



# Ministry of Justice

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## **FAMILY PROCEDURE RULE COMMITTEE**

At 11:00 a.m. – 12:50 pm on Monday 2 March 2026,  
Hybrid, in person at Royal Courts of Justice and online via Teams

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### **Present:**

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| • Sir Andrew McFarlane       | <b>President of the Family Division</b>          |
| • Mr Justice Keehan          | <b>High Court Judge (Chair)</b>                  |
| • Mr Justice Peel            | <b>High Court Judge</b>                          |
| • Her Honour Judge Suh       | <b>Circuit Judge</b>                             |
| • District Judge Foss        | <b>District Judge (County)</b>                   |
| • Poonam Bhari               | <b>Barrister</b>                                 |
| • Jennifer Kingsley JP       | <b>Magistrate</b>                                |
| • Shabana Jaffar             | <b>Cafcass</b>                                   |
| • District Judge Cassidy     | <b>District Judge</b>                            |
| • Helen Sewell               | <b>Legal Advisor</b>                             |
| • Rhys Taylor                | <b>Barrister</b>                                 |
| • Lord Justice Baker         | <b>Court of Appeal Judge</b>                     |
| • Mrs Justice Knowles        | <b>High Court Judge</b>                          |
| • District Judge Nelson      | <b>District Judge (Magistrates)</b>              |
| • His Honour Judge Humphreys | <b>Circuit Judge - Judicial Member for Wales</b> |
| • Laura Coyle                | <b>Solicitor</b>                                 |

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### **ANNOUNCEMENTS AND APOLOGIES**

1.1 The Chair welcomed everyone to the Family Procedure Rule Committee meeting. Apologies were received from Graeme Fraser and Vicki Mulligan.

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## MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

2. The Committee approved the minutes and the priorities table from the 2 February 2026 meeting.

2.1 Jennifer Kingsley asked for the February 2026 minutes to be amended, noting that paragraph 12.3 should refer to “Proposal for a single lay justice to hear REMO cases with a legal adviser remotely”.

**Action Point [1]: Secretariat to amend the February 2026 minutes in relation to paragraph 12.3 to refer to “Proposal for a single lay justice to hear REMO cases with a legal adviser remotely”.**

**Action Point [2]: Secretariat to arrange for the February 2026 minutes to be published on the relevant FPRC webpage.**

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## ACTIONS LOG

3. The Committee noted that 20 actions points were recorded from the 2 February 2026 Committee meeting with 14 of those having been actioned and marked as completed.

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## MATTERS ARISING

4.1 MoJ Tabled a paper which contained updates on the following:

- Web inaccuracies
  - Officials informed the Committee that a review is being undertaken of all Practice Directions to identify broken or outdated links. Officials noted that they intend to bring the proposed updates to the Committee for the April 2026 meeting.
- Practice Direction 31A
  - A cross-reference issue has been identified in Practice Direction 31A. Paragraph 4.2 lists information and documents that are required for certain applications under the 1996 Hague Convention.
  - Paragraph 4.2(g) refers to the information specified in paragraphs 3.2(c)–(e).
  - Paragraph 3.2 was removed on EU Exit, with savings for transitional cases, as it used to list information/documents required for certain applications under Brussels IIa (also repealed at EU Exit with savings for transitional cases).
  - Officials have reviewed the content of former para 3.2(c) – (e) and confirmed that it contained substantive requirements not covered elsewhere in paragraph 4.2.
  - Officials advise that paragraph 4.2(g) should be amended, to set out explicitly the information previously shown in 3.2(c)–(e), namely:
    - whether the judgment orders payment of money;
    - details of any applicable interest; and
    - service address and party identification information.
  - Officials will provide updated drafting for the Committee’s consideration for inclusion in a future PD update.

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- Practice Direction Update No.1 of 2026
  - Officials updated the Committee on the position in relation to draft Practice Direction ('PD') Update No.1 of 2026 ('the draft Update') and the proposed next steps following the March 2026 meeting.
  - The Committee were reminded that at its February meeting, it had agreed amendments to extend the end dates of the following existing pilot PDs:
    - PD36G - (Pilot Scheme, Procedure for Using an Online System to Generate Applications in Certain Private Law Proceedings Relating to Children)
    - PD36Z - (Pilot Scheme: Private Law Reform: Investigative Approach).
    - PD36ZD - (Pilot Scheme: Online System for Certain Private Law Proceedings Relating to Children, Certain Protective Orders and Certain Appeals).
  - Officials noted that they have provisionally included amendments to the following PDs, pending the Committee's discussion and agreement at the March meeting:
    - PD27A - (Family Proceedings: Court Bundles).
    - PD36ZH - (Pilot Scheme: Express Financial Remedy Procedure).
    - PD36ZI - (Pilot Scheme: Notification to the Police When Certain Orders Are Made Under Part 4 of The Family Law Act 1996).
    - PD36V - (Pilot Scheme: Family Mediation Voucher Scheme).
- Financial Remedy and Children Transparency: consultation
  - The Committee was updated on the stakeholder pre-engagement undertaken since the February 2026 meeting, ahead of launching the consultation on the disclosure of information from financial remedy and children proceedings.
  - The Committee were reminded that at the February meeting officials proposed further engagement with the Information Sharing and Transparency Working Group ('the Group') before launching the consultation on the disclosure of information from financial remedy and children proceedings, following advice from Mrs Justice Lieven and District Judge Harrison.
  - Officials shared the draft consultation paper with the Information Sharing and Transparency Working Group at their meeting on 24 February 2026. Officials noted that the Group recommended adding the Bureau of Investigative Journalism to the consultee list, which has now been actioned. The Group also highlighted practical issues arising from PD12R. Reporters can face pushback when requesting documents not listed in PD12R, while parties may still share the content of undisclosed documents with journalists if permitted to speak to the press, as they can read from those documents. This makes the process more cumbersome, as journalists cannot view the documents directly and must rely on what a party chooses to relay. The Group anticipates that these issues may be raised in consultation responses.
  - Officials noted that in line with the Committee's steer, matters already settled in PD12R have not been reopened and no amendments have been made to the paper in response to this feedback.

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- Officials highlighted as agreed by the Committee, the consultation paper has now been shared with Mrs Justice Lieven, District Judge Harrison and Mr Justice Peel for final sign off.
- Officials stated their intention to launch the consultation in early March 2026 and will provide an update on progress, including initial stakeholder feedback, at the April 2026 meeting.
- Family Drug and Alcohol Court ('FDAC') Code
  - The Committee were updated on the FDAC Code Practice Direction with officials noting that work has begun on a standalone Practice Direction which sets out the court processes and procedural elements of the Code.
  - Officials noted that they intend to share the draft Practice Direction with Lord Justice Jackson in the first instance to verify whether he is content with the approach taken, before the matter is brought back to the Committee.
  - Officials explained that timings for this work are dependent on availability of MoJ Policy and Legal.
- Qualified Legal Representatives ('QLRs') Statutory Guidance
  - The Committee were updated on the position of the statutory guidance for QLRs, following the President's request that this issue be brought to the March Committee meeting.
  - Officials noted that they are updating the statutory guidance for QLRs and proposed that the revised guidance will:
    - Extend the deadline for completion of QLR training, given low capacity on training courses. The Law Society continue to develop their training for solicitor QLRs, however delivery of this has been delayed. We are engaging with the Law Society to help move this forward.
    - Introduce grounds for removal from the QLR Register.
    - Provide clearer guidance on when the court should consider a conflict of interest, for example where a QLR also acts as the party's criminal representative.
    - Extend the time for payment claims for QLRs.
  - The Committee discussed longstanding operational challenges within the QLR scheme. Members noted widespread concerns from Designated Family Judges (DFJs) conference held in February 2026 about lastminute QLR cancellations, sometimes communicated by simple email to the court office citing 'personal reasons' resulting in cases having to be adjourned or reassigned at short notice.
  - The Committee discussed whether the QLR process requires a more systematic review capturing user experience, professional views, and implementation realities. Members acknowledged that the scheme had substantial benefits for vulnerable victims of domestic abuse, but that structural weaknesses, especially underfunding of QLR fees, were contributing to quality concerns and unpredictability in availability.

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- Mrs Justice Knowles reported that she had spoken with Her Honour Judge Barlow (Portsmouth, Isle of Wight, Hampshire) who had agreed to compile a list of recurring problems. It was suggested that any learning exercise should also collect positive accounts, ensuring a balanced picture
- Rhys Taylor noted that underfunding meant that many experienced advocates declined to participate, leaving less experienced practitioners to fill the gap. He also emphasised that while officials could advocate for increased funding, ultimate resource allocations were determined at departmental level.
- Members agreed that the draft QLR guidance should be revisited comprehensively and scheduled on the April agenda with the agreement that officials will lead the process of consolidating issues raised and potential policy solutions. The Chair stressed that responsibility for this work should lie with policy officials rather than individual judges.

**Action Point [3]: Secretariat to add as QLR statutory guidance as a substantive matter in April 2026 Agenda.**

**Action Point [4]: Officials to consider undertaking a consultation or review of QLRs.**

- o Forms Working Group
- The Committee was updated on the work of the Forms Working Group ('the Group') and the Group's agreed recommendations on amendments to Form N161 (Appellant's Notice) and the service forms C9, FP6, FL415 and C7. The following amendments to the corresponding forms were agreed by the Group:
  - - o Form C9: The Group agreed to remove outdated references to the 1991 rules and children's numbers and replace them with references to Part 6 of the Family Procedure Rules 2010, and to add a statement of truth to the form.
    - o Form FP6: The Group agreed to add a tick-box option enabling users to record service by email or other electronic means (including SMS and WhatsApp), supported by a free-text field. The Group also agreed to add the phrase "Where applicable" at the top of page 2 and to insert wording and space necessary for users to record the information required under rule 6.37.
    - o Form FL415: The Group agreed that, as earlier amendments had not been implemented due to digital constraints, the form should now be updated to more clearly reflect rule 6.37 by requiring users to record the date and time of electronic service. The Group also agreed that officials should consider whether unrepresented applicants should instead be directed to Form D89 when requesting service by a court official.
    - o Form C7: The Group agreed to remove outdated references to the Statement of Means and to update the wording on filing and serving the form to reflect Practice Direction 12B. The updated wording will clarify that respondents may return the form by post, by email, or where instructions have been provided via the HMCTS online dashboard. The Group also agreed that clearer

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guidance should be added on when Forms C8 and C1A must also be filed and noted that digital cost implications mean the timing of changes may need to align with the incoming President of the Family Division's review of the Letter to Parents.

- Form N161: The Group agreed that amendments were required following changes to rule 30.3 and PD30A introducing a permission requirement for appeals from decisions of lay justices. The Group further agreed to update terminology to clarify that "Justice(s) of the Peace", "lay justice" and "magistrate" refer to the same judicial office and confirmed that no other changes to the form are required. The Group noted that existing guidance in N161A remains appropriate and that related guidance notes (EX340 and FP201) are being redrafted by officials to reflect recent amendments.
- Family Justice and AI
  - The rapid development of AI applications has many implications for the legal system, which are being worked through in various forums, including the current AI and Family Justice Steering Group led from Judicial Office, which is developing a number of products.
  - It may be that this work, and the broader development of AI, require changes to Family Procedure Rules and Practice Directions in order to fully implement them, which in turn may require the creation of an AI-focused sub-group of the FPRC. Officials noted that it is important that any such changes take into account parallel developments in other jurisdictions.
  - The Committee discussed the risks arising from litigants in person (LiPs) using open AI tools to produce court documents, frequently uploading sensitive information such as names of children or details of abuse into publicly accessible AI platforms, potentially breaching confidentiality and exposing them to contempt of court. Concerns were also raised about AI generated inaccuracies and their implications for judicial efficiency.
  - A proposal was considered to add a "Do not use AI - may amount to contempt" banner across court documents. Members recognised its potential value but noted that while lawyers increasingly use secure, approved AI systems, banning LiP use of AI outright might deepen inequality of arms.
  - The Committee supported the Steering Group's work to develop draft guidance, suggested that it liaise with transparency and contempt workstreams, and agreed to schedule a dedicated item at the May meeting, inviting Mr Justice McKendrick.

**Action Point [5] Secretariat to add Family Justice and AI item to the May 2026 Agenda.**

**Action Point [6]: Secretariat to invite Mr Justice McKendrick to the May 2026 FPRC meeting.**

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## SUBSTANTIVE ITEMS

### PERMISSION TO APPEAL

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- 5.1 Officials updated the Committee on guidance in relation to appeal procedures noting that Guidance EX340, which was previously used for appeals against decisions in civil and family cases, and Guidance FP201, which focused solely on family appeals, have been replaced by updated guidance for family law appeals, to improve usability and accessibility and the guidance is live at [Appeal a decision in a family law case - GOV.UK](#)
- 5.2 The Committee were also informed that the associated Form N161 – Appellant’s Notice has also been amended to reflect recent amendments to rule 30.3 FPR and Practice Direction 30A (relating to the new need to seek permission to appeal from decisions of lay justices and Justices’ Legal advisers – which comes into force on 2 March 2026).
- 5.3 Members raised minor issues, including broken hyperlinks in the new guidance, which officials agreed to check and correct.
- 5.4 District Judge Foss raised a further issue concerning inconsistent headings referring to “decisions by magistrate,” noting that “legal adviser” was the correct term; officials agreed to address this.

### **Action Point [7]: Officials to review the new guidance to:**

- (a) correct broken hyperlinks identified by members, and**
- (b) amend inconsistent headings referring to “decisions by magistrate” to ensure the correct term “legal adviser” is used throughout.**

## **FPRC ANNUAL REPORT**

- 6.1 The Committee were informed and agreed to the plans to re-establish the annual reporting cycle. The Committee was also invited to consider and review the draft Annual Report ensuring it provides an accurate, complete and balanced reflection of the Committee’s activity over the reporting period April 2024 – March 2025.
- 6.2 Officials noted that they intend to return to the Committee at the April 2026 meeting with the final Annual Report subject to and following Committee’s feedback from the March 2026 meeting.
- 6.3 Officials explained that ahead of the April meeting they intend to submit the Annual Report to the President for final approval, aiming for publication in April 2026.
- 6.4 Officials noted that they will start preparations for the 2025–2026 Annual Report.
- 6.5 District Judge Foss noted inaccuracies in the categorisation of working groups within the report. Several groups listed as “active” had not met and should be moved to the appropriate section.
- 6.6 Members were invited to email any further corrections for incorporation prior to the report’s finalisation.
- 6.7 It was agreed that the reference to Her Honour Judge Suh in the Annual Report would be reviewed, as she was inconsistently referred to as both “District Judge Suh” and “Her Honour Judge Suh.”
- 6.8 Rhys Taylor highlighted inconsistencies in the reported meeting frequency of the working groups. In particular, the Early Resolution Working Group and the PD27A Working

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Group had met considerably more than the four meetings recorded and should be updated to reflect the accurate meeting schedule.

**Action Point [8]: Officials to correct the categorisation of working groups to ensure that only groups that have met are listed as “active,” repositioning others as required.**

**Action Point [9]: Members to email any further factual corrections for inclusion before the report is finalised.**

**Action Point [10]: Officials to review and amend references to Her Honour Judge Suh in the Annual Report to ensure the correct title is used consistently.**

**Action Point [11]: Officials to update the recorded meeting frequency for the Early Resolution Working Group and the PD27A Working.**

## FINANCIAL REMEDY PILOT

7.1 Officials requested the Committee approve an extension of the Express Financial Remedy Pilot for another year until April 2027 to:

- Allow for the collection of more comprehensive data to evaluate the pilot’s effectiveness as a means of ensuring lower value cases are dealt with more quickly and efficiently by the courts; and
- Allow completion of the qualitative and interview element of the evaluation.

7.2 Officials further requested the Committee approve adding Stockport as a participating court within the North-West Region, to increase case volumes within the pilot and support its evaluation.

7.3 The Committee noted more cases would need to progress in order to enable a meaningful evaluation of the pilot. The Committee further noted that the inclusion of Stockport would broaden the number of cases covered by the pilot.

7.4 The Committee agreed to the proposed extension of the pilot to April 2027, and to the inclusion of Stockport within the pilot.

**Action Point [12]: Officials to return to the Committee in early 2027 with a further update on the Financial Remedy Pilot.**

## MEDIATION VOUCHERS PD36V

8.1 The Committee was updated by officials on the family mediation voucher scheme (“the scheme”). Officials provided an oral update on the current funding position noting that they have not received confirmation of funding beyond the end of the current financial year. However, officials understand that funding is likely to be confirmed shortly. Officials proposed to include the amendment in the next PD Update to be submitted in mid-March.

8.2 The Committee was invited and approved an extension to PD36V so that it expires at the end of 31 March 2029, to reflect the anticipated continued operation of the scheme.

**Action Point [13]: Officials to include the agreed amendments to PD36V in Practice Direction Update No 1 of 2026.**

**MODERNISATION OF PRACTICE DIRECTION 27A**

- 9.1 Officials informed the Committee that the “easy-to-read” guide on court bundles has now been finalised by the Bundles Working Group, approved by the President, and will be published on the judiciary.uk website on the same day of PD27A coming into force (2 March 2026).
- 9.2 Officials noted that the Guide may need to be revisited in light of the Family Justice and AI guidance.
- 9.3 Officials updated the Committee on progress made on the minor amendments to PD27A, including the correction of paragraph 7.18 and clarifications required to reflect the intended collaborative preparation and filing of preliminary documents.
- 9.4 officials also invited the Committee to consider whether PD27A should be amended to include a direct link to the easy-to-read guide on court bundles. The Committee queried whether hyperlinks in Practice Directions are typical and whether they are maintained effectively. Officials confirmed that other PDs do contain hyperlinks but acknowledged that links often become out of date. The Committee agreed that including a link would be beneficial provided that the administrative team committed to checking and updating the link regularly, perhaps through an annual review process.
- 9.5 Members also discussed how the guidance would be shared with litigants in person through the online portal. Officials confirmed that the guidance could indeed be uploaded and dispatched alongside orders.
- 9.6 The Committee agreed both to adopt the minor amendments and to insert a hyperlink to the guidance, subject to routine maintenance.
- 9.7 Mr Justice Peel noted that the *Financial Remedies Guide* has not yet gone live. The guide has been drafted and consulted on but has not yet received approval from the President. The working group expects to finalise the document within the next week before submitting it to the President. The guide will not introduce substantive changes but will ensure consistency with PD27A. Officials will continue to keep Mr Justice Peel updated on the progress of the PD27A amendments.

**Action Point [14]: Officials to keep Mr Justice Peel updated on the progress of the PD27A amendments in Practice Direction Update No1 of 2026.**

**Action Point [15]: Officials to liaise with the Judicial AI Steering Group to discuss whether this guidance should include references to use of AI.**

**NOTIFICATION OF NON-MOLESTATION ORDERS TO POLICE**

- 10.1 Officials reminded the Committee that, at the February meeting, members had asked for further consideration of whether respondents might exploit confidentiality requests (for example, through a C8 form) to frustrate service.

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- 10.2 Officials reported that they had reviewed this issue in detail and concluded that no such loophole exists. The service rules remain unchanged and do not rely on police involvement; responsibility for service continues to rest with the applicant's representative or the court bailiff. Where a respondent's whereabouts are unknown, service can proceed via substituted service, meaning that confidentiality requests cannot be used to evade service. Officials also noted that the court retains the power under Rule 29.1 to override confidentiality requests and direct disclosure to the police where necessary.
- 10.3 However, officials emphasised that while confidentiality restrictions do not impede formal service, they may have an impact on police enforcement capability. This underlined the importance of ongoing work to develop proposals for sharing certain further information with police forces, which will be brought back to the Committee once drafting is further advanced.
- 10.4 Officials further advised that proposals relating to the sharing of service status should be paused and revisited alongside the more complex information-sharing proposals. To avoid delaying improvements already identified as necessary, officials sought approval for progressing only the sharing of non-confidential email addresses and telephone numbers at this stage, to come into force from 1 April 2026, subject to final testing.
- 10.5 The Committee expressed strong support for this approach. The Chair confirmed approval for the recommendation to share non-confidential contact information with the police and agreed that proposals relating to service status and further information sharing would return to a future meeting once fully developed.

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## SECRETARIAT ITEMS

### PRIORITIES TABLE, TRIAGE FORMS, WISH LIST

- 11.1 The Committee confirmed that it is content for the Priorities Table to be published.

#### **Action Point [16]: Secretariat to arrange for the updated March Priorities Table to be published on the relevant FPRC webpage.**

- 11.2 Officials presented two triage forms alongside the updated priorities table. The first item concerned a proposal to widen the powers of Justices' Legal Advisers in public law cases. The proposal had been assessed as Tier 3. Her Honour Judge Suh noted that the timetable adjustment powers in question are routine, straightforward, and frequently result in unnecessary referrals to a District Judge under the current framework. It was observed that expanding these powers would reduce avoidable boxwork and improve the timeliness of public law case management.
- 11.3 Helen Sewell supported this assessment, highlighting that a modest amendment to the relevant Practice Direction could ease judicial workload and enable legal advisers to resolve predictable case management matters independently.

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11.4 Reflecting strong support across the Committee, it was agreed to approve the proposal in principle. Drafting will proceed, with the wording to be brought back to the April meeting if required.

**Action Point [17]: Officials to prepare drafting to widen the powers of Justices' Legal Advisers in public law cases, reflecting the Committee's agreement in principle, and to return the wording to the April meeting if required.**

11.5 The second triage item related to proposed amendments connected to HMCTS proposal of only the removal of references to service by fax within the Family Procedure Rules 2010 (FPR). This proposal was assessed as Tier 2

11.6 The Committee considered and agreed that the Post Reduction Project triage form should be added to the Priorities Table at Tier 2.

**Action Point [18]: Secretariat to add the Post Reduction Project workstream to the Priorities Table at Tier 2.**

11.7 The Committee also discussed Wish List which records items that have been temporarily deprioritised due to resourcing pressures or because work is progressing elsewhere. No workstream from the Wish list was moved to the Priority Table.

## OTHER PROCEDURE RULE COMMITTEES

### *Online Procedure Rule Committee (OPRC)*

11.8 The Committee was informed that the OPRC has begun using Microsoft Copilot to generate automated transcripts of its meetings to support accurate and timely drafting of minutes and the secretariat queried if the FPRC is content to trial this from April 2026.

11.9 The Committee was content and agreed for the Secretariat to trial the automated transcript process in FPRC starting from April 2026.

**Action Point [19]: Secretariat to trial the use of automated meeting transcripts, generated through Microsoft Copilot, for FPRC meetings starting from April 2026.**

### *Civil Procedure Rule Committee (CPRC)*

11.10 The Committee was informed that at its December 2025 meeting, the CPRC agreed an action (paras 42–49 of the CPRC minutes) to formally set out the CPRC's agreed position on contempt matters and write to the cross-jurisdictional Judicial Contempt Working Group, chaired by Lord Justice Edis, conveying that position. The Committee were informed that this action has now been completed: a letter, co-signed by the Deputy Head of Civil Justice on behalf of the Master of the Rolls, has been sent to the Working Group, whose work remains ongoing.

11.11 The minutes to the CPRC December 2025 meeting can be found at the following link: <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/698dab04ceeaa48d377f6a42/cprc-5-dec-2025-minutes.pdf>

## FPRC WORKING GROUPS

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*Children's Working Group*

11.12 Following the Committee's discussion at the February 2026 meeting in relation to repurposing the Children Working Group ('the Group') to review the procedural framework in PD36Z and PD12B (Pilot) and develop any necessary amendments to ensure the Rules and Practice Directions properly support policy and operational decisions taken through Programme governance officials have reviewed and updated the Working Groups table to reflect members who have joined.

11.13 Mrs Justice Knowles confirmed that all Group members have been contacted and accepted their membership of the Group.

**Action point [20] Secretariat to add District Judge Foss to working Group table for children working Group.**

**DRAFT APRIL 2026 AGENDA**

The agenda will be updated to reflect developments in this meeting.

**DATE OF NEXT MEETING: 13 April 2026**

16. The next meeting will be held on Monday 13 April 2026 and will be a hybrid meeting both at the Royal Courts of Justice and via MS Teams.

*FPRC Secretariat*

*March 2026*

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