



Judge-alone Trial Protocol

Chief District Court Judge – 25 July 2025

Issued pursuant to s24 (3)(i) District Court Act 2016

Nothing in this protocol is intended to reduce fair trial rights, the right to natural justice, or rights under the New Zealand Bill of Rights Act 1990.

Purpose

1. This protocol supports preparedness of parties for the trial date, reduces delays to trial, and optimises available sitting time.

Guidelines

2. Registrars are to conduct a teleconference between prosecution and defence for every case, to monitor case readiness, **three weeks** from the scheduled judge-alone trial date (or as close as possible to three weeks). An alternative to a registrar teleconference is a judicially led call-over. Where possible, the same prosecutor that will be prosecuting the trial will attend the teleconference/call-over.
 - a. Relevant factors that determine whether a case is ready to proceed are discussed with parties, such as whether witnesses are summonsed, if there is any disclosure outstanding, or if there are any pre-trial matters that need determination.
 - b. Any issues that are raised at the teleconference that require escalation to a judge can be referred on by the registrar.
 - c. If necessary, a call-over with a judge can be scheduled prior to the trial date after the teleconference.
3. Judge-alone trial courts are **to begin at gam** in order to call-through every scheduled case and determine the priority of cases proceeding. The first trial will be able to commence at



10am, or earlier if suitable to the presiding judge and parties. A 9.30am start may be considered for courts that:

- a. Have no resident judges
 - b. Are considered Satellite courts which may require additional travel time
 - c. Have local circumstances that would interfere with a 9am start time, subject to prior approval from the Chief District Court Judge.
4. All cases that require a judge-alone trial should have a trial date **within 20 weeks** of the case entering the trial stage (i.e. post the Case Review Hearing).
 5. Any local variation to these guidelines needs approval by the Chief District Court Judge and must be consistent with the fundamental principle of timely access to justice.

Judicial Case Management Guidelines for Judge-alone Trials

6. These are general guidelines and are relevant to larger common rooms and courts. Smaller courts may follow these general guidelines to the extent that they are applicable.
7. Judge-alone trials that require judicial case management should be identified at an early stage, and no later than at the case review hearing. These files can then be referred to the non-jury liaison judge by the registry.
8. The following is a non-exhaustive list of judge-alone trials that may require judicial case management:
 - a. Multiple defendants (more than 2 defendants)
 - b. Multiple complainants (more than 2 complainants)
 - c. Vulnerable defendants
 - d. Vulnerable complainants
 - e. Large number of charges
 - f. Complexity of charges
 - g. Multiplicity of trials for one defendant
 - h. High profile trials
 - i. Trials of 1 day or more
 - j. Communications Assistant directed for either defendant or witness.

Where a case is identified at a case review hearing or earlier as a trial that requires judicial case management, a judge should be allocated by a non-jury liaison judge to manage that file. The purpose of this is that the judge will be solely responsible for all trial

matters leading up to final disposition. This should involve, amongst other things, conducting teleconferences and a pre-trial call-over to discuss whether the case is on track for hearing.

Implementation

9. This protocol commences on 1 August 2025.
10. From time to time, this protocol may be varied by the Chief District Court Judge to ensure it remains relevant and fit for purpose.

Heemi Taumaunu
Chief District Court Judge

Date	25 July 2025
Signed by	
Review date	25 July 2026