

# **REMOTE HEARING PROTOCOLS**

## **INSTRUCTIONS TO THE PARTIES**

### **1 Introduction**

- i. The default position for hearings is using the Microsoft Teams facility.
- ii. Proceedings conducted in this manner will be referred to as remote hearings.
- iii. Remote hearings are judicial proceedings conducted by remote access technology. There may be members of the public observing the hearing. The decorum of the hearing still applies and the VTE expects the behaviour of the parties on remote hearings to be the same as in a tribunal room environment.
- iv. Parties do not need to have the Teams app to participate in proceedings, just follow the link provided by the VTS with the invitation. If this is not possible parties can join by telephone.

### **2 Establishing a Remote Hearing**

- i. Parties will need to provide an email address which will be used for the hearing and any electronic communication on the day.
- ii. Each party will receive an email invitation advising of the time and date of the hearing which will contain both a link and a dial in telephone number for the parties to access the proceedings on the day. A member of staff will contact you before the hearing date to talk through the process and accessibility of the hearing.
- iii. If you are calling a witness to give evidence, please notify us in advance so that appropriate arrangements can be put in place to facilitate this.
- iv. Please follow the online protocols when joining the hearing.

### **3 Joining the Hearing (online protocols)**

- i. If possible, use a headset with microphone as this will provide optimal audio experience for all.
- ii. Avoid sitting with your back to a window or bright light source as this may cause reflection and distort your identity.
- iii. Close doors around you to avoid unexpected visitors/interruptions.

- iv. Join when invited to do so and do so as quickly as possible. Don't leave it late as you will need to check your equipment works.
- v. Mute other devices and apps.
- vi. Enter the remote hearing with your microphone muted and camera off as another case may still be running. You will be informed when your case is being called.
- vii. Turn your camera (and microphone) on when speaking.
- viii. Keep your microphone muted when not speaking.

#### **4 The Hearing**

- i. The hearing panel will notify you when the hearing commences. The hearing panel will be aware of the papers you have submitted so you do not need to read your case in full again, just present the main points.
- ii. The panel and/or clerk will set out the procedure on the day and invite you to speak at the appropriate time. Normal VTE etiquette should be applied, and the panel members addressed formally.
- iii. If you have poor internet connection, please let the clerk know. The hearing will not proceed without both parties being able to participate. If necessary parties can join by telephone.
- iv. Also advise the clerk if there are likely to be unavoidable interruptions and these will be catered for (such as deliveries, childcare issues etc.)
- v. If the connection breaks try and reconnect, proceedings will be adjourned when there is a break.
- vi. If calling a witness, try and arrange for them to be ready and on Teams, but with the microphone and camera switched off until called by you. If a hardcopy witness statement has been provided to the other party and panel beforehand, there is no need for them to read the whole statement. You might wish for them to highlight the main points of their evidence. Then ask them to await instructions from the panel on questions (please ensure they have read a copy of this paper on what to do).
- vii. Please only speak when invited to by the hearing panel and/or clerk. There is no need for a party to interrupt another party or a panel member. If for any reason you need to interrupt proceedings either virtually raise your arm through the Teams system or, if that is not available to you, please raise your arm on camera.

- viii. Refer to the document, the page number (and ideally paragraph numbers) when highlighting part of a document already provided. The senior member will advise you when they have found it.
- ix. When invited to ask questions, ensure that you only ask one question at a time. Await the answer before speaking again – do not interrupt the other party's response.
- x. Regular breaks will be arranged, and parties should ensure that their microphones are muted during such breaks but that they return promptly as directed by the panel to continue proceedings.
- xi. The hearing panel will be suitably attired for a hearing as though the parties were present and there is an expectation the parties will be similarly dressed.
- xii. At the end of the hearing both parties will be invited to sum up. Please wait online whilst the panel retire to check they have all the information they require. The clerk will contact you within 5-10 minutes of the hearing ending to confirm that either the panel have all the information they require or that they wish to continue proceedings through Teams.