

## Guidance for Practitioners

In response to the ongoing nationwide Covid-19 restrictions the Courts Service has initiated a pilot virtual hearing programme.

1. Please treat the virtual courtroom as you would a bricks and mortar courtroom.  
The rules that apply in court, such as no recording or image capture, still apply in a virtual court unless the Judge gives an individual explicit permission for them to be waived.
2. The Registrar will forward the virtual courtroom connection details to the legal representatives in individual cases These details will change for each virtual courtroom. See below for your connection details to which this email refers
3. Connection details are not to be forwarded to without permission of the presiding judge. Where parties to cases wish to attend a virtual court, their legal representative should contact the registrar/court office with this request. With the approval of the judge, connection details can then be forwarded . Parties who intend to connect to the court should supply their names and these need to be forwarded to the Registrar so they can be identifiable during court proceedings. Parties must provide an undertaking not to disclose the access details to that specific court and abide by the normal rules of court (no recordings or taking of pictures). They must be on mute with their camera turned off during court proceedings. They must not connect by phone call.
4. Allow yourself time to access the virtual court (30 minutes in advance) so that you are already in the virtual courtroom by the Court start-time. Once you have accessed the virtual court mute your sound by using the mute button..
5. Oaths and Affirmations: If you are a witness and you wish to take an oath on a bible or other sacred text, you must have this text with you during the virtual hearing. Before taking the oath you will be asked to hold this text up to ensure it can be seen by the court. The oath or affirmation will have the same legal effect as it would when taken in a physical courtroom.
6. Your name will be displayed with your video image—usually this is what you enter when you join the virtual courtroom, but it is dependent upon the method you use to join.
- 7. Please place yourself on mute if not addressing the Court.**
8. Ensure that you are joining the Virtual Court room with your camera and microphone enabled from a quiet room with appropriate lighting so your face can be clearly seen.
9. The Pexip VMR solution runs on tablets, PCs and mobile phones. Your signal strength will determine the quality of your participation. However if there is an issue with the quality of your signal, you may be asked to switch off your camera so that the Court can hear you clearly. Tablets and laptops to be used where possible in preference to mobile phones to optimise sound quality.
10. Please see below for details of the minimum system specifications required to access, and some general tips for improving your video conferencing experience

### Connection Details

<b>Date &amp; Time:</b>	XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX @ XXXX
<b>Browser Link:</b>	<a href="https://my.videoconferencing.ie/meet/XXXXXXXXXXXX">https://my.videoconferencing.ie/meet/XXXXXXXXXXXX</a>
<b>Room Code (Pexip App):</b>	XXXXXXXXXXXX
<b>MS Skype4B:</b>	XXXXXXXXXXXX@vmr.vc
<b>Video System (SIP/H.323):</b>	XXXXXXXXXXXX@vmr.vc

## Technical Requirements

The virtual courtroom is provisioned to facilitate connection from a laptop or PC using an array of internet browsers including Chrome, Safari and Firefox (camera & microphone required). The virtual courtroom also supports connection from traditional video conferencing endpoints, Skype for Business and an assortment of available video technologies. Connection is also available from smartphones & tablets using the dedicated Pexip App.

### Baseline Minimum Hardware Requirements: *(Higher spec machines recommended for performance)*

2.0-Ghz dual-core Intel Core i5 or later      Free disk space of 1GB or more      4 GB of RAM free physical 2GB

### Network Bandwidth Requirements - Video Quality

High - 1280 kbps (HD)

Med - 768 kbps (SD)

Low - 384 kbps (SD)

## Tips for improving your video conferencing experience

- Ensure that your internet connection for the virtual courtroom is strong, stable and meets the requirements specified. A stable internet connection is key to achieving a successful video call and avoiding disruption
- Test your connection in advance. Your assigned virtual courtroom will be opened 10 minutes in advance and you may use the connection detail to test your access prior to the sitting. The virtual room will close following completion of the sitting.
- Ensure all applications on your laptop or device are closed, apart from your video stream. Additional applications may interfere with the quality of your video call and access to the virtual courtroom.
- Be aware of how you appear to others on the call. Your image will be displayed in the bottom right corner of your screen. Shoulders and Head centred is the recommended position.
- When not actively speaking in the virtual courtroom, you should **mute your microphone** to reduce feedback and unwanted background noise.
- Clear sound is essential for a good conferencing experience. The microphones on modern laptops are sensitive and it is not advisable to get too close. It is likely you will improve the sound quality for other users by sitting back slightly from your device. You should also ensure your laptop volume is not too high, as this will cause feedback for other users. Try reducing your volume to the minimum that is acceptable to your ears, using headphones is an alternative if feedback becomes an issue.



- Lighting makes a big difference to how you appear to others on the conference. You should ensure you have a good light source directed towards the face and avoid having any light sources behind or directly above you. It is especially important to make sure windows and daylight sources are not behind you. Any daylight source behind you will overwhelm the camera on your laptop and you will not be easily visible.