

# Protocol for Remote Viewing of Hearings

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## Introduction

1. This Protocol applies to any hearing of the Supreme Court, Court of Appeal or High Court (the Court) in respect of which the Court has made a direction that remote viewing of the hearing is permitted.
2. Most Court hearings involve an in-person hearing, where the Judge or Judges, counsel or self-represented litigants and other participants are present in the courtroom. In some proceedings there may be a remote hearing, where one or more participants participates remotely using a range of different technologies, as permitted under the [Courts \(Remote Participation\) Act 2010](#). The [Protocol for Participation in Remote Hearings](#) applies to remote hearings.
3. For some hearings (including remote hearings), the Court may permit litigants, the media and/or public to view the hearing remotely. Those permitted to view a hearing remotely do so by using either Virtual Meeting Room (VMR), a web browser-based videoconferencing system supported by the Ministry of Justice and Spark, or by using Microsoft Teams (Teams), a meeting solution that uses an internet browser or the Teams app.

## Application to view a hearing remotely

4. If you wish to apply to view a hearing remotely, you should contact the Registry of the relevant Court by email or telephone. The request should be made before 1pm on

the working day before the hearing. Details of the Courts' email addresses and telephone numbers can be found [here](#).

## Setup

5. To view the hearing on a computer or laptop, you will need to be able to connect using the following:

(a) **Browser:** for VMR use Microsoft Edge or Mozilla Firefox. For Teams use Microsoft Edge or Google Chrome. Do **not** use Internet Explorer, which does not work with either VMR or Teams.

(b) **Connectivity:** a strong and stable internet connection (preferably broadband with a wired connection to your device or high-quality Wi-Fi, but if that is not available any stable high-speed data connection may be used).

(c) **Device and hardware:** you will need to ensure that the speaker on your device or your headphones provide you with suitable audio quality.

(d) **Microphone:** you must ensure your camera is turned off and your microphone is muted.<sup>1</sup>

**Note:** The Court staff will not be available to assist with any problems you have with your browser, connectivity or device.

## Connecting remotely to a hearing

6. If you are given permission to view a hearing remotely, you will need to follow these steps to connect to the hearing:

(a) VMR hearings -The Registry will provide a link and a password to connect to the VMR system.

(i) Copy and paste the link into your browser (see paragraph 5(a) above) and press 'Enter'. You will then be able to enter the password.

(ii) You will be taken to a new screen where you will then be asked to set up your video, microphone and speakers. You must ensure your camera is turned off and your microphone is muted.

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<sup>1</sup> In some courts, the link you will be provided with will be a 'view only' link, which allow you only to view the hearing, in which case this requirement will not apply to you. You will be told if this is the case. But it is best to turn off the camera and mute the microphone anyway.

(b) Microsoft Teams – The Registry will send an email or Outlook calendar invitation with the Teams meeting link. Click on the link to join the remote hearing. You must ensure your camera is turned off and your microphone is muted. (Your camera and microphone may also be disabled by the Registry.)

(c) For quick reference guides see; [VMR](#) or [Teams](#) remote courts information.

7. The Registry will be able to see and monitor who is using the VMR or Teams access to the hearing.

## Important information

8. If the Court permits you to view a hearing remotely, that is a direction from the Court that you may connect to the hearing in accordance with this protocol and also a direction that you must comply in all respects with the conditions set out below. The purpose of these conditions is to preserve the integrity of the Court process and to protect the privacy of those involved in the proceeding. Failure to comply with paragraphs 10, 11 and 12 of this protocol will be treated as a breach of a court order.

9. When you apply to view a hearing remotely, you must provide the Registry with your contact details, including name, email address and telephone number.

10. The link you are provided with is for your personal use. You must not pass it onto to someone else.

11. If you wish to display the hearing on a larger screen to a group, you must request permission to do so from the Registry when requesting to view the hearing remotely.

12. Viewing the hearing remotely is subject to the same restrictions as if you were viewing the hearing in person in the courtroom. In particular:

(a) You must not record the screen (video) or audio and must not take still photographs. This includes a prohibition on downloading or capturing, by any means, sounds or images from the video feed, whether by software or digital devices, including cell phones, and a prohibition on electronic sharing of any content from the hearing.

(b) You must not publish any report of the hearing while it is in progress. This includes publishing material on any social media platform or any other media. (Exemptions apply to accredited media as defined in the [In-Court Media Coverage Guidelines](#) )

(c) You must adhere to Court suppression orders This includes a prohibition on publishing information on social media.

13. Because you are viewing the hearing remotely these exceptions are made to the usual courtroom etiquette:

(a) Note taking is permitted.

(b) Restrictions on drinking and eating in the courtroom do not apply.

## Media

14. The Media Guidelines for reporting on courts apply to members of the media viewing the hearing remotely. Please refer to the [In-Court Media Coverage Guidelines](#) and the [Media Guide for Reporting the Courts and Tribunals](#). To make any audio or visual recording of the hearing you will need to apply to the Registry using the usual [application form](#).

*This protocol is subject to revision.*