



Centre for excellence
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Children's Rights in Children's Hearings: The Impact of Covid-19

Dr Robert Porter

Dr Fern Gillon



stakeholders who had experience of, or had wanted to, take part in a virtual hearing. Over 270 responses gathered.

- Detailed consultation report produced, with young person, and parent versions.

Impact on Article 12 rights

Attendance

"I'm extremely aware that many children and young people struggle to communicate via technology. Many of my case load will only engage in the face to-face in-person way. This makes it challenging to ensure their voices are truly being heard and represented in decision making" (advocacy worker)

Voice

"I felt a bit under pressure as I struggle with anxiety and I didn't have the opportunity to ask to speak the panel by myself as my mum and everyone was on the screen" (young person)

Participation

"I think virtual hearings are more like business meetings now as we try and ensure that everyone can have their say within a specific time limit ...I suspect for some children or young people... they must feel even more now that it is a meeting for adults - not for them" (panel member)

Procedural Rights

Information

"Accessing reports, helping relevant persons to access/understand written information in time to share information with legal representatives or advocacy. Using objective connect challenging to access papers" (advocacy worker)

Representation

"If child has a legal rep or advocate, they cannot silently cue each other to speak because they are not in eye contact" (safeguarder)

Understanding implications – explanation of decisions

"After the end of the hearing when the virtual hearing has ended, the child or relevant person are effectively cut off and have no opportunity to discuss and make sure fully understand what has happened" (reporter)

Post-hearing support

Practical Support

"...the parent remained at home with two very young and vulnerable children whilst participating in the Hearing. I feel this could increase risk to the children...When the decision weren't going their way, the parent was clearly very angry and simply cut their connection prior to the end of the hearing. There was no ability to then deescalate or assess their mood further" (social worker)

Emotional Support

"As a panel member, making the decision to remove a child from their parents immediately, and the family having to cope with hearing that without support. Then, afterwards having the emotional consequences of making such a decision while in my own home, with my own children nearby was tough" (panel member)

"Virtual hearings do not allow for the customer care aspect of a face to face one - for example, distress and upset cannot be managed virtually either before, during or after the hearing, which is part of my role as a Reporter. A small but significant illustration of is the box of tissues in every hearing room which is a recognition of how emotional hearings can be. There is no box of tissues in a virtual hearing"
(reporter)

Justifiability of move to virtual hearings

Role	Was move justified?		
	Yes	No	Unanswered
Panel Members	142	2	1
Reporter	10	1	0
Social Worker	35	2	0
Safeguarder	15	0	1
Advocacy Worker	11	0	0
Solicitor	17	3	0
Other Role	7	0	8
Total	237	8	10
Total as %age	93%	3%	4%

What does this mean in terms of the priority given to children's rights?

Does this remain true as virtual hearings continue to take place?

References and links

- Full consultation report
(https://www.celcis.org/files/6815/9646/6463/Virtual_Childrens_Hearings_Report_3rd_August_2020.pdf)
- Children and Young Peoples Report
(https://www.celcis.org/files/6115/9653/8760/Report_for_Young_People_August_2020.pdf)
- Parent and Carers Report
(https://www.celcis.org/files/6115/9653/8760/Report_for_Young_People_August_2020.pdf)



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Any Questions?

Fern.Gillon@strath.ac.uk

Robert.Porter@strath.ac.uk