



JUDICIARY OF  
ENGLAND AND WALES

**HH JUDGE NICHOLAS DEAN K.C.**

HON RECORDER OF MANCHESTER

## **Greater Manchester Crown Courts – Practice Update, April 2024**

In order more effectively to tackle current trial waiting times and to make most efficient use of the availability of improved judicial and case progression resources, some changes to current practice are to be implemented. The aim is to help facilitate, where possible and appropriate, early resolution of cases, to reduce the number of intermediate hearings and more efficiently to manage pre-trial preparation.

Some changes to the protocol for CVP attendance are likely in the near future; they will be notified separately in due course.

### **Pre-PTPH Reviews**

From early May pre-PTPH reviewing will be re-instated. Each forthcoming PTPH will be reviewed approximately 14 days prior to the hearing (and so approximately 21 days after sending). Checks will be carried out on the material uploaded to DCS and on the extent to which engagement is apparent. Judges will comment and, where necessary, will give directions to be complied with in time for the PTPH hearing. Judges may remark on any aspect of an individual case, including potential resolution. The review will be provided to the parties not less than 10 days before the PTPH in the expectation that it will be acted on in time for the PTPH.

## **PTPH**

The PTPH will be conducted with the revised BCM principles in mind. If there are to be guilty pleas *and* the case is anticipated to be able to proceed to sentence, then this must be notified to listing as far in advance of the hearing as possible so that sufficient time can be allocated to the case.

In the event of not guilty pleas, a FCMH hearing will generally be listed shortly after the Stage 2 date and a PTR will be fixed approximately 4 weeks before the trial date. In order to assist the FCMH, the Standard Witness Table must be completed and uploaded with any Defence Statement (that is at Stage 2).

Where a PTR is ordered, whether at the PTPH or at any FCMH, practitioners are reminded that the PTR form (as revised, see below) will need to be completed in advance of the PTR hearing. Defendants, unless specifically released from attendance, will be expected to attend both the FCMH and the PTR. Litigators must report any lack of co-operation by defendants which impedes or hinders engagement.

## **FCMH**

The principal purpose of the FCMH is to scrutinise any defence statement as well as the Standard Witness Table and to give or adjust directions to work towards a trial. If a defence statement is in preparation but has not been completed, then the defence should apply to put back the FCMH and any such application will be considered. If there is no such application then it will be assumed that no defence statement is to be served. Applications to allow more time to serve a defence statement, whether made in writing or in a hearing, will not generally be considered; they are meaningless.

## **PTR<sup>1</sup>**

The PTR is a hearing shortly before the trial date, the principal purposes of which are to ensure that the case will indeed be a trial, and that it is ready for trial. In too many cases guilty pleas are indicated on or immediately before the trial date when it is too late for alternative trials to be listed and in some cases, with the same effect, problems are notified on or immediately before the trial date causing trials to have to be vacated, problems which ought to have been apparent and anticipated at the PTR.

A PTR form has been available for use for over a year, but has in fact only rarely been completed. A revised form has now been approved and is available to all practitioners. The revised form **must**, with immediate effect, be used in all PTR's to which it applies (see the introduction to the form itself for details).

HH Judge Nicholas Dean KC  
Hon Recorder of Manchester

11 April 2024

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<sup>1</sup> Sometimes cases are listed for PTR's a significant amount of time before the trial date – these hearings ought generally to be listed as FCMH's (or as mentions). This Practice Update applies to only PTR's listed approximately 4 weeks before the trial date.

