

Appointment of the President of the Family Division: 23 April 2026

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His Majesty The King has been pleased to approve the appointment of The Rt Hon Lord Justice Stephen Cobb as the President of the Family Division. This appointment follows the retirement of Sir Andrew McFarlane on 13 April 2026.

Biography on candidate

The Rt Hon Lord Justice Stephen Cobb was called to the Bar, Inner Temple, in 1985 and took Silk in 2003. He started his judicial career as a Recorder in 2004 and was authorised to hear cases under section 9(1) of the Senior Courts Act 1981 in 2009. He was appointed as a High Court Judge in 2013 and was assigned to the Family Division; he also sat in the Administrative Court of the Kings Bench Division and was a nominated judge of the Court of Protection. He was appointed to the Court of Appeal in June 2024, and took his place in 2025. He served as a Family Presiding Judge (North Eastern Circuit) between 2015 and 2021.

The Appointment

The appointment of the President of the Family Division was made by His Majesty The King on the advice of the Prime Minister and the Lord Chancellor following the recommendation of an independent selection panel chaired by Baroness Carr of Walton-on-the-Hill, the Lady Chief Justice. The other panel members were: Lord Lloyd-Jones (Justice of the Supreme Court), and three lay Judicial Appointments Commissioners namely, Professor Chris Bones (lay JAC Commissioner), Professor Clare McGlynn (lay JAC Commissioner) and Uche Igbokwe (non-legally qualified judicial JAC Commissioner).

The President is the Head of the Family Division of the High Court of Justice and may sit as of right in the Court of Appeal, the High Court and the Family Court either alone or as part of a panel. He is also Head of Family Justice, Head of Probate, President of the Court of Protection and chairs both the Family Procedure Rule Committee and Family Justice Council.

The Exercise

This selection exercise was run under the relevant sections of the Constitutional Reform Act 2005 as amended by the Crime and Courts Act 2013.

In accordance with section 70 of the Constitutional Reform Act 2005, as amended by the Crime and Courts Act 2013, the panel determined the selection process to be followed. As required by the Crime and Courts Act 2013, the Lord Chancellor was consulted as part of the selection process.

In accordance with s.10(3) of the Senior Courts Act 1981, the selection exercise was open to all applicants who satisfy the judicial-appointment eligibility condition on a 7-year basis, or are judges of the Supreme Court of the United Kingdom, Court of Appeal, or High Court.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/appointment-of-the-president-of-the-family-division-23-april-2026>