HM Courts & Tribunals Service

Court of Protection
Court User Group Meeting
(General)
Wednesday, 15 April 2026 2pm
via MS Teams

Terms of Reference

The purpose of the Court User Group is to provide a forum for discussion of matters causing concern for Court Users and views and comments on policy issues.

These minutes may be widely disseminated.

Minutes

Meeting started 14:03

Attendees:

HHJ Hilder (HHJH)	Senior Judge of the Court of Protection
HHJ Owens (HHJO)	SE Regional Lead Judge
HHJ Miranda Robertshaw	SW Regional Lead Judge
HHJ Beckley (HHJB)	Resident Judge - Court of Protection
DJ Allen	Resident Judge - Court of Protection
DJ Ellington (DJSE)	Resident Judge - Court of Protection
DJ Grosse	Resident Judge - Court of Protection
Kamila Czmiel (KC)	HMCTS Court of Protection- Delivery Manager
Maureen Mohammed	HMCTS Court of Protection- Delivery Manager
Anthony Tang	HMCTS Court of Protection- Delivery Manager
Amrit Panesar	Senior Operations Manager - HMCTS
Lorna Green	HMCTS Court of Protection - ACO
Harmen Johal	HMCTS Court of Protection - ACO
Ezinne Kanu	HMCTS Court of Protection - ACO
Ayo Odunubi	HMCTS Court of Protection - ACO
Jalaja Sabu	HMCTS Court of Protection - ACO
Laura Walters	HMCTS Court of Protection - ACO
Natalie Cheesewright	HMCTS Court of Protection
Scott Soley	HMCTS Court of Protection
Eleanor Carver	Court of Protection - Bristol Hub
Joseph Hilditch	Office of the President of the Family Division
Katrina London	Office of the Public Guardian
Christopher McGowan	Office of the Public Guardian
Charlotte Gandu	Office of the Public Guardian

Lauren Coad	Official Solicitor & Public Trustee
Damian Cullen	Official Solicitor & Public Trustee
Sophie Forsyth	Official Solicitor & Public Trustee
Mark Higgs	Official Solicitor & Public Trustee
Victoria Newey	Official Solicitor & Public Trustee
Elizabeth Jeary	MOJ HQ Court Funds Office
Joan Goulbourn (JG)	MOJ Mental Capacity Policy Team
Annette Roberts (AR)	Lancashire County Council
Amanda Hill (AH)	Court observer
Dipti Patel (DP)	Richmond and Wandsworth
Meenu Sharma (MS)	Liberata
Caroline Glitre (CG)	London Borough of Barnert
Natalie Matthews (NM)	CJCH Solicitors
Deborah Pardoe DeP	Allied Services Trust
Shadia Doerfel (SD)	Lincolnshire County Council
Richard Bremer (RB)	East Riding of Yorkshire Council
John Holdsworth (JH)	Coodes LLP
Nicola Saunders (NS)	Red Kite Law LLP
Bhaveni Parmar (BP)	Lancashire County Council
Martin Terrell (MT)	Warners Law LLP
Christine Leggett (CL)	HMCTS Senior Courts Costs Office
Emily Steel (ES)	Trethowans LLP
Nilufer Ozdemir (NO)	TV Edwards LLP
Owen Brown (OB)	Wrigleys Solicitors LLP
Kathleen Bennet (KB)	Anthony Gold Solicitors
Louise Hadley-Niblett LHN)	Worcestershire County Council
Jemma Cable (JC)	HAB Law
Debra Morris	Affinity Law
Madeline Abbott	Anthony Collins Solicitors
Luke Hollis	Apricity Law Limited
Susan Friar	Barnet Council

Sara Townend	Barnsley City Council
Ella Wainwright	Barr Ellison Solicitors
Amanda Murray	Barsnley MBC
Chloe Myers	Barsnley MBC
Jessica Arthur	BCP Council
Darren Barwell	BCP Council
Rachel Hergest	BCP Council
Heather Hutchinson	BCP Council
Ranjit Josan	Bedford Borough Council
Karen McCulloch	Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes ICB
Emily Bridge	Bevan Brittan LLP
Joshua Braznell	Birmingham City Council
Emma McIntosh	Birmingham City Council
Joseph Wing	Birmingham City Council
Tasha Bibby	Biscoes Law
Jeanette Carle	Bison Solicitors Ltd
Danielle Mendoza	Bison Solicitors Ltd
Janet Paine	Bison Solicitors Ltd
Sue Bowler	Boyes Turner LLP
Isabelle Corbett	Boyes Turner LLP
Lindsay Da Rè	Boyes Turner LLP
Nicole Jarrett-Francis	Brent Council
Sharon Mercelsanca	Bridgend County Borough Council
Juli Morgan	Bristol Council
Faria Jamali	Browne Jacobson LLP
Cheryl Chappell	Buckinghamshire Council
Claudine De Bellis	Buckinghamshire Council
Jessica Nash	Buckinghamshire Council
Emma Harrison	Butler and Co Solicitors
Jane Kilner	Calderdale MBC
Laura Stephenson	Calderdale MBC
Louise Traviss	Calderdale MBC
Emily Kennett	Capsticks Solicitors LLP
Caroline Bielanska	Caroline Bielanska Consultancy
Libby Mannion	Cheshire and West Chester Council

Lisa Hunter	Cheshire East Council
Deborah Broadhurst	City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council
Christine Dzvukamanja	City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council
Rachael Mason	City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council
Vicki Walkaden	City of Stoke-on-Trent
Harriet Marwood	City of York Council
Rhona McLachlan	City of York Council
Lucy Waller	City of York Council
Anna Wooding	City of York Council
Sarah Paramor	Cornwall Council
Claire Coulson-Haggins	Coventry City Council
Shirley Otomewo	Croydon Council
Claire McAllister	Cumberland Council
Gemma Sayer	Cumberland Council
Beverley Wakefield	Cumberland Council
Jim Smith	Cumbria Council
Emily Ham	Davies & Partners Solicitors
Fraser D Rogers	Dean Wilson LLP
Anwen Lewis	Denbighshire County Council
Clare Thomas	Denbighshire County Council
Alison Bush	Derby City Council
Suzanne Hays	Derby City Council
Ambrin Williams	Derbyshire County Council
Helen Georgiou	Devon County Council
Chloe Reed	Devon County Council
Trudie Willis	Devon County Council
Thomas Clarke	Dorset Council
Jessica Dunning	Dorset Council
Kelly Evans	Dorset Council
Catherine Hose	Dorset Council
Kate Stratford	Dorset Council
Liz Dalgetty	Downs Solicitors LLP
Andrea Fletcher	Durham County Council

Katy Marsh	Durham County Council
Lucy Cavell	East Riding of Yorkshire Council
Tulay Kuzu	East Riding of Yorkshire Council
Sophie Smith	East Riding of Yorkshire Council
Sara Sutcliffe	East Riding of Yorkshire Council
Mariam Bhamjee	East Sussex County Council
Gem Selvarajah	East Sussex County Council
Jessie Marshall	EDS Law
Christopher Blackett	EMG Solicitors Ltd
Carl Marston	Enable Law
Sarah Phillips	Enable Law
Jack Wooltorton	Essex County Council
Rachel Wooltorton	Essex County Council
Joanne McNally	Fletchers Solicitors Ltd
Louise Fleming	Flintshire County Council
Robyn Hemmings	Freeths LLP
Jessica Latimer	Freeths LLP
Emily Prachar	Freeths LLP
Deb Johnson	Gateshead Council
Ben McGuckin	Gateshead Council
Christian Richardson	Gateshead Council
Sheree Green	Greenchurch Legal Services Ltd
Gursharn Hothi	HAB Law
Sarah Allen	Hampshire County Council
Vani Cheganna	Harrow Council
Chantel Horton	HCC Solicitors
Alaina Shah	HCR Law
Mollie Hamshere	HCR Legal LLP
Sam Evans	Herefordshire Council
Hannah Lewis	Herefordshire Council
Vanessa Manley	Herefordshire Council
Lydia Owen	Herefordshire Council
Richard Shaw	Herefordshire Council

Claire Whittall	Higgs LLP
Alice Mannion	Hill Dickinson LLP
Ernesta Barakauskaite	Hoople Group
Toni Murphy	Hoople Group
Michelle Weaver	Horwich Cohen Coghlan Solicitors
Amanda Shergold	Howden Insurance Brokers
Robyn Davis	Humphries Kirk LLP
Rachel Anthony	Hywel Dda UHB - Deputy Head of Legal Services
Veronika Maresova	Invicta Law
Gemma Eason	Irwin Mitchell LLP
Teresa Diaz Pozo	Irwin Mitchell LLP
Mathieu Culverhouse	Irwin Mitchell LLP/CoPPA
Kerrie Motton	JE Bennett Law
Poki Wratten	JE Bennett Law
Tom Cheesman	JM Finn & Co
Megan Christie-Copeland	JMW Solicitors LLP
Rachael Gibb	JMW Solicitors LLP
Naomi Alexander	Judge & Priestley LLP
Tracy Brooks	Kent County Council
Melanie Sleap	Kent County Council
Zena Bolwig	Keystone Law/Professional Deputies Forum committee
Sameena Munir	Kingsley Napley LLP
Karen Nicklen	Kiteleys Solicitors
Du'A Aziz	Knights plc
Riya Begum	Knights plc
Sofia Pana	Knights plc
Kevin O'Neill	Knowsley MBC
Charlotte Alderson	Lancashire County Council
Amy Bailey	Lancashire County Council
Katherine Holtom	Lancashire County Council
Jennifer Mort	Lancashire County Council
Krishna Parekh	Lancashire County Council
Joanna Rushton	Lancashire County Council

Emily Mouland	Lanyon Bowdler LLP
Toni Reeves	Lanyon Bowdler LLP
Chris Mdee	Leeds City Council
Vicky Sowah	Leicester City Council
Neil Parry	Leicestershire County Council
Lynda Wilson	Leicestershire County Council
Anna-Maria Maleska	Leigh Day Solicitors
Philippa Davies	Lester Aldridge LLP
Karen Noulton	London Borough of Bexley
Elizabeth Mouricette	London Borough of Camden
Abina Pasupathy	London Borough of Camden
Phillip Joseph	London Borough of Ealing
Yvonne Mitchell	London Borough of Ealing/APAD
Louise Slaney	London Borough of Enfield
Amina Hassan	London Borough of Hackney
Ellen Mkukupha-Tembo	London Borough of Hackney
Abi Kale	London Borough of Havering
Kerry Runham	London Borough of Havering
Berkeley Montandon	London Borough of Lewisham
Natia Agba	London Borough of Redbridge
Mark Weyman	London Borough of Tower Hamlets
Hannah Carver	Manchester City Council
Clare English	Martin Searle Solicitors
Donna Golden	Middlesborough Council
Lauren Hutchinson	Middlesborough Council
Anna Porter	Middlesborough Council
Iona Bruce	Miles and Partners LLP
Claudia Watson	Miles and Partners LLP
Maria Azram	Mills & Reeve LLP
Sophie Ball	Mills & Reeve LLP
Holly Chantler	Morr & Co LLP
Samantha Hamilton	Mullis & Peake LLP
Sophie Land	Newcastle City Council
Allison Freeman	Newcastle Council

Morgan Harvey	Newcastle Council
Jade Mason	Newcastle Council
Shola Oshinuga	Newcastle Council
Marie Warrington	NHS Derby and Derbyshire ICB
Christopher Lucas	NHS Hampshire and Isle of Wight ICB
Nicola Emery	NHS Hampshire and Isle of Wight ICB
Natalie Hider	NHS Humber and North Yorkshire ICB
Sarah Wright	NHS Norfolk and Waveney ICB
Amanda Johnson	NHS South Yorkshire ICB
Jo Thurlow	NHS South Yorkshire ICB
Linda Putland	NHS Suffolk and North East Essex ICB
Amy Hiesley	NHS Sussex ICB
Claire Pritchard	NHS Sussex ICB
Anjanee Trent	NHS Sussex ICB
David Gardner	No5 Barristers Chambers
Sarah Clarke	Norfolk County Council
Sophie Lowe	Norfolk County Council
Jane Stafford	Norfolk County Council
Sarah Whitworth	Norfolk County Council
Angela Baines	North Lincolnshire Council
Amy Tarpy	North Lincolnshire Council
Claire Rouse	North Yorkshire Council
Julie Thompson	North Yorkshire Council
Neil Ward	Nottingham City Council
Andrew Bradfield-Barnes	Oxfordshire County Council
Lillian Floyd	Oxfordshire County Council
Ciara Panayiotou	Pathfinder Legal Services Ltd
Sian Evans	Pembrokeshire County Council
Rhiannon Tucker	Pembrokeshire County Council
Harriet Hansen	Peter Edwards Law
Felicity McArd	Peter Edwards Law
Michele Battershill	Plymouth City Council
Ruth Branagh	Plymouth City Council

Jacqueline Burch	Plymouth City Council
Charlie Dunn	Plymouth City Council
Andy McGovern	Portsmouth City Council
Cameron Restall	Portsmouth City Council
Joseph Brophy	Qualia Law CIC
Leanne Gibson	Ramsdens Solicitors LLP
Alison Palmer	Ramsdens Solicitors LLP
Lindsey Marks	Reading Borough Council
Niall O'Malley	Reading Borough Council
Saskia Witney	Reading Borough Council
Prasanna Thogiti	Reading Borough Council
Grace Osborn	Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council
Sarah O'Sullivan	Renaissance Legal
Philip Warford	Renaissance Legal
Penny Lee Blowes	RKB Law Solicitors
Claire Langford	RKB Law Solicitors
Ruth Tarr	Rotheras Solicitors
Mariam Shah	Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council
Deborah Sotheran	Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council
Tonbra Oladunjoye	Royal Borough of Greenwich
Jess Bonniger	RWK Goodman LLP
Cameron Findley-Smith	RWK Goodman LLP
Sara Isenberg	RWK Goodman LLP
Matilda Pillonel	RWK Goodman LLP
Thanuja Oppilamany	Sandwell Borough Council
Somayeh Tosi	Sandwell Borough Council
Vickie Rawlinson	Sefton Council
Kyra Harvey	SEN Legal
Kristina Rankine	Sheffield City Council
Doris Sheridan	Sheridan Consult Ltd - Holborn House
Barbara Walton	Shropshire Council
Tom Williams	Shropshire Council
Clare King	Slater Heelis Solicitors

Paige Richards	Slater Heelis Solicitors
Amanda Piper	SME Solicitors LLP
Pamela Clarke	South London Legal Partnership
Christine Bibby	South Tyneside Council
James Webb	Southampton City Council
Nicola Fitzhugh	Southerns Solicitors
Amy Monks	Speak Up Advocacy Hub
Katie Mayren	Stephensons Solicitors LLP
Megan Shaw	Stephensons Solicitors LLP
Megan Taylor	Stephensons Solicitors LLP
Jodee Mayer	Stewarts Law LLP
Keely Gowrie	Stockport Council
Kathryn Layzell	Stone King LLP
Hannah Rodgers	Stonegate Legal
Phoebe Atkins	Suffolk County Council
Rachel Crowe	Suffolk County Council
Justine Jenkins	Suffolk County Council
Caroline Nunn	Suffolk County Council
Vanessa Roper	Suffolk County Council
Sharon Thompson	Suffolk County Council
Helen Kite	Surrey County Council
Helen Lucas	Surrey County Council
Rebecca Cochrane	Swansea Bay University Health Board
Sian Rowlands	Swansea Council
Lizzie Konadu	Switalskis Solicitors
Will Forsdike	Taylor Emmet Solicitors
Emma Carey	The PDS Trust Corporation (Client Manager)
Charlene Hughes	Thomson Snell & Passmore LLP
Emma Wesley	Tollers LLP
Sue Clark	Trethowans LLP
David Plant	Walsall Council
Karon Walton	Warner Goodman LLP
Angela Andrews	Warrington Borough Council
Kristina Holden	Warrington Borough Council

Choelette Graham	Westmorland & Furness Council
Sophia Heasley	Westmorland & Furness Council
Marta Kok	Westmorland & Furness Council
Julie Richardson	Westmorland & Furness Council
Gareth Wilding	Westmorland & Furness Council
Jenny Woodburn	Westmorland & Furness Council
Danista Appadoo	Wigan Council
Nahida Kayum	Wigan Council
Victoria Kelly	Wigan Council
Hayley Monaghan	Wigan Council
James Batey	Wilson Browne Solicitors
Clare Edwards	Wilson Browne Solicitors
Amber Ferdous-White	Wilson Browne Solicitors
Vikki Hawkins	Wilson Browne Solicitors
Rachel Hayes	Wilson Browne Solicitors
Sophie Cox	Wiltshire Council
Pam Hemmings	Wiltshire Council
Alison Lamont	Wiltshire Council
Diane Altuntas	Wirral Council
Rebecca Dearden	Wirral Council
Jacqueline Jeffries	Wirral Council
Caroline Saul	Wirral Council
Alice Tomlin	Withers LLP
Tracey Gell	Wokingham Borough Council
Karen Russell	Wokingham Borough Council
Joanna Shields	Wokingham Borough Council
Katie Beauchamp	Wolferstans Solicitors
Katrina Vollentine	Wollens
Emily Webber	
Helen	
Roopa	
Chantal	

1. **Apologies**

- DJ Mullins
- Mala Nair -HMCTS Court of Protection - Operations Manager
- Neil Cawthorn (The PDS Trust Corporation)
- Marie-Clare Churchman (City of Doncaster)
- Nicholas Gardner (CFG Law)
- Lindsay Jackson (Durham County Council)
- Nikki Lyons (Manchester City Council)
- Holly Mieville-Hawkins (Anthony Collins Solicitors)
- Sian Paddick (Bridgend County Borough Council)
- Greg Phillips (EMG Solicitors Ltd)
- Karen Royall (Bath & Northeast Somerset Council)
- Melanie Varey (Access to Public Law)
- Janice White (Oxfordshire County Council)
- Ian Jones (Swansea Council)

2. Minutes and action points from previous meeting 22 October 2025 **Agreed and adopted**

3. Operations/Delivery Manager's Report – **COP Senior Management Team**. **Kamila Czmiel (KC)**

The latest performance statistics were shared with users on 8 April, and these provide a positive picture of continued improvement across the service. Overall, both the volume and age of applications, whether paper or digital, have continued to reduce on a steady and sustained basis. This progress reflects the significant benefits of the team now being fully trained across all workstreams, allowing greater flexibility and a more consistent flow of work.
At present, paper COP1 and COP9 applications, alongside digital applications submitted via the portal, are all on day 8. Current volumes stand at 129 paper new applications, 178 digital applications, and 52 COP9s. In addition, there are 229 new trustee applications already put on the system and allocated case reference numbers; these are now awaiting referral to the court or ACOs, with the oldest dating back to 9 January. Alongside this, 183 streamlined applications submitted by existing deputies or attorneys are also awaiting referral, the oldest of which was filed on 16 February.
Work continues to progress well within the orders hubs. For paper orders, there are currently 204 final orders and 90 directions orders, both being at 15 days. For digital orders, performance is stronger, with 131 final orders at 8 days and 51 directions orders at 5 days. Both paper and digital hubs experienced a noticeable increase in order volumes during this period. This was largely driven by the focused paper boxwork blitz week held in March, alongside additional overtime worked by several Authorised Court Officers. Both teams remain focused on building on this momentum, with the clear aim of reducing outstanding orders to 10 days or below.

The enquiry service has also shown significant improvement. Incoming email volumes continue to be managed at around 500, while the age of emails has reduced significantly, from 30 working days to 15 working days. Encouragingly, this reduction in administrative backlog has directly contributed to a fall in the number of complaints received, indicating an improved experience for users.

Recruitment activity remains a key factor of this progress. We are currently in the process of recruiting eight additional agency staff to further strengthen capacity. Interviews have been completed, and successful candidates are now progressing through compliance checks ahead of confirmation of start dates. In addition, the Authorised Court Officer recruitment campaign has now concluded, with two successful candidates identified. Both are expected to commence in post shortly.

Further strengthening the leadership structure, the recruitment campaign for five Team Leader roles is now live. This presents an important opportunity to boost the management team and support sustained performance and staff development going forward.

Training remains a priority across most areas of the operation. Ongoing activity continues to support staff movement, maintain operational resilience, and build capability across teams, including among extended agency staff.

At the beginning of 2026, the ambition was for each team to achieve a position of operating within 10 working days by the end of March. Most teams have now successfully met this target. The consistent reduction in outstanding workload is largely attributable to increased staffing capacity, with newly trained staff now working independently, and the continued use of Saturday overtime to accelerate progress on outstanding orders and enquiry emails.

No questions following report

HHJH noted positive feedback re the new COP statistics from Zena Bolwig (ZB) and passed thanks to Jess Newton and team for their hard work on this.

HHJH also referred to the COP summer intern recruitment campaign which is now in progress.

4. Update from the Mental Capacity Policy Team – Joan Goulbourn (JG)

1. **Mental Capacity Code of Practice and Liberty Protection Safeguards**

Work in progress with DHSC and MOJ to update the chapters to the previously consulted on the Code in 2022, with recent judgments such as Parr and Townsend and Epsom hospitals now taken into consideration

2. **Use of AI**

The use of AI in social work statements is to be discussed at the Next Rules Committee meeting

3. **Mazur Judgment**

This seems to have regularised the situation, but HHJH has raised concerns with some of the applications still being made.

4. **Upfront digitalisation**

Work continues on the proposed digital application process for New Trustee applications. It hoped to go live in May, with updates to the practice directions

and redesigning of the COP 14 and 15 PA DEP forms in progress.

5. **President update**

The President retired on the 13 April 2026, and we await details of the new President to be announced.

6. **PD19B updates**

This was hoped for in April 2026, but this is currently waiting sign off

Follow up questions raised:

Annette Roberts (AR) Lancashire County Council via the CHAT

Is there any news since in regards of the banking issue and Finance UK

JG advised that there had been notification from the joint money laundering steering group on possible updated guidance, this would be chased up and shared.

Amanda Hill (AH) Court Observer in the meeting

Enquired firstly on how the Code practice working group was set up and if any family members were involved and secondly re the impact of the Towsend appeal to Supreme court on the timetable.

JG responded that impact would be determined by the outcome of the trust application by the Supreme Court. With regards to the working group this has been set up collaboratively by the MOJ and DHSC, and although there are no family members currently involved there are plans to go out to charities (with family involvement) for their input in the near future.

Dipti Patel (DP) Richmond and Wandsworth in the meeting

When will LPS come in to effect.

JG advised that there is no set date, the updated code is expected to come out by the end of this year, and it is hoped that this will be at least 6 months before LPS.

5. HHJ Hilder

- Emails - Please use the subject line of the e-mail constructively: in the subject line please follow the following format**: P's initials, case number, document name (if attaching), URGENT + reason (only if urgent)**
- Please do not send 'chase up' emails - they are simply creating more backlog because staff time is spent dealing with e-mails rather than progressing cases. Litigation is not conducted by e-mail. **Temporary measure**: there will be no reply sent to e-mails asking for an update. This will be reviewed in 3 months.
- **Emails should only be sent to one court email address. If an email is sent to more than one COP email address, only the first recipient will action this email; all subsequently named court recipients will simply delete the message.** The updated list of COP email addresses is shared at the end of these minutes.
- Please check the published statistics for current waiting times. If you have waited longer than these averages, then a COP9 application *may* be appropriate.

HHJB flagged that direct emails to Judges should only be sent with permission. Any other emails should be sent to relevant HMCTS team.
DJSE added that emails should also advise in the first line of the email on whose behalf the message is sent – for which party do you act??? This will save judges a lot of time and frustration. The court should not be copied into inter-party communications.
Meenu Sharma (MS) Liberata via the CHAT
How can we follow up a case if it has been more than 6 months since the application was submitted
HHJH if the matter is outside the published timescales, a COP9 application may be appropriate.
Caroline Glitre (CG) London Borough of Barnet via the CHAT
Is there eventually going to be a portal where we can track progress of applications that way?
HHJH recognised the attractions of such a facility but confirmed that it is currently technically impossible for the Court, with no suggestion that this is going to change in the foreseeable future.

- Visits to P in SE Region (raised by HHJO)
  HHJO expanded on the difficulty of accommodating in person meeting/judicial visit requests. She reminded users that there is a standard process involving (first) completion of a form by the party requesting the visit, and (depending on proposed venue) an HMCTS risk assessment visit.
  HHJH added that that the COP is committed to facilitate the participation of P, but that an in-person visit off-site to the court should not be expected as the norm. The Court needs to allocate the appropriate amount of COP time, considering all cases – see Rule 1.1(3)(f).

- Refusal of costs of a paper application, which should have been made digitally
  HHJH reminded users that costs of making the application are unlikely to be authorised where the application should have been made digitally but it is made on paper.

- **FFRAP COP Pro Bono Support Service for property and affairs**
  The central registry is very pleased that a new 'duty desk' service will be available on the first Tuesday of every month commencing on 5th May 2026 - for anyone who requires legal advice in this area, or assistance with making a property and affairs deputyship application. Contact details for public enquiries: **cop@ffrap.org**

  HHJH added that it is hoped this will be extended to H&W matters generally in June 2026

  Nicola Saunders (NS) Red Kite Law LLP via the CHAT
  is the Pro Bono support service by in person appointment only or can they be contacted by telephone and meeting by phone/teams?
  HHJH explained that this is an externally-provided service, and the FFRAP should be contacted directly to make arrangements. It is hoped that the facility will develop as the level of demand becomes clearer.

6. **Marie Roeton (Reading Borough Council) not in meeting**
Please advise how Local Authorities should proceed in light of the *Mazur* ruling. So, we are clear and confident in how we proceed with the service

And additional questions raised by
Natalie Matthews (NM) CJCH Solicitors via the CHAT
Will there be any guidance around *Mazur* and what the court expects from applications?
Deborah Pardoe (DeP) Allied Services Trust via the CHAT
please can there be clarification for applications
Richard Bremer (RB) East Riding of Yorkshire via the CHAT
Does the Court consider that the authorised officer of a Local Authority, who is the applicant for a P&A deputyship, can be treated as a litigant in person and therefore avoid the scope of the Mazur judgment and the Legal Services Act?

HHJH confirmed the expectation that litigants act lawfully. The CUG is not a venue for advice. It is likely that further comms will be forthcoming in due course.

John Holdsworth (JH) Cooder LLP via the CHAT
Will there be any update to the Court's position on CILEX ALRs being removed from the rota following the appeal on Mazur
HHJH confirmed that, post-*Mazur* at first instance, an ALR check was completed by the Law Society and (a very small number of) non-solicitors were taken off its database until matters resolved. This question will be referred to the Law Society, which operates the ALR scheme.

Shadia Doerfel (SD) Lincolnshire County Council in the meeting
Raised an issue filing an urgent welfare application with the Birmingham Hub where responses were not received.
HHJH advised that this would be referred to the Regional Lead Judge for the SW HHJ Chatterjee. The COP does not have an out of hours service other than that which operates from the RCJ.

7. **Bhaveni Parmar (BP) Lancashire County Council**
Based on Practice Direction, we understood that where a document may be filed with the court by electronic means (whether pursuant to a rule, practice direction or court order) any statement of truth contained in that document must be verified by an electronic signature in one of the following forms:
(a) an image of the signature of the maker of the statement;
(b) or a digital signature of the maker of the statement generated by commercial software - *Section 7 of the Electronic Communications Act 2000 provides for the use of an electronic signature in an electronic communication*
What are the benefits of a wet signature and how does this request meet legal requirements as per Electronic Communications Act 2000?

HHJH advised that the 'digital signature' is not a typed name, but rather an electronically stored signature.

8. **Ian Jones (Swansea Council) – not in attendance**
   Query regarding 'expiry' of COP3s

HHJH summarised that this question raised concerns on how long a COP3 remains valid, and the lack of clear timescales provided by the Court on this. She repeated the explanation given at previous CUG meetings that a single 'sell by date' cannot be provided as the court makes individualised decisions based on the circumstances of each P's situation, including the nature/cause of the incapacity.

DP via the CHAT
Could DOL documents be completed from information in the local authority's care and support plan and MCA completed by a previous social worker and new social worker not see P in person? Would the digital signature be valid?
HHJH confirmed that where a previous social worker has completed an internal assessment with a statement of truth completed, that document can still be relied on.
DP added can the rest of the application rely on that assessment?
HHJH confirmed yes that the COPDOL11 application can reply on the assessment, as long as the assessment is validly completed (a statement of truth by the assessor.)

9. **Martin Terrell (Warners Law LLP) on behalf of the PDF**

1. An existing deputy makes a new application for the sale of a property and the court makes an order authorising the sale. The order is silent on the subject of the costs of the application. Are the costs incurred in the application covered by general management costs or should the order made in the application provide authority for costs?
   Deputies have had different views from judges who take the first view and will not provide express authority for costs while the SCCO has asked for express authority to assess costs.

HHJH noted that if the order is silent on costs, then the general rule applies. Is the SCCO asking for further authorisation?

Christine Legget (CL) HMCTS Senior Courts Costs Office agreed and requested for information on this to be sent to her, so this can be checked at the SCCO for any training issues.

2. There seems to be a recent trend, when deciding applications to purchase property on behalf of an adult P, of orders directing that the purchase be made by trustees, even though P providing all the purchase monies.

HHJH confirmed this as an error

3. There is some uncertainty about the process for subsequent applications by an existing deputy where the original application has been made on the portal. A member recently applied using the portal

for amendment to recitals following a client change of name, but it was rejected and the deputy was told to make a paper application. It has been recommended that once a deputy is appointed via the portal, further applications, (on a COP1 and including for authority to buy or sell property) can be made electronically by sending the application documents by email to: COP_EAPPS@justice.gov.uk. There are in effect three gateways: the portal, email and post. Which is the right gateway to use?

HHJH The portal can currently be used for new PA deputyships and replacement deputyship applications only. However, in this type of circumstance, where the original application was made digitally, the Court will not hold any paper file, so would prefer that the application is filed by email to: COP_EAPPS@justice.gov.uk.

**Further clarification requested by James Batey (Wilson Browne) after circulation of draft minutes:*
The completed and signed application forms should be attached to the email, and the body of the email should contain the PBA number and reference.
NB This only applies to the type of 'subsequent applications' which relate to the deputyship eg seeking additional authority to sell property. It does not apply to statutory will or new trustee applications, which are still only accepted on paper.

4. The portal will allow for an application to replace an existing deputy. Where an existing deputy has a time limited order, which may be the case where capacity may change and need to be reviewed, a new application is needed to convert the limited order to an unlimited order. However, it is not an application for a new deputy or a change of deputy, simply an application by an existing deputy. Which the right gateway for this application?

HHJH confirmed that this type of application would be treated as a replacement application, and therefore should be made via the portal

Emily Steel (ES) Trethowans LLP via the CHAT
We have made 2x applications to First Avenue House in relation to the same P - one to appoint a replacement P&A deputy (made first, 18 months ago) and one to appoint a H&W deputy (made later). The Court has dealt with the latter application and when we queried the status of the first application we were advised by Court staff that it has been archived in error. We have contacted the Court to rectify this on multiple occasions,by phone and email, including COP Progression as we have been advised, without success. How would you suggest that we proceed? Is there a direct contact at the Court we can contact about this?

HHJH apologised for any error and requested that **KC** deal with this.

10. **Nilufer Ozdemir (NO) TV Edwards LLP**

1. Applications to come off the record
   NO expanded on the situation where funding ends and as the last resort an application is made to come off record and this is refused. What are the Courts expectations in this circumstance.

HHJH noted this situation may occur where a firm is instructed to act on behalf of P by the OS and the funding source expires. However, that occurrence does not automatically discharge the appointment of the litigation friend. See judgment of Hayden J when Vice-President of the COP at [2020] EWCOP 38 paragraph 18 and following.

HHJB referred users to the COP Rule 18.2.

2. Use of AI and the Transparency Order

HHJH confirmed that the Rules Committee will review this later this month, in respect of the Transparency order and forms.
HHJH added that the subject of AI is currently under review as a Court's wide issue.

11. **Owen Brown (OB) Wrigleys Solicitors LLP**

We have prepared an application to discharge a lay deputy and replace them with a professional deputy. The original application to appoint the lay deputy was made on paper, and not via the portal. We submitted the application on paper but have been advised by the court that the application should be made via the portal.
Our understanding is that, where a deputy was originally appointed following a paper application, any subsequent application to replace that deputy had to made on paper.
Please could the court clarify which applications should be made via the portal."

HHJH confirmed that a replacement deputy application should now be made via the portal, even if the initial application was made on paper.

12. **Kathleen Bennet (KB) Anthony Gold Solicitors**

1. We have received letters from the CoP on multiple occasions regarding notification of respondents in respect of Applications for recognition/enforcement of foreign powers. Our understanding is that this is not consistent with paragraph 11 of Practice Direction 23A, which states:
   Rule 9.10 and Practice Direction 9B (requirement to notify other individuals) shall not apply to a Schedule 3 application unless the applicant is also asking the Court to make additional declarations and / or orders under sections 15 and / or 16 of the Act, in which case the applicant should also notify such persons as the applicant would have been required to notify had he or she been seeking only those declarations and / or orders under sections 15 and / or 16 of the Act.
   Can we have some clarity on this, and how best to ensure that the Court staff are aware of the PD?

HHJH responded that these applications for foreign powers should go to our Technical Specialist team and then be referred on to HHJH directly. Staff have been reminded of this process

2. We have received Directions Orders for failing to comply with the notification procedure when making an application through the electronic portal.
   In accordance with the EAPPS portal, and the general COP notification procedure, we understand that it is not necessary to upload the blank COP15PADeps if the notified interested person does not return the form within 14 days. Instead, we confirm that we notified the interested person and that they did not respond.
   With regards to the COP14PADep, on the electronic portal there is no option to upload the completed form and instead, it is necessary to fill in P's responses to the notification manually.
   However, we have been asked on a number of occasions to upload blank form COP15ADeps and COP14Adeps, causing delays with the Application. Can we please have confirmation of the correct procedure.

HHJH confirmed an uncompleted COP15PADEP does not need to be uploaded. A completed COP14PAdep can be uploaded.

13. AOB

AOB1 Rosie Campbell (Rook Irwin Sweeney LLP) – not in attendance

Email addresses for service by the court – we would be grateful for clarity on how we can ensure that email addresses which we specify in the court forms are used by the court for service. By way of example, we recently filed an appeal application which gave a team inbox as the email address for service (which was created to ensure that emails from the court are not missed, for example if an individual lawyer is on leave), however the court instead served on the individual lawyer only. Our experience is that the court staff may sometimes rely on the email addresses which appear in email chains between parties and the court, which may not always be our preferred addresses for service, and we want to know how we can guarantee that the court will copy in our team inbox account every time.

HHJH confirmed that staff should use the contact details as per the application form. This message and reminder will be sent on to staff.

AOB2 Louise Hadley-Niblett (LHN) Worcestershire County Council

The difficulty in accessing bank accounts, pension plans etc after receipt of the COP and the amount of time it is taking which exceeds the points allocated for caseworker allocation.

HHJH flagged that this issue is being dealt with in the discussions in progress with JG and UK finance seeking to raise awareness in this area. **JG** confirmed that she would take this up with UK Finance and others and come back to LHN.

AOB3 Rosalind Wing (Enfield Council) not in attendance

Where the parties have reached agreement on a draft order and have filed an agreed COP9 application to vacate the hearing, is it still necessary to file position statements? Where there is nothing to be added to what is in the draft order, it would seem prudent to save counsels' time and the instructing parties' money (usually public funds).

HHJH advised that this would depend on the directions order and the timing of the application made. If the COP9 application is within the specified timeframes a PS may not be required, but if outside these it is likely that it will be needed.
DJSE flagged that COP staff cannot deal with the volumes of emails received and therefore are unable to process late applications. If you have not been told a hearing is vacated, you need to comply with the order
HHJB added there is no need to make the Court aware that it is *likely* a COP9 application will be filed. Please just work on filing the COP9 as soon as possible.

AOB4 Jemma Cable (JC) HAB Law

I have been contacted by several advocacy agencies who are raising concerns about delays by local authorities in making CoPDoLS applications. These delays are resulting in significant periods where P is being deprived of liberty in the community without Court authorisation, and without a Rule 1.2 representative being appointed.

HHJH noted that this would appear to be a matter for the advocate to liaise with the relevant public authority, as the Court would not be aware of the P until an application is made. In cases however where the Court has appointed a Rule 1.2 representative and the concern is that the LA has not applied to the Court, the Rule 1.2 rep should make the court aware of this via a COP9 application. This provisions for this duty are now made clear as part of the final Re X template order

Next meeting dates:
1 July 2026 P&A at 2pm – MS Teams
21 October 2026 General at 2pm – MS Teams

<u>HHJH update</u>

As users may be aware the role of Senior Judge of Court of Protection has now been advertised by the JAC. All who meet the criteria are encouraged to apply.

Meeting ended: 15:32

The list of **Court of Protection email addresses** available to court users is as follows:

- All paper applications: copapplications@justice.gov.uk
- General Enquires: courtofprotectionenquiries@justice.gov.uk
- All one-off urgent welfare application (section 16, Section 21). Urgent medical treatment applications. New Trustee matters. Panel Deputy queries and all application made under Registered LPAs and EPAs: copubos@justice.gov.uk
- All applications and queries made on COP DoLs 11: copdols_or_s16@justice.gov.uk
- Filing of Documents and general enquires regarding hearings: courtofprotectionhearings@justice.gov.uk
- Filling of all documents relating to electronic Property and affairs deputyship applications: cop_eapps@justice.gov.uk
- All queries about orders issued where the application was made on paper, including requests for additional copies and Slip Rule amendments ordershub@justice.gov.uk
- For digital Public Guardian applications only, where solicitors are a respondent in the proceedings.COPOPGAPPS@justice.gov.uk
- All queries relating to paper P&A deputyship applications currently within proceedings, including requests for further information and service of papers COPCaseProgression@justice.gov.uk

Please use only **ONE** address from this list for your communication. If multiple addresses are used, all recipients after the first will simply delete the message on receipt