

# Court of Appeal to live-stream family cases

- Court of Appeal family hearings to be live-streamed for the first time
- Pilot includes safeguarding measures to maintain privacy and protect vulnerable individuals
- Part of move to increase transparency and public confidence in the justice system

A statutory instrument laid in Parliament today (12 March 2020) will pave the way for the project, following the success of a pilot to live-stream civil cases launched in 2018.

Family cases that reach the Court of Appeal include certain divorce or care proceedings. The move will mean that these cases could be broadcast online to increase public understanding – with the first hearing expected later this year.

Safeguarding measures will be in place including a delay to the live-stream, giving judges the ability to halt the broadcasting immediately if necessary.

Justice Secretary and Lord Chancellor Robert Buckland said:

Every day family court judges do outstanding work making difficult decisions in highly emotive cases, often involving children.

By working with the judiciary on innovative pilots such as this we are making the system as transparent as possible, with the right safeguards in place.

This builds on our recent action to improve public understanding of our justice system, including by allowing television cameras to broadcast sentencing remarks from Crown Courts for the first time.

Sir Terence Etherton, The Master of the Rolls, and Sir Andrew McFarlane, President of the Family Division said:

We are delighted that the Government has taken forward our initiative of livestreaming the court of appeal civil division.

“Being open about what happens in court is critical for public confidence and understanding of the work which the judiciary undertakes. For centuries our court rooms have been open to the public. Livestreaming brings the public gallery into the 21st century and we are delighted that we can make the difficult and important work of the Court of Appeal Civil Division open to the broadest possible audience.

Many of our most significant cases come from the family jurisdiction. It is only right that cases of such wide public importance are made open to the public. Recent examples of cases looking at issues such as Islamic faith marriage, access to fertility records, or transgender identity are of interest to the public and it is important for the public to see how the court approaches these issues.

We are of course mindful that in some cases, full public access would not be appropriate, we will ensure that those involved in such cases remain protected.

Anonymity can also be awarded due heightened sensitivity of family cases, be that for the protection of a party or a witness, and the court retains the discretion not to live-stream a hearing at all.

Parties will be informed prior to the hearing whether it has been selected for the pilot and given the chance to raise any objections.

Nominated cases will be live-streamed on the judiciary website, YouTube, Facebook and Twitter.

## **Notes to editors**

- Suitable cases for broadcast will be selected by the judiciary based on public interest and will exclude cases with reporting restrictions.
- Parties are written to ahead of the live stream to inform them they have been selected and giving parties the chance to raise any objections, either by phone or in writing.
- There is a 90 second time delay, and a stop feature to allow for recordings to be stopped by the judge or court clerk. This acts as a safeguard against any breach of reporting restriction or any other issue, for example, disruption to the proceedings. Camera's in court are directed at the Judges' Bench and the Bar and not at the parties.