STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS

2026 No. 696 (L. 11)

CIVIL PROCEEDINGS, ENGLAND AND WALES

The Online Procedure (Rules and Practice Directions) Rules 2026

Made - - - -	*23rd June 2026*
Laid before Parliament	*26th June 2026*
Coming into force - -	*7th September 2026*

The Online Procedure Rule Committee, having power under section 22(1) of the Judicial Review and Courts Act 2022(**a**) to make rules under section 19 of that Act, makes these Rules in exercise of the powers conferred by sections 19, 23 and 24, after having fulfilled the requirements of section 26(1) and (2), of that Act.

PART 1
General Provisions

Citation and commencement

1. These Rules may be cited as the Online Procedure (Rules and Practice Directions) Rules 2026, and come into force on 7th September 2026.

The Online Procedure Rules 2026

2.—(1) The Schedule to these Rules contains the Online Procedure Rules 2026.

(2) In the Online Procedure Rules 2026, any reference to "these Rules" means the Online Procedure Rules 2026 themselves, and any reference in those Rules to a rule by number alone means the rule with that number in those Rules.

(3) The Online Procedure Rules 2026 apply to the types of proceedings listed in the first column of the table below. The date from which they apply to each type of proceedings is set out in the second column. The cases where they apply and how they apply (for example, whether they apply to all proceedings of that type or only proceedings which involve particular parties or are started after a particular date) are set out in the third column or in any practice direction referred to in the third column.

Table 1

(**a**) 2022 c. 35.

Type of proceedings	*Date from which Rules apply*	*Extent of application*
Possession proceedings	7th September 2026	As set out in Practice Direction "Online Procedure Rules for Possession Proceedings"(**a**)

Practice directions for piloting new practice and procedure

3.—(1) Practice directions may establish pilot schemes for assessing new practice and procedure before provision for that practice and procedure is incorporated in any Online Procedure Rules, in accordance with paragraphs (2) and (3).

(2) If provision is not already made by or under any Online Procedure Rules, practice directions may make provision for the practice and procedure to be followed in any type of proceedings, for a specified period to enable that practice and procedure to be assessed.

(3) Practice directions may modify or disapply any provision made by or under Online Procedure Rules—

(a) for specified periods;

(b) in relation to specified types of proceedings; and

(c) in relation to proceedings in specified courts and tribunals,

during the operation of pilot schemes for assessing the use of new practice and procedure in connection with proceedings.

(4) In this rule, "specified" means specified in the relevant practice direction.

We make these Rules

Sir Geoffrey Vos (Master of the Rolls)
Sir James Dingemans (Senior President of Tribunals)
Sir Stephen Cobb (President of the Family Division)
Gerard Boyers
Brett Dixon
17th June 2026 Online Procedure Rule Committee

I allow these Rules by authority of the Lord Chancellor

Sarah Sackman
Minister of State
23rd June 2026 Ministry of Justice

(**a**) This and other practice directions are published together with the rules on GOV.UK.

SCHEDULE

Rule 2(1)

The Online Procedure Rules 2026

The structure of the Online Procedure Rules 2026

1. These Rules are in three parts—

(a) Part 1 contains the principles governing all online proceedings;

(b) Part 2 contains the rules which apply to all online proceedings ("core rules");

(c) Part 3 contains rules which apply only to particular types of online proceedings.

PART 1

The principles governing all online proceedings

Online proceedings

2. These Rules govern online proceedings. Online proceedings are proceedings specified in Part 3 of these Rules, which are required or authorised to be to be initiated, conducted, progressed, or disposed of by electronic means, or by equivalent non-electronic means where these Rules allow.

Digital service

3. Everything in online proceedings is to be done by way of a digital service designed and maintained by or on behalf of His Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service (HMCTS) and accessed on GOV.UK. Technical specifications and data standards for the digital service will be published on GOV.UK. There may be different digital services for different types of online proceedings.

The Overriding Objective

4. The Overriding Objective of these Rules is to promote access to justice by enabling disputes to be resolved using digital means (before or after the start of proceedings) quickly, efficiently, fairly and at proportionate cost.

5. All those involved in online proceedings must do all they can to achieve the Overriding Objective and to follow these Principles.

6. The court or tribunal must, in order to achieve the Overriding Objective, seek to—

(a) manage online proceedings actively so that they are dealt with quickly and fairly;

(b) make sure that all parties and witnesses, whether vulnerable or not, can fully participate in online proceedings and give their best evidence;

(c) make sure that all parties are on an equal footing and are treated fairly;

(d) promote all forms of dispute resolution in and out of court or tribunal;

(e) find ways to make sure that online proceedings are dealt with proportionately to the value, importance and complexity of the case, the court's resources and the financial position of each party;

(f) make sure everyone obeys rules, practice directions and court orders;

(g) allow reasonable public access to court and tribunal decision-making.

7. In any proceedings having a connection to Wales, the Welsh language may be used by any person who wishes to use it.

Duties of the parties to online proceedings

8. The parties to online proceedings must—

(a) help the court or tribunal to achieve the Overriding Objective;

(b) take all reasonable and appropriate steps to settle their disputes;

(c) cooperate fully with the court or tribunal's active case management of the online proceedings;

(d) identify the issues that the court or tribunal needs to decide in the online proceedings;

(e) act in good faith when dealing with the court or tribunal and other parties.

Active case management of online proceedings by the court or tribunal

9. Active case management of online proceedings by the court or tribunal includes—

(a) directing or encouraging the parties to cooperate in the management and progression of online proceedings;

(b) directing or encouraging the parties to use other methods to resolve their disputes and helping them use those methods;

(c) helping the parties to reach agreement about all or part of the online proceedings;

(d) fixing and controlling timetables to move the online proceedings forward;

(e) considering and deciding whether the outcomes of a future step are justified by its cost;

(f) making directions that enable the online proceedings to be resolved without the parties coming to court;

(g) making full and effective use of technology;

(h) holding hearings and receiving evidence by phone, video or other electronic means where appropriate;

(i) combining two or more sets of online proceedings into one, and dealing with more than one set of online proceedings together;

(j) pausing all or part of any online proceedings or judgment without setting an end date or until a future date or event;

(k) ordering a party to send the court or tribunal and the other parties a budget for the details of the costs they have spent or expect to spend on the online proceedings;

(l) making any other order for the purpose of managing the case and achieving the overriding objective.

Identifying issues and deciding issues

10. Active management of online proceedings by the court or tribunal also includes—

(a) early identification of the issues that the court or tribunal needs to decide;

(b) deciding promptly which issues should be decided at a full hearing by the court or tribunal and which issues can and should be dealt with more quickly;

(c) deciding the order in which issues are to be dealt with;

(d) having a separate hearing to decide any issue, or deciding that an issue does not need to be dealt with;

(e) dealing with as many parts of the online proceedings as possible on the same occasion;

(f) dismissing a claim or an issue in a claim without a full hearing;

(g) giving judgment in the online proceedings after a decision on an issue.

Time allowed for things to be done

11. The court or tribunal may—

(a) allow more time or less time to follow a rule, practice direction or order, even if the request for more time is made after a deadline has passed;

(b) bring forward a hearing, or postpone a hearing even if the hearing has started;

(c) require a party or their representative to attend the court or tribunal at a specified time.

Accessibility of the digital service

12. The digital service providing the platforms for online proceedings will be designed and maintained so as to be usable by all.

13. If an unrepresented party to online proceedings wishes to use non-electronic means to access online proceedings and to communicate with the court or tribunal, they (whether individuals or corporate entities) must do so in the manner provided by these Rules, supported by the systems provided by or on behalf of HMCTS.

14. Users of the digital service shall have access to—

(a) plain language guidance;

(b) reasonable adjustments for disability and specific needs;

(c) measures to support effective participation;

(d) assisted digital support;

(e) non-digital alternatives in accordance with these Rules.

15. If the digital service is not available for any reason, no person is to be disadvantaged in online proceedings because they could not use the service during that time.

Early resolution

16. These Rules shall be applied so as to point parties to online proceedings towards the least burdensome or least costly means to resolve their dispute. Examples include online information, online advice, consensual online dispute resolution and adjudication (whether by a court or tribunal or some other method).

PART 2

Core rules

Starting proceedings: requirement to use the digital service

17. All online proceedings must be started using the digital service by providing online the information required for that type of online proceedings (unless rules 20 and 21 apply) and paying the required court or tribunal fee (unless rule 23 applies).

Later steps in online proceedings: requirement to use digital service

18. All subsequent steps in online proceedings by any person (such as responding with a defence) must be taken using the digital service by providing online the information required for that step (unless rules 20 and 21 apply) and paying the required court or tribunal fee (unless rule 23 applies).

Use of non-electronic means by unrepresented persons

19. The practice direction applicable to a particular type of online proceedings will make provision for paper forms identifying the information required, and the format in which it is to be provided, for initiating and taking subsequent steps in that type of online proceedings. Such forms will be published online by or on behalf of HMCTS and made available for downloading or printing. The court or tribunal must supply, on request, a paper copy of any such form (with relevant explanatory material) to a person who cannot provide the information required using the digital service.

20. An unrepresented person may choose to start online proceedings, or take a subsequent step in online proceedings, by submitting the information required in the relevant paper form to the court or tribunal to upload onto the digital service.

21. The court or tribunal will upload the information if the unrepresented person follows the instructions of the court or tribunal and (unless rule 23 applies) pays the required court or tribunal fee.

22. Once online proceedings have started, an unrepresented party may choose to be notified of developments in those proceedings on paper.

People who have applied for Help with Fees

23. Provision for any case where any person has applied for Help with Fees in online proceedings is made by the practice direction which applies to that type of proceedings.

Proceedings ceasing to be online proceedings

24. In any online proceedings the court or tribunal may, if necessary to achieve justice, order that the proceedings are no longer to be online proceedings and are to be governed instead by other rules which would apply to that type of proceedings if they were not online proceedings. The court or tribunal may give directions as to how the proceedings are to progress under the other rules.

Exercise of the powers of the court or tribunal

25. The court or tribunal may exercise any of its powers whether or not a party has made an application requesting it to do so.

26. The court or tribunal's powers in online proceedings may be exercised by—

(a) any judge of the court or tribunal;

(b) a legal adviser or an authorised person, where these Rules or a practice direction allow;

(c) a court officer, where the act is purely formal or administrative.

Interpretation

27. Any term used in these Rules will have the same meaning when used in a practice direction.

28. In these Rules, unless the context requires or the Rules provide otherwise—

"authorised person" means a member of tribunal staff authorised by the Senior President of Tribunals under paragraph 3(3) of Schedule 5 to the Tribunals, Courts and Enforcement Act 2007(**a**);

"court officer" means a member of staff appointed under section 2(1) of the Courts Act 2003(**b**) or section 40(1) of the Tribunals, Courts and Enforcement Act 2007;

"legal adviser" means an authorised person or court officer who is—

(a) a barrister;

(b) a solicitor; or

(c) a Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Legal Executives, or a CILEX lawyer.

29. Where any period of time for doing an act is specified in these Rules, a practice direction or a judgment or order of the court or tribunal—

(a) if the period is specified as a number of days either from or to a specified date, the specified date does not count as one of the days;

(b) if the period is specified as 5 days or less, any of those days which falls on a Saturday or Sunday, Christmas Day, Good Friday or a bank holiday under section 1 of the Banking and Financial Dealings Act 1971(**c**) is not included;

(c) the last date provided in a judgment or order for doing an act must, wherever practicable, be expressed as a calendar date, and include the time of day by which the act must be done;

(d) if "month" is specified, it means a calendar month.

PART 3

Rules for specific types of proceedings

Possession proceedings

30. Rules for possession proceedings are set out in a practice direction titled "Online Procedure Rules for Possession Proceedings"(**d**).

(**a**) 2007 c. 15. Paragraph 3(3) was inserted by section 3 of, and paragraph 44(3) of the Schedule to, the Courts and Tribunals (Judiciary and Functions of Staff) Act 2018 (c. 33).
(**b**) 2003 c. 39.
(**c**) 1971 c. 80.
(**d**) This and other practice directions are published together with the rules on GOV.UK.

EXPLANATORY NOTE

(This note is not part of the Rules)

These Rules are the first to be made under the powers to make Online Procedure Rules conferred by Chapter 2 of Part 2 of the Judicial Review and Courts Act 2022 (c. 35).

Rule 1 provides for citation and commencement.

Rule 2 provides for there to be a set of Online Procedure Rules (the Online Procedure Rules 2026), which are contained in the Schedule to these Rules, and for how and when those Rules will apply to different types of proceedings (initially only to possession proceedings, with other types of proceedings to be included at a later date). The Online Procedure Rules 2026 are divided into overarching principles about the nature of online procedure under the Rules, "core rules" which are applicable to all types of proceedings to which Online Procedure Rules apply, and rules for particular types of proceedings (as noted above, initially only possession proceedings).

Rule 3 provides for practice directions (made under Schedule 3 to the Judicial Review and Courts Act 2022) to be able to make provision for practice and procedure which would otherwise be in the Rules themselves, on a pilot basis so that the practice and procedure can be tested and assessed before being included in the Rules.

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