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## EXPLANATORY NOTE

*(This note is not part of the Rules)*

These Rules, with effect from 1st January 2004, re-enact the Family Proceedings Courts (Constitution) (Metropolitan Areas) Rules 1991 (the Metropolitan Rules) (S.I.1991/1426) with amendments. In addition to drafting amendments, the substantial change is that the Rules apply to the whole of the Greater London Commission Area rather than just the Inner London areas that the Metropolitan Rules applied to.

The Rules provide that there is one family panel for the whole of the Greater London Commission Area formed of justices nominated by the Lord Chancellor although any justice who is a member of an existing family panel on 31st December 2003 will be a member of the first panel. The members of the first panel will serve for a term from 1st January 2004 until 31st December 2005 and members of each subsequent panel will serve for a term of 3 years, although additional justices can be nominated to the panel at any time (rule 4).

Rule 5 lists the eligibility criteria which must be met in order to be nominated to the panel; rule 6 deals with vacancies on the panel and rule 7 provides for the panel to hold meetings.

The Rules provide that justices who are existing chairmen on 31st December 2003 in any petty sessions area within the Greater London Commission Area are entitled to preside until 31st December 2005 but after that date the chairmen must be nominated by the Lord Chancellor (rule 8).

Transitional provisions provide that the panel may hold a meeting before 1st January 2004 which will be treated as a meeting of the new panel, despite the fact that it did not exist at the time, and provide that existing appointments to any family panel made under the Metropolitan Rules or Family Proceedings Courts (Constitution) Rules 1991 (S.I. 1991/1405) will continue until 31st December 2003 (rule 9).

These Rules revoke the Metropolitan Rules which make equivalent provisions for family panels in the Inner London area only (rule 3).