



21st May 2020

Dear Court Users,

Having had to postpone the formal Court User Group meeting set for 28th April 2020, this seems like a good opportunity to update you on the court's performance and activities during the Coronavirus outbreak and to make you aware of some of the work being done to assist practitioners.

The Court of Protection has remained open since lockdown began, and there has been a continuous presence of judges, Authorised Officers and court administrative staff & managers at First Avenue House (FAH). Where possible, staff, Authorised Officers and judges are now also working remotely. The court currently has around 70% - 80% of its staff complement either working remotely, working at First Avenue House or combination working.

Hearings

At the start of the public health crisis and in line with guidance from the Vice President the Court took an early decision to reconfigure listed hearings to be conducted remotely, by telephone where possible, to reflect hearing methods that most professional applicants, judges and staff were already familiar with. The court immediately reworked its hearing guidance (GN5) and the website has been amended accordingly. Other forms of video remote hearings are still available at the discretion of the judges, and the court is working with HMCTS and the Ministry of Justice to fast track the installation of new CVP platform for video hearings.

Filing of form COP20s

We appreciate that access to postal services may be restricted at present so following feedback from court users, the court has now set up a new email inbox to allow applicants to file their service forms COP20A and COP20B electronically. Please ensure that you file your COP20s at the same time where possible and **include P's name and court case reference** in the title of your e-mail. The email address is;

COP_Service@justice.gov.uk

Please note that this email box is strictly for the filing of form COP20s only - any other forms or documents sent to this email address will not be actioned.

Electronic filing of P & A deputy applications

The court has also worked with MoJ Digital to set up and begin a limited pilot exercise to allow users to send in property & affairs deputy applications electronically. The court has established a small 'e-apps' team and put in place a process to test whether the court can accept P & A deputy applications electronically as a regular feature. The pilot is due to conclude at the end of July when it will be assessed, and further information will be made

available. The court is continuing to pursue the provision of a bespoke digital application system with HMCTS and the Ministry of Justice.

Performance

Formal statistics will be provided in the usual way prior to the next Court User Group meeting. The court regularly reviews its performance and whilst there is still plenty to be done, the backlogs of work before the judges and Authorised Officers have been significantly reduced, and the court continues to use its current resources flexibly to ensure a constant through flow of work.

We appreciate that these are difficult times for all our court users so if you have any thoughts or ideas about how we can assist you please contact **Ross Hamilton ACO** at ross.hamilton@justice.gov.uk and he will consider each suggestion made.

I hope that you have found this useful and may I ask that you assist the court by disseminating any relevant information to other court users within your professional networks.

Yours,

HHJ Carolyn Hilder – Senior Judge of the Court of Protection

Amrit Panesar – Court Manager