

What is the purpose of a Ground Rules Hearing?



WHAT IS A GROUND RULES HEARING?

A Ground Rules Hearing is an opportunity for the judge, trial counsel and the intermediary to discuss the adaptations needed to assist a person with communication difficulties to fully participate during court proceedings.

It is essential that a Ground Rules Hearing takes place before the [trial](#) or hearing begins. In family court, a Ground Rules Hearing must take place before any hearing where evidence is being heard.

It is essential to discuss the intermediary report at the Ground Rules Hearing, to ensure that the recommendations are implemented successfully.

At the Ground Rules Hearing, trial counsel and the judge can seek clarification on issues raised in the report and establish the role that intermediary will play. This avoids confusion during the trial process and helps the proceedings to run smoothly.

Ground Rules Hearings are important in order to establish and agree the measures that will be in place throughout the trial or hearing to ensure that your client is able to effectively participate in the proceedings.

WHAT HAPPENS DURING A GROUND RULES HEARING?

During a typical Ground Rules Hearing, the intermediary will present the findings of the intermediary report to the court. Ideally, this will occur before the trial judge and counsel. The intermediary will highlight your client's communication difficulties and make recommendations to assist with these areas of need.

- *Learn more about [the intermediary role at this stage](#).*

KEY TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

The following issues are typically discussed during a Ground Rules Hearing (this is not an exhaustive list):

- The frequency and duration of breaks.
- The length of the court day.
- The role of the intermediary throughout the proceedings.
- Any extra measures that will assist your client throughout the proceedings (e.g. adaptations to language used in the courtroom, measures to support attention and emotional management).
- Any special measures which the intermediary report recommends (e.g. seating a defendant outside of the dock, the use of screens in the courtroom, the use of video-link).
- Any extra observations not included in the report gleaned during previous hearings or conferences with the client and an intermediary.
- A method for the intermediary to indicate if your client experiences difficulty and/or further adaptations are required.
- How often the judge would like to receive an intermediary update, detailing the effectiveness of strategies and recommendations.
- Agreed protocol for [giving evidence](#) (including special measures and question style).
- Whether [questions in advance](#) will be submitted by all advocates to the intermediary for review prior to your client's evidence.

Communicourt is the largest Managed and Approved Service Provider of intermediaries for defendants and respondents, in criminal and family courts. We passionately believe that everyone has a right to a fair trial.

Communicourt
communication matters in the courts

How we can help you



REQUESTING AN INTERMEDIARY ASSESSMENT

If you think your client may have a communication difficulty, intermediary support is fully funded. Communicourt assessments are simple to arrange using the process outlined below.

An intermediary assessment can provide professionals and the court with more insight into your client's communication strengths and difficulties, and how these may impact them during proceedings.

We produce comprehensive communication reports which identify issues and make detailed recommendations to help you and your client, even in cases where an intermediary is not recommended.

If an intermediary is recommended, one of our highly trained intermediaries can attend conferences (subject to funding) and hearings to facilitate those recommendations, meaning you can focus on your job.

Our experience means we can recommend solutions that make a tangible difference and support the justice system in getting a fair result.



HOW TO GET SUPPORT



BOOK ONLINE

Refer your client for an assessment through our online booking system [communicourt.co.uk](https://www.communicourt.co.uk)

FUNDING

We will send you a quote that you need to send to HMCTS and Legal Aid for them to approve funding

BOOK THE ASSESSMENT

Once you have funding in place, please let us know. We will then arrange an assessment

ASSESSMENT

The 3 hour assessment can be carried out in person or remotely. You will then receive a report

BOOK COURT DATES

We will send booking forms which must be signed by the court. Once received we will then book your intermediary

5 minutes

24 Hours

4-6 weeks

7 days

Throughout the trial