

Information for Queen's Bench Court Users

Queen's Bench Masters Hearings and QB Action Department

In the light of the developments of the last 48 hours, the situation has changed from the communication sent out last week.

The Royal Courts of Justice is still open, and a small number of senior key administrative staff there in person, all QB Masters are now working remotely from home, and all QB Action department staff released with a core number working remotely from home.

The Fees Office in the QB Action Department is closed, but all professional users should continue to use CE-File where you can pay by PBA or credit card. All other users will be asked for payment when the Fees Office re-opens.

Foreign Process and Children's Funds The Foreign Process and Children's Funds Sections departments are closed until further notice. Any urgent applications for Foreign Process should be sent to foreignprocess.rcj@Justice.gov.uk and any urgent correspondence for Children Funds should be sent to qbchildrensfunds@justice.gov.uk, which will be forwarded to the most appropriate Master, unless a Master has already dealt with the matter, when you should send direct to that Master.

Hearings before the QB Masters All hearings will now be conducted by telephone conference or by Skype (audio only or audio and video). Telephone hearings are conducted in accordance with PD23A and PD51Y (copy of the latter attached separately) and must be hosted by an approved service provider. Professional representatives will be required to set up telephone conferences and ensure that they are recorded, as has previously been the case. Masters will instigate Skype hearings and invite you to join the conference. You will be informed by the Master or by listing clerks how the hearing is to take place, and please let us know as soon as possible if there are any difficulties (see Communications with the Court below).

The hearings will be listed as usual in the Cause List and identified as either telephone or video hearings

If parties reach an agreement to adjourn any listed hearings because they are not urgent and they would prefer them to be listed in court when the current emergency situation is lifted please let the Master know as soon as possible. The Master may also reach a decision of their own initiative to adjourn any particular hearing and will communicate with the parties by email or telephone.

Communications with the Court about Hearings

Our court staff have been unable to keep electronic filings up to date as a result of depletion of staff during the present crisis. Please therefore do not rely on electronic filing alone to ensure that a document reaches the Master for a hearing. Please email with information and all documents relating to a forthcoming hearing directly to the Master. All Masters' email addresses, as well as those of their clerks and key Action Department staff are in Annex B.

As far as possible please send one email with all information and documents for a hearing. Repeated emails are unhelpful and difficult to manage when Masters have many hearings

listed every day and are involved more than usual in the administrative arrangements for the hearings.

Documents for hearings Please follow the instructions previously provided about electronic bundles. Most Masters will not be able to come into court to collect hard copy bundles and there are no facilities to courier these to us. Do not include skeleton arguments in the electronic hearing bundle but email them separately.

Please also bear in mind that working from electronic bundles at a telephone hearing can be more time consuming and cumbersome so please ensure that the bundles contain no more documents than necessary for resolution of the issues in question.

Thank you for your understanding, and for assisting us to ensure that we can continue to progress as many QB claims as possible during this difficult time.

Barbara Fontaine Senior Master of the Queen's Bench Division 25 March 2020