



JUDICIARY OF
ENGLAND AND WALES

FROM HIS HONOUR JUDGE TOWNSEND

ACTING RESIDENT JUDGE PLYMOUTH CROWN COURT

Conferences with Defendants who are in Custody
Facility for Linking Legal Representatives with Defendants

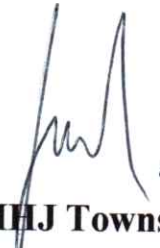
We are anxious to facilitate, as best we can, arrangements for conferences with Defendants who are in custody, so that such progress as is possible is made in outstanding cases and, in particular, that resolution and disposal of appropriate cases can take place.

Following representations from the Bar and solicitors, the court staff and I have explored what we can offer the profession, and I am pleased to say that we can offer audio links to the prisons with immediate effect. This will involve an additional court being opened, with a member of staff brought in to do so, the Defendant being placed on the prison video link, and his/her representative dialling in by phone: this has been tested this morning, and works satisfactorily with the parties able to hear each other. While this is not a video link, it works well and I am satisfied that it will enable effective conferences to take place: we have explored the suggestion put forward that the video booths could be opened, but there are substantial obstacles to this taking place safely, and so we cannot offer it.

Solicitors and counsel wishing to use this facility will need to alert the

prison authorities, and then liaise with the court office, where a member of staff will be in charge of the timetabling of conferences. Inevitably, time slots will be a scarce resource, and it is therefore vital that those using the facility comply strictly with the time limits that they have been given, and do not overrun: I have asked that any misuse of the facility should be reported to me so that action can be taken.

I hope that this will assist everyone in keeping the administration of justice going and enable the legal profession to continue working in these difficult times.



HHJ Townsend
8th April 2020