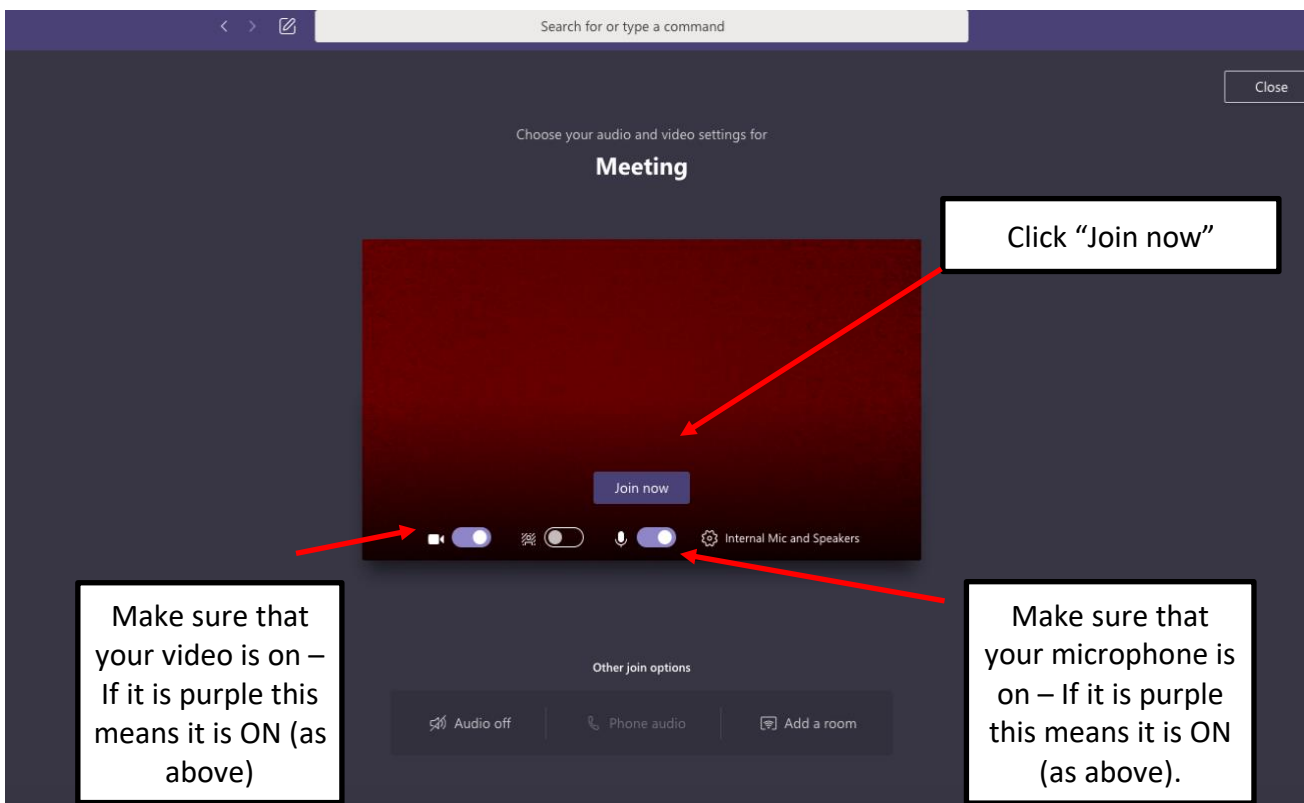
https://teams.microsoft.com wants to open this application.

Cancel

Open Microsoft Teams

Simply click "Open Microsoft Teams"

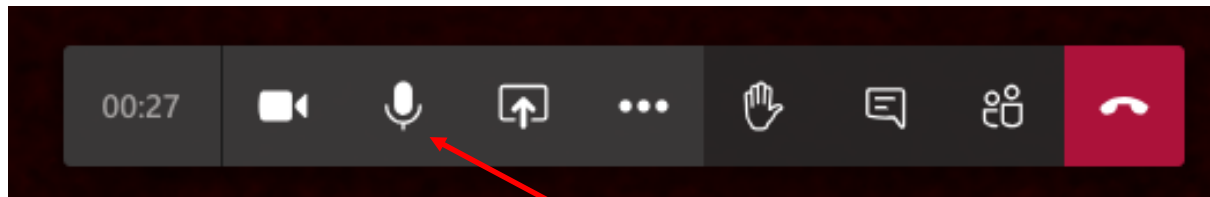
The following screen will then pop up - You will need to make sure everyone can see and hear you so you may need to select your audio and video settings (i.e. video/microphone on or off), then click 'Join now'.



It is likely that there will be a lengthy pause whilst everyone is connected to the hearing. You should be able to see different parties as they log on and put their video function on. Sometimes this process can take quite a while to set up properly before the Judge comes online. We suggest it is a good idea to mute your microphone as soon as you are on.

During the hearing it is a good idea to mute your device and only unmute if the Judge or clerk of the court asks you a direct question. If you touch the middle of the screen (if on a tablet) or if you click on the middle of the screen (if on a laptop/computer), an options bar will appear that gives you the following options:

- c. Video on/off;
- d. Microphone on/off;



Simply click on the microphone symbol to mute yourself

There is a 'chat' facility which you will be able to access. Please be aware that this can be viewed by all participants to the MS teams hearing.

The court has the options to remove people from the hearing, and mute everyone in the hearing if anyone is being disruptive.

How to join a Zoom Hearing

What is Zoom?

Zoom is another online video conferencing platform which is sometimes used by the Courts. It works in a very similar way to both Skype for Business and Microsoft Teams. Zoom can be used on Windows and Mac computers and on Apple, Windows and Android tablets and smart mobile phones.

How to Access Zoom

The easiest way to access Zoom is to **download it onto your device first**. There are three ways you can do this:

- a) On your Apple phone or iPad go to the app store and search for 'Zoom Cloud Meetings'. Download the app.
- b) For Android device go to google play app store and search for 'Zoom Cloud Meetings'.
- c) For all other devices go to:

<https://zoom.us/download>

You will see the following page come up:

Zoom Client for Meetings

The web browser client will download automatically when you start or join your first Zoom meeting, and is also available for manual download here.

Download

Version 5.0.5 (26223.0603)



Once you have downloaded Zoom onto your device you are all ready to go!

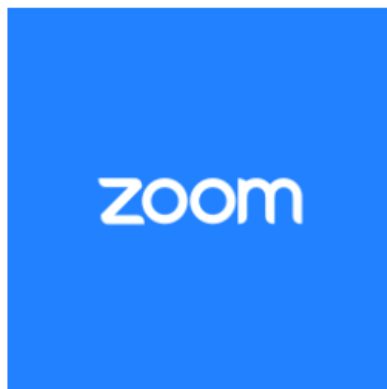
How to join a hearing by Zoom

The court will send you an email that looks like this:

Click on this link to access the video hearing

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us04web.zoom.us/j/841417289?pwd=NTB5Vm5reTRPVnNpTXhSMnJQVmRkQT09>



Launch Meeting - Zoom

us04web.zoom.us

Zoom is the leader in modern enterprise video communications, with an easy, reliable cloud platform for video and audio conferencing, chat, and webinars across mobile, desktop, and room systems. Zoom Rooms is the original software-based conference room solution used around the world in board, conference, huddle, and training rooms, as well as

Meeting ID: 841 417 289
Password: 014395

You may this Meeting ID and Password – if you are asked to enter these codes you will find them in the original email sent to you by the Court

Once you have clicked on the link the following box will pop up on your browser:

Open zoom.us?

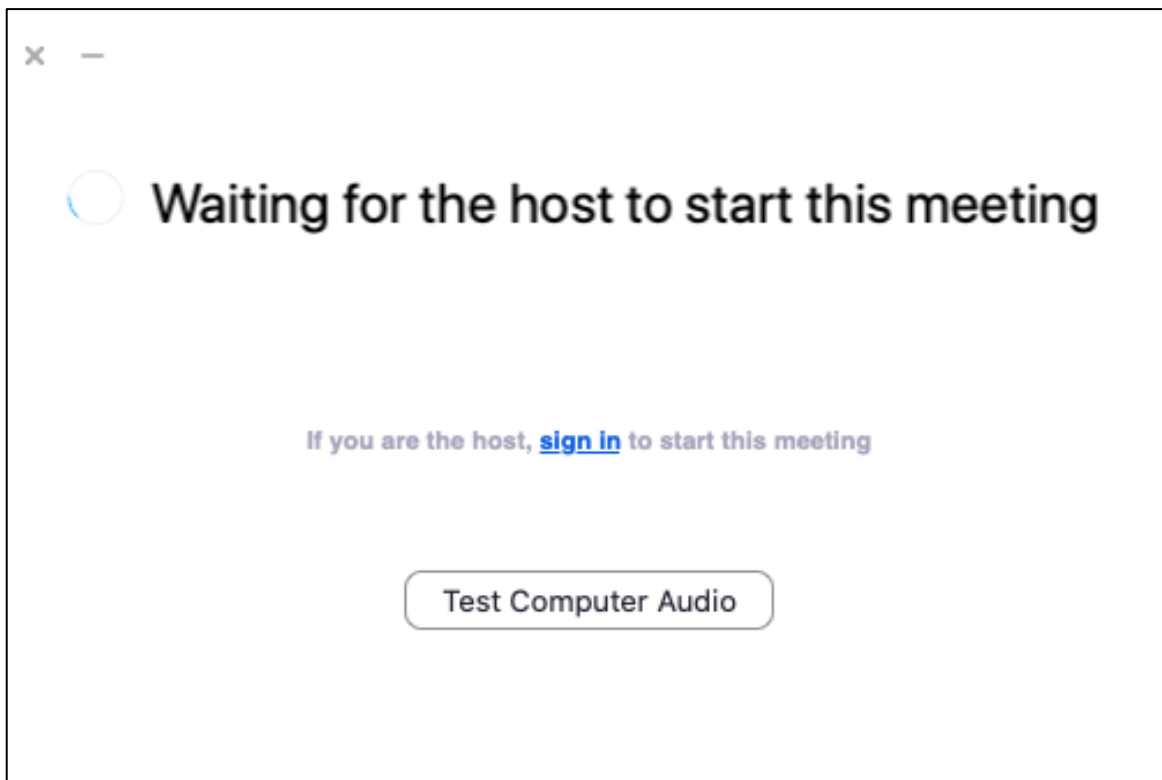
https://us04web.zoom.us wants to open this application.

Cancel

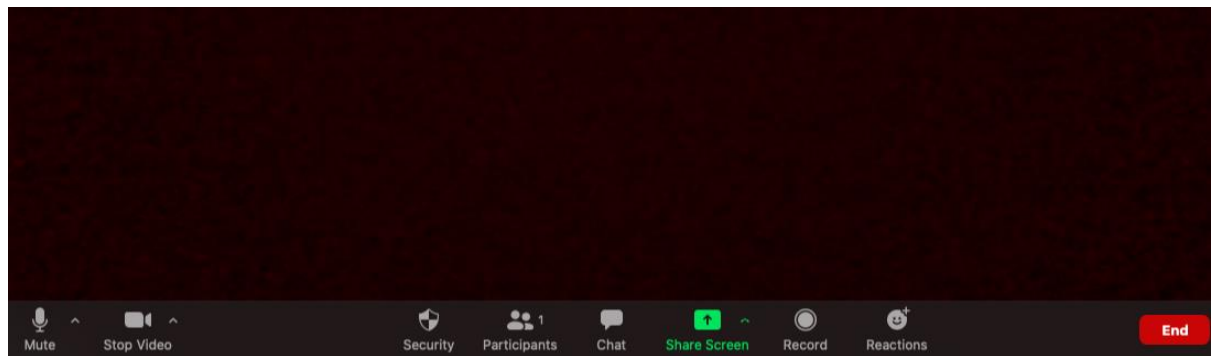
Open zoom.us

Click on "open zoom.us"

You will then see the following screen, this is the "lobby" and you will be let into the hearing by the court clerk:



Once you have been let into the hearing you will be asked to mute yourself:



Click on this button to mute yourself, if you are asked a direct question simply click on the “mute” button again to unmute yourself

How to join a telephone hearing

Court hearings by telephone

Some court hearings are being run via a telephone conference platform called 'BT Meet Me' which allows the Judge to hear everyone on the telephone call.

How do I join a court hearing by telephone?

Your telephone number will have been supplied to the court by your solicitor.

You will be telephoned by the court **around** the time that you have been given for the start of the hearing. Do not worry if you are not called at the exact time the hearing is due to begin; the court has to telephone all the people who need to join the hearing and this can take some time. However, please do make sure you are ready to start at the time the hearing is listed.

The number will be one you may not recognise and it might have a London dial code that starts "0203..."

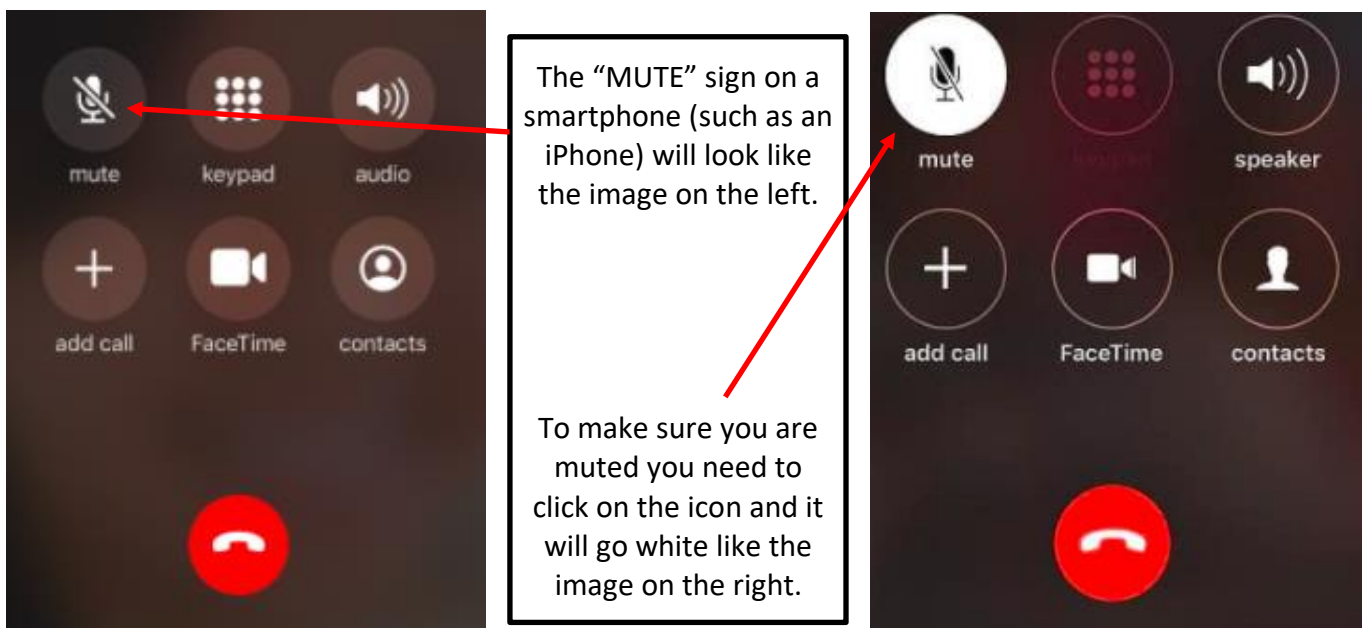
What is the procedure once I have been joined to the call?

You will be asked to record your name for the hearing. Please say your full name.

You will be announced on the line with this recording and the court clerk will check that you can hear them and ask for you to wait for everyone else to be dialled on. It will most likely be silent for a while whilst you hear everyone being joined to the call. Lots of people, both lay parties and lawyers may be on the line already but will have muted themselves.

Remember to mute yourself after you have confirmed your attendance with the court staff. To do this you need to press *6 on your phone.

If you are on a smartphone, it will give you the option of muting your call, usually with the sign of a microphone, which looks like this:



You will then hear the court staff read out some short guidelines and say that the hearing is being recorded, just as it would be in court. You will also be reminded that even though you are on a telephone call, the hearing is just as serious as a courtroom hearing. The Judge will then join the line and usually ask the representative of the local authority or the applicant to speak first and introduce the parties.

You don't need to talk unless you are specifically asked to do so by the Judge - if that happens remember to unmute yourself to speak and mute your phone again when you have finished.

Practical Guidance

As far as possible, the court is aiming to recreate a similar atmosphere to the courtroom environment for your remote hearing. To that end when you join the hearing, the Judge's Clerk or member of court staff will ask you to confirm a number of things:-

- That you are sitting somewhere quiet and private
- That you are not recording the proceedings
- The hearing remains a serious and solemn occasion, which is not diminished by the way in which the hearing is being conducted

Here are a few things you might need to consider to help with that prior to the hearing taking place:

- You might be joining a hearing from an office space, a room in a public building or from your home. It will not be appropriate to join from an outdoor space. Nor is it appropriate to be 'on the move'.
- Ideally, you should be in a quiet room/place on your own, comfortable enough to be able to concentrate on what is being said during the hearing and able to respond if asked to speak.
- If possible, the background behind you should be as neutral as possible (blank walls for instance) and your face should be visible on the screen. Some sort of light nearby is helpful. Try and angle the video camera so that it is level with your face. If you are joining via smartphone device, it might be a good idea to prop the device up so that it is still.
- The judge or clerk will ask you at the beginning to 'mute' your microphone or your telephone speaker so that there is no feedback noise and so that any background noise does not get in the way of the Judge being able to hear everything that is said.
- Be aware that the Judge has the ability to mute people, should their behaviour become disruptive to the proceedings
- There is a "chat" function on the videolink. If you send a message on here this is visible to everyone and it is advised that you do **not** use this function.

Frequently Asked Questions

Can I speak during the hearing?

Just as if you were in court, your representative will be speaking on your behalf.

You should have been able to speak with your solicitor or barrister before the hearing, and they will let you know what is going to be happening during the hearing. In most cases, you should also be able to speak with your representative after the hearing.

If you are representing yourself, it's a good idea to wait until the Judge asks you to speak.

What if there is something urgent I need to raise?

Before the hearing you should have been able to speak with your representative (either your barrister or solicitor) and you can raise any issues with them.

If something comes up during the hearing that you need to address urgently, wait until your representative has finished speaking on your behalf (the Judge will ask each of the parties' representatives to address the court in turn), if it is urgent and has not been dealt with, we suggest you say your name and "I'm sorry to interrupt but...."

Some barristers might give you an email or a telephone number which you can contact them on while the hearing is going on. It is a good idea to wait until you've heard everyone speak until you ask your representatives questions, remember they are listening to everything too and need to concentrate on everything that is being said during the hearing.

You could make a note of any questions you have while the hearing is going on to help you remember if there was something you wanted to raise with your representative.

Can I ask for a break?

If you have been on a hearing for longer than around 45 minutes and there is a good moment to pause, the Judge or your representative will probably suggest a break. These remote hearings can be very tiring, all participants, including the Judge and the lawyers are still getting used to this format.

If you need to leave urgently you should try and let your representative know first but if you cannot, we suggest you say your name, say 'sorry to interrupt' and then ask for a break. Remember to mute your microphone again after you have spoken.

If you are in a hearing that is going on for longer than a few hours, it is likely that the procedure for breaks will be raised and discussed with the Judge at the very beginning. If you have a specific condition or feel you need breaks often, this is something you should try and raise with your solicitor in advance so that they can tell your representative to raise this on your behalf. If this hasn't happened, you might need to raise this during the hearing.

What if I don't have broadband?

This is an issue you should try to raise with your solicitor well before the hearing happens so that some sort of alternative can be put in place for you.

The Court Service and the local authorities are trying to work together to make sure that you are able to join the hearing as fully as possible.

You might need to try and get onto broadband or wifi in order to be able to participate fully. If not, and you are using cellular data to connect to a hearing, it is likely that this will become expensive for the bill payer.

In some cases, the local authority might be able to organise an office space and screen for you to be able to join the hearing. This is becoming more common, but is not yet a guarantee.

What if I only have a phone?

You can join these video hearings via your phone. Sometimes these hearings may be held as 'telephone' hearings. Some Judges do not want to have one party joining on telephone when others are able to join via videolink. Wherever possible, the Judge will want to be able to see all of the parties' faces, just as if you were in court.

Do try and raise this with your solicitor as soon as you can so that the solicitor can let the court know and an alternative found, if possible. If you are joining via phone and it is a videolink hearing, you will probably only be able to see one person on the screen at all times. Try and put the phone somewhere where it can be as still as possible, aiming the camera at your face.

Do I have to go to the court building?

There are some cases which Judges consider suitable for some of the parties to attend court, usually with their representatives, to be present in front of the Judge. Sometimes, if it's possible to keep socially distant, all of the parties may attend at court, but this will depend on the space available in the courtroom.

If some people are at court and others are not, they will be joining the hearing via videolink if possible. This is known as a 'hybrid' hearing.

The court does not want to put anyone in danger, so if you consider yourself either suffering from, vulnerable to or shielding from COVID-19, you will need to explain the details of your category to your representative. Your representative should ask you if you feel able to go to court.

It is likely that there will be a separate hearing to consider the issue of how the hearing should take place. These are sometimes referred to as a 'ways and means hearing' where nothing about your case will be decided, it's just to consider how the next hearing can proceed and whether or not any of the parties and possibly the Judge are able to or should attend court

Is there a cost to using CVP?

No, the cost of using the system is borne by the court and is free to the users. The browser link and the mobile app are all free, however it does require an internet connection to work, so if you are using a portable device, you might have to use their mobile data allowance. The court will not cover the cost of data used by those using the CVP system.

What if the Court needs to adjourn the case for a short period during the hearing?

During the hearing if there is an adjournment for you to be able to communicate with your representative, or the Judge wishes to have a discussion with the lawyers alone (this sometimes happens), you may be asked by the Judge to temporarily leave the hearing.

You can do this by pressing "hang up" or the court can end the session. The Judge will be able to see who is still present at the hearing and who has left by looking at the listing of the hearing participants (if by CVP, Skype, MS Teams or Zoom) or by checking who remains on the call (if by phone).

If you need to rejoin the hearing, you just retake the steps you originally took to join the hearing. Alternatively, you may be telephoned by the court and asked to rejoin the hearing.

Telephone/BT meet me hearing - What happens if I get cut off?

If you are on a telephone only hearing and you get cut off, it's possible that nobody will realise. If this happens, don't worry, you should contact your representative immediately to let them know that this has happened. They may well ask for a pause in proceedings so that the court can dial your number again.

However, some phone services are able to tell the other participants that someone has left the call, so the others on the line will know that you are no longer there and can ensure that steps are taken for the court to dial your number again.

If you have missed anything serious your representative or the Judge will go over it again for you. Try and note down what was being discussed at the time you got cut off and the time on the clock so that anything you may have missed can be repeated.

FLBA Working Group

Rachael Claridge

Delia Minoprio

Hope Spalding