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STATUTORY RULES OF NORTHERN IRELAND

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**1996 No. 322**

**The Family Proceedings Rules (Northern Ireland) 1996**

**Part IV**

**Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995**

**Attendance at a directions appointment and hearing**

**4.17.**—(1) Subject to paragraph (2), a party shall attend a directions appointment of which he has been given notice in accordance with rule 4.15(5) unless the court otherwise directs.

(2) Proceedings or any part of them shall take place in the absence of any party, including the child, if—

- (a) the court considers it in the interests of the child, having regard to the matters to be discussed or the evidence likely to be given, and
- (b) the party is represented by a guardian ad litem or solicitor;

and when considering the interests of the child under sub-paragraph (a) the court shall give the guardian ad litem, the solicitor for the child and, if he is of sufficient understanding, the child an opportunity to make representations.

(3) Subject to paragraph (4), where at the time and place appointed for a hearing or directions appointment the applicant appears but one or more of the respondents do not, the court may proceed with the hearing or appointment.

(4) The court shall not begin to hear an application in the absence of a respondent unless—

- (a) it is proved to the satisfaction of the court that he received reasonable notice of the date of the hearing; or
- (b) the court is satisfied that the circumstances of the case justify proceeding with the hearing.

(5) Where, at the time and place appointed for a hearing or directions appointment one or more of the respondents appear but the applicant does not, the court may refuse the application or, if sufficient evidence has previously been received, proceed in the absence of the applicant.

(6) Where at the time and place appointed for a hearing or directions appointment neither the applicant nor any respondent appears, the court may refuse the application.