

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.
- It is essential that the intermediary is involved in the Ground Rules Hearing. Learn more about [their role at this stage here](#).
- The intermediary will highlight your client's communication difficulties and make recommendations to assist with these areas of need.
- The intermediary will also ask for the court to agree a method for them to indicate if your client experiences difficulty and/or further adaptations are required.

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

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

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 Ground Rules Hearing the intermediary should present the specific recommendations for your client to the court. This includes the trial judge and counsel.
- The frequency and duration of breaks.
- The length of the court day.
- The role of the intermediary throughout the proceedings.
- Agreed protocol for giving evidence (including special measures and question style).
- Any extra measures that will assist your client throughout the proceedings.
- Any extra observations not included in the report.
- How often the judge would like to receive an intermediary update, detailing the effectiveness of strategies and recommendations.

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.

How we can help you



HOW BOOKING AN ASSESSMENT WILL HELP YOU AND YOUR CLIENT

We will assess your client to understand their communication difficulties and how these might affect them in court. Your client does not need to have a diagnosis.

We produce a comprehensive report. This will identify any particular communication issues and make recommendations to help you and your client.

One of our highly trained intermediaries can be there throughout proceedings 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)

5 minutes

FUNDING

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

24 Hours

BOOK THE ASSESSMENT

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

4-6 weeks

ASSESSMENT

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

7 days

BOOK COURT DATES

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

Throughout the trial