

6. EXTENSIONS TO THE TIMETABLE FOR PROCEEDINGS

- 6.1** The court is required to draw up a timetable for proceedings with a view to disposing of the application without delay and with the aim of doing so within 26 weeks. If proceedings can be resolved earlier, then they should be. A standard timetable and process is expected to be followed in respect of the giving of standard directions on issue and allocation and other matters which should be carried out by the court on issue, including setting and giving directions for the Case Management Hearing.
- 6.2** Having regard to the circumstances of the particular case, the court may consider that it is necessary to extend the time by which the proceedings are intended to be resolved beyond 26 weeks to enable the court to resolve the proceedings justly. When making this decision, the court is to take account of the guidance that extensions are not to be granted routinely and are to be seen as requiring specific justification. The decision and reason(s) for extending a case should be recorded in writing (in the Case Management Order) and orally stated in court, so that all parties are aware of the reasons for delay in the case. The Case Management Orders must contain a record of this information, as well as the impact of the court's decision on the welfare of the child.
- 6.3** The court may extend the period within which proceedings are intended to be resolved on its own initiative or on application. Applications for an extension should, wherever possible, only be made so that they are considered at any hearing for which a date has been fixed or for which a date is about to be fixed. Where a date for a hearing has been fixed, a party who wishes to make an application at that hearing but does not have sufficient time to file an application notice should as soon as possible inform the court (if possible in writing) and, if possible, the other parties of the nature of the application and the reason for it. The party should then make the application orally at the hearing.
- 6.4** If the court agrees an extension is necessary, the intention is that an initial extension to the time limit may be granted for up to eight weeks (or less if directed) in order to resolve the case justly, meaning that the maximum time limit for proceedings will be 34 weeks. If more time is necessary, in order to resolve the proceedings justly, a further extension of up to eight weeks may be agreed by the court. There is no limit on the number of extensions that may be granted in a particular case.
- 6.5** If the court considers that the timetable for the proceedings will require an extension beyond the next eight week period in order to resolve the proceedings justly, the Case Management Order should:
- (1) state the reason(s) why it is necessary to have a further extension;
 - (2) fix the date of the next effective hearing (which might be in a period shorter than a further eight weeks); and
 - (3) indicate whether it is appropriate for the next application for an extension of the timetable to be considered on paper.
- 6.6** The expectation is that, subject to paragraph 6.5, extensions should be considered at a hearing and that a court will not approve proposals for the management of a case under FPR 12.15 where the consequence of those proposals is that the case is unlikely to be resolved within 26 weeks or other period for the time being allowed for resolution of the

proceedings. In accordance with FPR 4.1(3) (e), the court may hold a hearing and receive evidence by telephone or by using any other method of direct oral communication. When deciding whether to extend the timetable, the court must have regard to the impact of any ensuing timetable revision on the welfare of the child.