



26th March 2020

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

There is no doubt that the world which we know has changed utterly in the last 14 days and at this time our thoughts are with those who are ill, those who are in the frontline health service, those in leadership and the families of these groups.

The Family Lawyers Association (FLA) is aware that home-based existence is particularly difficult for families who are in the midst of relationship breakdown. Many such families rely upon the family law courts to, if not resolve, in some measure alleviate the difficulties consequent upon breakdown and the very considerable disruption to the court service in the context of these current challenging times has seen the availability of court interventions (and, indeed, other alternative dispute resolution mechanisms) hugely curtailed.

In this context, the FLA believes it incumbent upon us to consider our current procedures and practices and to examine how these might be adapted in order to safely resume some level of court activity in the short and medium term. Indeed, such considerations may be beneficial in the long term also. In order to address these matters, a FLA Covid-19 Response Steering Group, under the chairmanship of Paul McCarthy SC, has been established. It has approached its task with diligence and, in just in excess of one week, has formulated a number of preliminary reports and proposals. They are to be congratulated on the results of such a mammoth task. These are attached.

We ask you to consider them and to comment on them. A sub-group of the Steering Group is available to meet with stakeholders (remotely) to discuss these proposals which will be revised and adapted over the coming weeks, having regard to such feedback and the

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changing conditions under which society currently operates. If you wish to comment on these proposals, please email pcmccarthy@lawlibrary.ie or nejackson@lawlibrary.ie. If you wish to arrange a discussion meeting with a sub-group of the Steering Group, please contact pcmccarthy@lawlibary.ie.

We cannot end this correspondence without, again, expressing our gratitude to the members of the Covid-19 Response Steering Group. They have been tireless in their efforts. Thank you to Paul McCarthy SC, Sara Phelan SC, Rachel Baldwin BL, Adrienne Cawley BL, Jennifer Cuffe BL, Sinead Behan BL, Eithne Hegarty BL, Keith Walsh, solicitor, Brendan Dillon, solicitor and Deirdre Burke, solicitor. Thank you also to Sean O hUallachain SC and Helen Coughlan, solicitor, who have provided liaison with the Bar Council and the Law Society.

The work will continue.

Wishing you the best in unpredictable times. Stay safe and keep well.

Yours sincerely,

Nuala E Jackson SC
Chair, FLA

Alan Finnerty, solicitor
Vice-chair, FLA

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