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# Parents' Guide to Remote Hearings

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*This document has been produced in order to help represented parents when they are attending a remote court hearing in the Sussex area or the proceedings involve either Brighton and Hove City Council, East Sussex County Council or West Sussex County Council.*

*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.*

# Technical Guidance

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This section covers:

- How to join a skype hearing
- How to join a CVP hearing

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 applicable to your case.**

## How to join a Skype hearing

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### 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.

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**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**

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NAME OF JUDGE

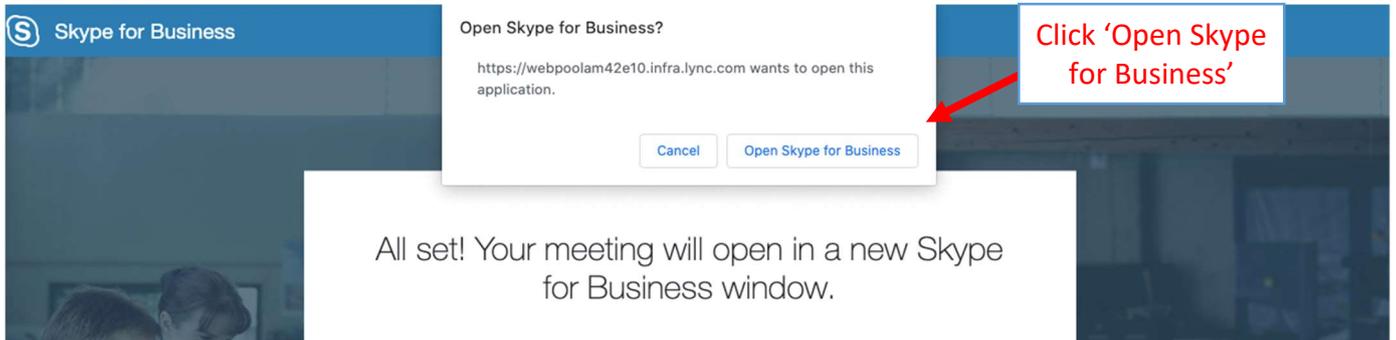
COURT DETAILS

 HM Courts & Tribunals Service

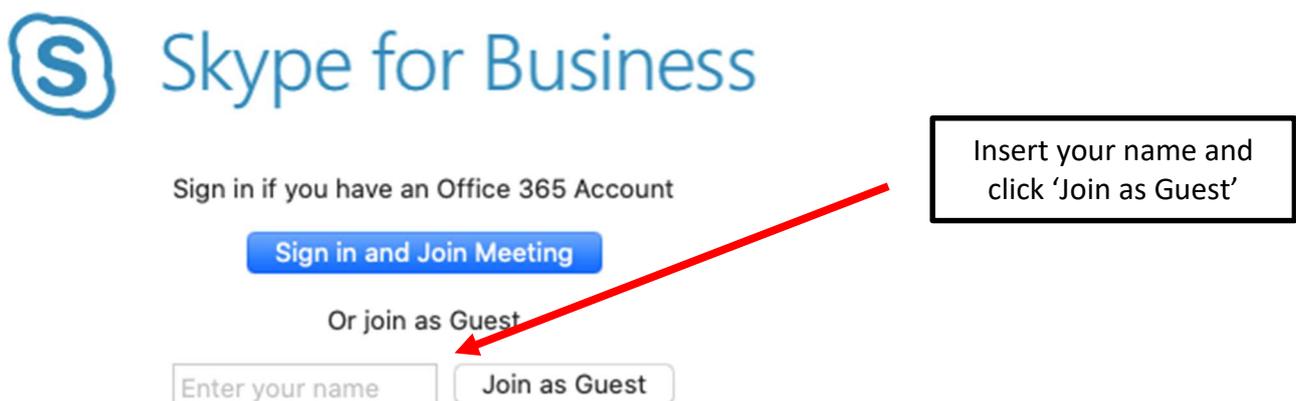
**Coronavirus (COVID-19): courts and tribunals planning and preparation**

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

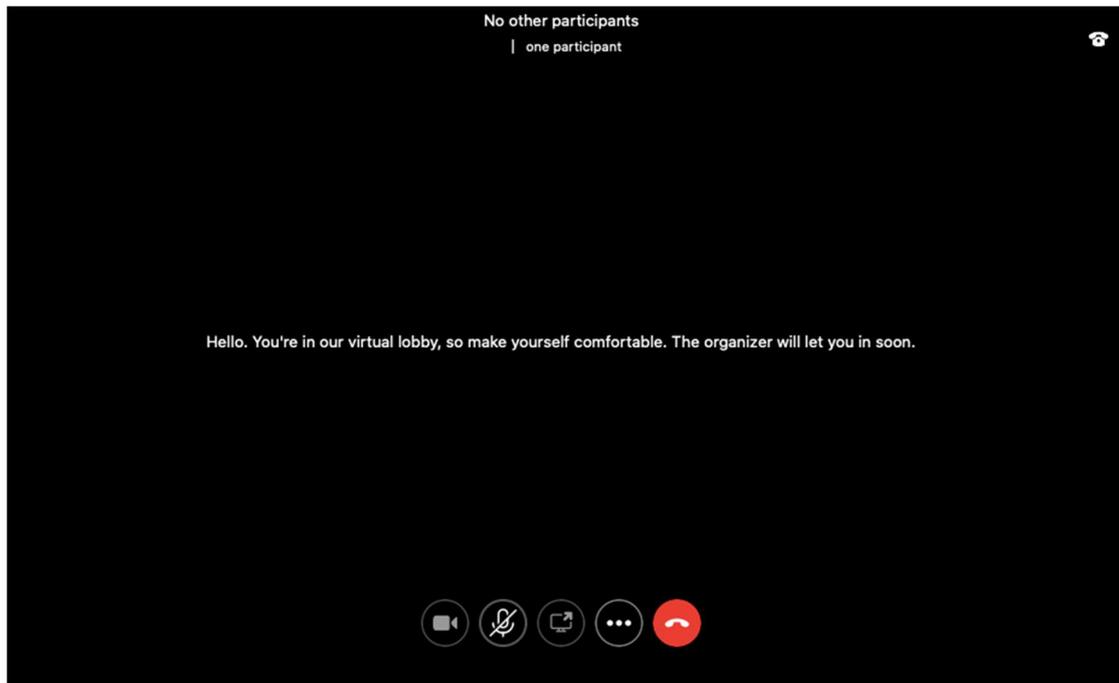
Once you have clicked “Join Skype Meeting” if you have pre-downloaded ‘Skype for Business’ you should see this pop up.



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

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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

### **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 image shows the Pexip logo, which consists of the word "pexip" in white lowercase letters inside a dark blue rectangular box with 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 .

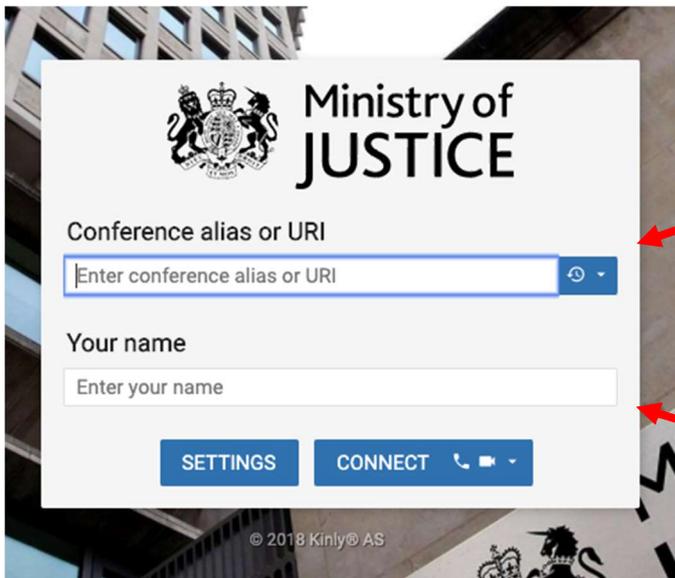
The instructions to join a hearing will be sent to you in an email prior to the hearing and will be similar to the following:-

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:



Type in your Conference Alias/URI here which was sent to you by the court

Make sure you type your own name into this box as well

3. Once ready to log in, type in the Conference Alias/URI as specified by the court
4. The type your own name in the second field
5. If you have been given a conference PIN number, enter that into the box when requested to do so.

6. Click



7. The following screen will appear placing you into a virtual lobby and you will hear a recorded message Waiting for the conference Host to join .
8. Once the Host has joined, they will let you into the CVP hearing

# Practical Guidance

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## Practical Considerations

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
- Although the proceedings are taking place by phone or videolink, they are no less serious

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.
- 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 advisable.
- 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**

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### **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.

### **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 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.

### **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.

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 this one issue. 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.

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### **FLBA Working Group**

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