

**Central Family Court,  
First Avenue House,  
42-49 High Holborn,  
London WC1V 6NP**

27 October 2022

**The likely imminent future ‘mandation’ of the contested cases financial remedies portal**

Dear All,

I am sending this message out in my capacity as Lead Judge for the London FRC. This message applies specifically to the London FRC, although similar messages may well be sent out by other FRC Lead Judges in other zones.

This message is aimed at all legal practitioners in financial remedies work in the London FRC – that includes Solicitors and Barristers and all courts in London doing FRC work.

You will, I am sure, be aware of the changes being made by the Reform programme to the practices and procedures in the Family Court, as well as courts in other jurisdictions. The judicial lead for the programme is Cobb J.

You may recall the implementation of the digital portal for financial remedies consent orders. This was formally ‘mandated’ (i.e. so it was the only way of filing consent orders) in November 2020. About 32,000 consent orders now go through that system nationally each year. The vast majority of consent orders are now approved online within two to three weeks of being uploaded and the system works smoothly.

The view of HMCTS is that the digital portal for contested cases should now be implemented. I recognise that the process of reform has been very difficult for all court users, including the judiciary, but significant improvements have been made to this portal and, subject to one or two remaining enhancements, the view is that it is now ready for roll-out. The anticipation (subject, of course, to the approval of the President, and Cobb J) is that ‘mandation’ will occur early in 2023, possibly as early as 31<sup>st</sup> January 2023.

What that means in practical terms for everybody is that from that date all financial remedies applications will have to be issued online (about 80% of them already are).

Furthermore, from the mandation **date the only way for Solicitors and Barristers to file and lodge documents with the court will be via the digital portal** for contested cases. This means that all statements, Forms E, case summaries and position statements, expert reports and (most importantly of all) hearing bundles will (absent some particular case-based reason) no longer be accepted by another method – that is, **no emails, no WeTransfer, no Egress etc., just uploading on to the portal.**

Drafting of orders at the end of hearings can, for the moment, continue to be conducted offline.

My simple message is this. All practitioners need, forthwith, to ensure they are registered to have access on the portal and, when they are able to do so, to start using it so that, long before the mandation date, it has become second nature. I strongly recommend that you undertake training at one of the many sessions being offered by HMCTS.

For Solicitors the procedure to get registered is [register for the service](#) and for payment by account here [Registering for an account](#).

For Barristers the procedure to get registered is [register for the service](#).

**Registration for the portal is free.**

Barristers are able to register now. Very shortly the portal system will be tweaked to allow a Solicitor conducting a particular case to invite the Barrister instructed on the case (provided the Barrister is registered) to have access to the file on that case on the portal. Where a Barrister is acting on a direct access basis then an HMCTS caseworker can, provided the Barrister is registered and the litigant confirms the direct access instruction, invite the Barrister to have access to the file on that case on the portal.

HMCTS is offering an online training session for practitioners on Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> November 2022. Other sessions will be fixed in due course. To join this training sessions please visit:- <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/431865420097>.

Once we are all familiar with this portal, many aspects of our practice in this field will be much easier.

Our hope and expectation is that, before long, it will be as well regarded as the consent order process.

**Edward Hess**  
**His Honour Judge Edward Hess**  
**Lead Judge for the London Financial Remedies Court**

**HHJ.Edward.Hess@ejudiciary.net**