

IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUSTICE
BUSINESS AND PROPERTY DIVISION

33 Bull Street
Birmingham
B4 6DS

Monday 26th January 2026

BEFORE:

HHJ TINDAL (Sitting as a Judge of the High Court)

BETWEEN:

(1) RICHARD WOOD
(2) REBECCA WARD
(3) FIONA EUGENIE LAWRENCE
(4) MICHELLE DAWN ROSE

Claimants

- and -

SOPHIE FLEMING

Defendant

MR DAY appeared on behalf of the Claimants
MR LEARMONTH KC appeared on behalf of the interim administrators
MS FLEMING did not appear and was not represented

APPROVED JUDGMENT

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(Official Shorthand Writers to the Court)

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HHJ TINDAL:

Introduction

1. This is a committal hearing arising from probate proceedings, hopefully at least in this country reaching their conclusion, concerning the will of Mr Brendan Fleming who died at the end of 2023 and the conduct of his partner, Ms Sophie Fleming. She is the Defendant to committal proceedings brought by both the Executors of Mr Fleming's will, Mr Wood and Ms Ward, the First and Second Claimants; now joined in a second committal application by their temporary replacements as Interim Administrators of the will since August 2024, Ms Lawrence and Ms Rose, the Third and Fourth Claimants.
2. In my judgment of 13th August 2024 (*Wood v Fleming* [2024] EWHC 2398 (Ch)), I continued an injunction I had made without notice prohibiting Ms Fleming from harassing Mr Wood and Ms Ward from her online social media account (which I will detail later). At that hearing, by consent, I appointed Ms Lawrence and Ms Rose as Interim Administrators. At the hearing, Ms Fleming admitted she was responsible for the posts but argued they were justified because of fraud by Mr Wood and Ms Ward. Indeed, in the course of her submissions about the making of the injunction, Ms Fleming told me she had already breached the injunction that I had made without notice and effectively 'boasted' that she would continue doing so, which has been her stance throughout the litigation. In the course of my judgment in August 2014, I laid that to one side because I was not dealing with a committal application at that stage.
3. However, understandably, Mr Wood and Ms Ward did bring a committal application, which I heard in November 2024. This time, Ms Fleming did not personally engage with the process, but did instruct Counsel, who cross-examined Mr Wood and Ms Wood and put to them Ms Flemings' accusations of fraud and corruption. In my second judgment of 14th November 2024 (*Wood v Fleming* [2024] EWHC 1421 (Ch)), I found her allegations were wholly without substance. I also found proved their allegations she had breached the injunction by ongoing online harassment of them. However, I deferred consideration of penalty until the end of the probate proceedings in the over-optimistic hope that this would act as some form of 'Sword of Damocles' over Ms Fleming's head.
4. Sadly, this has not proved to be the case, since in their turn Ms Lawrence and Ms Rose have also alleged similar online harassment by spurious allegations of fraud and professional misconduct by Ms Fleming. At a hearing on notice on 10th November 2025, I made a similar anti-harassment injunction in their favour against her.
5. This was shortly before I concluded the probate proceedings at a trial on 24th and 25th November 2025, at which Ms Fleming neither appeared nor was represented. I rejected her allegations that Mr Fleming's will was invalid and held he died domiciled in the Republic of Ireland, his nationality and domicile of origin which had revived since moving from Turkiye to Northern Ireland shortly before his death. I made directions to consider the penalty for the contempt I found proved on 14th November 2024 in respect of Mr Wood and Ms Ward. On 9th December 2025, Ms Lawrence and Ms Rose also applied for committal of Ms Fleming for contempt for breach of the November 2025 injunction. This hearing on 26th January 2026 was listed for both applications and the notice was uploaded by the Court onto CE-File on 5th January 2026: three weeks ahead.

The Third and Fourth Claimant' committal application: Procedure

6. Ms Fleming as a litigant-in-person has access to CE-File (and has used it extremely frequently to email the Court). So, she would have been notified by email of the committal hearing around 5th January 2026. Indeed, between that date and 15th January 2026, when Ms Lawrence and Ms Rose's solicitors' firm Veale Wansboroughs Vizards ('VWV') sent it to the Court with a request to serve by email, Ms Fleming said online:

“Richard [Wood] and Rebecca [Ward]'s attempt to imprison the children's mother [i.e. Ms Fleming] exparte in England, for breach of the exparte injunction, will be heard by Jimmy Tindal [i.e. myself] on 26th January 2026. The mother will be in Turkey.”

Yet whilst Ms Fleming states she is in Turkiye (I use the official spelling), according to CE-File, her address for service remains her property in Northern Ireland. Whilst Ms Fleming said she would be in Turkiye on 26th January 2026, her location is unclear.

7. However, service by email is a permitted method of service in England and Wales (CPR 6.3(d) and by alternative service under CPR 6.15), so it is also a permitted service method on a party giving an address for service in Northern Ireland (CPR 6.40(2)). Since the address for service Ms Fleming has given remains there, either postage to Northern Ireland, or with Court permission email, would be legitimate methods of service. Moreover, even if Ms Fleming has been in Turkiye throughout January 2026, as she has not given an address for service there and has retained her address for service in Northern Ireland, she is plainly not co-operating with the Court in England (which she considers lacks jurisdiction). So, service under the Hague Service Convention through consular authorities of Turkiye where Ms Fleming may not even be and where she had not provided an address would be totally impracticable. Therefore, as it is clear Ms Fleming is frustrating effective service and as email had been shown to be an effective method of bringing proceedings to her attention and was her preferred (and frequent) method of communication with the Court, I considered there was 'good reason' to authorise service by email (c.f. *Abela v Baadarani* [2013] 1 WLR 2043 (SC)). So, on 20th January 2026, I authorised service of the committal application and notice of hearing for Ms Lawrence and Ms Rose also on 26th January 2026 by email. Indeed, on that same day, Ms Fleming acknowledged this within minutes, saying 'Ms Lawrence would be in prison before she was'. Indeed, this shows how effective email service was.
8. Ms Fleming was aware of the committal hearing for Mr Wood and Ms Ward's case around 5th January 2026, a fortnight before she was served with Ms Lawrence and Ms Rose' application. She did not apply to adjourn it, nor contact lawyers to represent her, as she had in 2024. Indeed, the next day, 21st January, she posted a copy of the notice of hearing and again commented Ms Lawrence would be in prison before her, adding:

“All the corrupt English Lawyers are desperate to put me in prison before 6 February 2026, when Judge Rahmi Coşan will decide who will be the Estate Officers of my children's worldwide inheritance. If the children and I cannot attend the 6 February 2026 hearing in Kaş then Judge Rahmi Coşan is going to believe the claim that I am not the children's mother and the children's mother is missing/deceased [and] that Irem's clients are the only possible choice to be Estate Officers. My existence is extremely inconvenient and preventing the success of their desire to embezzle my children's inheritance.”

9. However, on the 22nd January, Ms Lawrence and Ms Rose realised their application for committal had been issued on the wrong form: an N244 rather than an N600. That was remedied the same day by email. Ms Fleming responded to that again the same day:

“You have no chance of getting me put in prison by alleging that I breached an *ultra vires* Order in an English Court with no jurisdiction... [and by] helping yourself to my children's inheritance without any authority...”

Yet this error and service less than a week ago raises the issue whether I should proceed.

10. CPR 81.4(2) provides a committal application *must* - it is a mandatory requirement - contain certain details, such as the nature of the alleged contempt, the date of the order allegedly breached, confirmation of service of the Court's order, a brief summary of the facts alleged to constitute the contempt, that the Court may proceed in the defendant's absence if they did not attend, but will only find them in contempt if satisfied beyond reasonable doubt; and if so the Court may punish the defendant by fine or imprisonment, confiscation of assets or other punishment under the law and that if the defendant admits the contempt and wishes to apologise, that is likely to reduce the seriousness of any punishment by the Court. The original N244 application and statement served on 20th January made all that clear to Ms Fleming at that stage.

11. However, what was not communicated is other very valuable rights which Ms Fleming, like all people facing contempt proceedings, has under CPR 81.4(2), namely:

“(i) the defendant has the right to be legally represented in contempt proceedings;

(j) that the defendant is entitled to a reasonable opportunity to obtain legal representation and to apply for legal aid which may be available without any means test;

(l) a defendant is entitled to a reasonable time to prepare for the hearing;

(m) the defendant is entitled but not obliged to give written and oral evidence in their defence;

(n) the defendant has the right to remain silent and to decline to answer any question the answer to which may incriminate the defendant, but that the court may draw adverse inferences if this right is exercised.”

12. Nevertheless, that information was contained on the standard N600 form served on 22nd January. However, as Mr Learmonth points out, Ms Fleming is certainly aware of all those rights because she has previously been involved in committal proceedings in 2024 when she was previously advised of – and exercised – those rights to be represented on Legal Aid and to remain silent without filing evidence. Indeed, earlier at the hearing in August 2024, I had explained those rights to her personally when I did not make committal findings even though she was boasting she had breached my July 2024 injunction and would continue to do so. She was reminded of those rights in the later 2024 committal application and again in the most recent one. Whilst I am acutely conscious of the fundamental importance of procedural fairness in committal proceedings, I am satisfied Ms Fleming understands her rights. Indeed, she regularly asserts them. Moreover, she is aware - and has said publicly she is aware - of this hearing today and has chosen, as she did at the trial and previously, not to attend. I am satisfied Ms Lawrence and Ms Rose's committal application has been effectively served and if necessary, I retrospectively validate service on 22nd January (*Abela*).

13. I am conscious less than a week's notice of a committal hearing may not in many – even most - cases be a 'reasonable time to prepare for the hearing', especially for a litigant-in-person. But in this case, Ms Fleming has actually had three weeks' notice of the hearing in relation to Mr Wood and Ms Ward's application, even if only less than a week's notice of Ms Lawrence and Ms Rose's application. She has had plenty of time to contact and arrange lawyers for that hearing if she wanted to do so and they – or she - could have sought adjournment of it or of Ms Lawrence and Ms Rose's application. Ms Fleming has not done so, instead she has responded to the committal proceedings by 'doubling down' in her online allegations. I would add she has also not requested to appear remotely from Turkiye, which anyway would be inappropriate for committal, especially from abroad and as she previously posted footage of a remote hearing online.
14. Ms Fleming's posts of 21st and 22nd January 2026 suggest not her inability to attend this hearing, but a deliberate decision not to attend because she fears being sent to prison for contempt before the upcoming hearing of Turkish proceedings on 6th February 2026. I have considered whether that position may be different were I to adjourn of my own motion this hearing until after the Turkish hearing, even though she has not sought that. However, there is no suggestion this would change her stance, which has been to dispute the jurisdiction of the English Courts throughout the litigation and to focus on the Turkish proceedings. That is reflected in her recent approach to probate proceedings where she chose not to attend or instruct lawyers at the trial in November 2025.
15. I am satisfied Ms Fleming has had an opportunity to contact a lawyer for this hearing as she did in 2024 – and/or to apply for an adjournment to enable her to instruct lawyers and for them to prepare for the hearing, or indeed herself to prepare for the hearing. However, she has chosen to continue simply not participating in proceedings. I am also satisfied it is fair and appropriate to proceed in Ms Fleming's absence which I am also satisfied is a deliberate conscious waiver of her right to participate under Art.6 ECHR.

(Further Submissions)

The Third and Fourth Claimants' committal application: Merits

16. I turn to the merits of the application to commit Ms Fleming by Ms Lawrence and Ms Rose. I remind myself of the valuable procedural rights of someone facing committal for contempt in CPR 81.4(2) I set out earlier and the principles I referred to in my November 2024 judgment at [51]-[54]. Those included that the burden of proving the allegations of contempt is squarely on the claimants to satisfy me so that I am sure on the criminal standard of proof that the defendant Ms Fleming has committed contempt by breaching my injunction of 10th November 2025. In particular, I repeat the guidance I noted at [52] given by Burton J in *Supermax v Malhotra* [2019] EWHC 2711 (Comm):

“First, the court order and the particulars of breach of it must be clear and comprehensible and the particulars make plain the thrust of the claimant's case. Secondly, the particulars of breach must be supported by prima facie evidence contained in the affidavits or witness statements, and any exhibits, accompanying the application, so as to show a real prospect of success. Thirdly, an application must not be brought for an illegitimate purpose. Fourthly, an application must be proportionate to the need of enforcing court orders and preventing interference with justice.

Fifthly, both the order and the particulars of breach must be seen and read in context and given their natural and ordinary meaning, in the light of the knowledge of the relevant participants

Sixthly, in construing an order there is need to pay regard to the mischief sought to be prevented by that order.

Seventhly, an order is not vitiated by cross-referring to documents.... The principle remains whether the order was clear as to what a recipient should do.

Eighthly...if there can be seen to be more than one reasonable inference to be drawn, and at least one of them is inconsistent with a finding of contempt, or if an innocent explanation of the contempt is a real possibility the claimant fails.”

17. Whilst Ms Fleming agreed to the appointment of Ms Lawrence and Ms Rose of VWV as Interim Administrators on 13th August 2024, within a few months, she began to allege fraud and corruption against them as well and indeed criminal prosecution in Turkiye. Merely by way of example, in June and July 2025, Ms Fleming said:

“VWV...have lied to HMRC. They are twisting the truth, you are twisting the law, just so that you and a bunch of corrupt English lawyers and corrupt English financial service providers, can embezzle the estate of a foreign domiciled testator. An Irishman, who has been domiciled in Turkey since 2014...”

"VWV Solicitors, who have then lied to HMRC, claiming that Brendan had a domicile in Northern Ireland. So first they lie saying he was domiciled in England, then they lie saying he was domiciled in Northern Ireland. And the whole reason that they are lying is because the Turkish court have made a certificate of inheritance that does not include them, because the Turkish court have already decided that the will they are presenting is an invalid will."

I add I have been shown no evidence the Turkish Court has decided any such thing.

18. Therefore, at a hearing on notice on 10th November 2025 I granted this injunction:

“1) The Respondent shall, within 7 days of this Order being communicated to her by email, take down, remove and/or delete all posts on any social media.... and/or any other posts or publications referring to the Applicants, Veale Wasbrough Vizards LLP, any member or employee thereof or any barrister engaged by them in connection with these proceedings or the administration of the estate of Brendan Joseph Fleming (‘the deceased’) (‘the Protected Persons’)

2) Until further order, the Respondent shall not, whether by herself or by instructing or encouraging any other person: a. telephone, text, email or otherwise contact or attempt to contact the Applicants (including via any social networking website or other forms of electronic messaging) except for the purposes of serving formal court documentation in relation to this claim or other court proceedings; b. telephone, text, email or otherwise contact or attempt to contact the friends and family of the Protected Persons (including via social networking websites or other forms of electronic messaging); c. publish, or otherwise communicate, any information that alleges criminal or professional misconduct against the Protected Persons; d. publish, or repeat, or in any way or encourage the publication or repetition of any allegations of criminal or professional misconduct as against the Protected Persons and by any means and on any form of social media; e. publish, or otherwise communicate, any private and/or confidential information relating to the Protected Persons.”

19. In that injunction order, I authorised service by email on Ms Fleming (for similar reasons as already discussed) and I am satisfied it was served on her on 17th November. This meant the deadline for Ms Fleming to comply with paragraph 1 was 24th November – as it happened, the first day of the trial of the probate proceedings she did not attend. However, it is clear from Ms Lawrence's witness statement she has just sworn to me and I find on the criminal standard so that I am sure, Ms Fleming did not remove the offending posts, but has immediately made at least three more in November 2025. Indeed, she has continued to do so since, e.g. on 21st January 2026 as I quoted earlier
20. However, one of the many difficulties with Ms Fleming's behaviour is that it outpaces the speed at which applications can be made to injunct or commit it. So I must focus this judgment on the specific allegations of which she has been made aware in the N600 served on 22nd January 2026: that she failed to remove the offending Facebook posts (including those in June and July 2025) regarding VWV by 24th November 2025, and since she then has knowingly and repeatedly breached the order by continuing to make posts in breach of paragraph 2 of the injunction, on 22nd and 28th November 2025.
21. On 22nd November 2025, I am sure it was Ms Fleming who posted on her Facebook page a picture of Ms Lawrence and Ms Rose and said: 'Probate Fraud' and another post naming them saying: 'Relying on Mr Tindal's Ultra Vires Orders to help yourself to Estate Funds is THEFT'. These are allegations of criminal and professional misconduct on social media in breach of paragraphs 2(c) and (d) of the injunction of 10th November.
22. The post of 28 November 2025 was a post on the Facebook page 'Before it is news', which I am sure Ms Fleming curates from its contents. I am sure she posted this:

“Michelle Rose and Fiona Lawrence of VWV solicitors could not be prosecuted in Turkiye until they committed a crime in Turkiye. Now they have just done that - sending or misleading English injunction to intimidate or silence a Turkish lawyer constitutes attempted perversion of justice, intimidation of a legal representative, abuse of process and interference with the administration of justice in a foreign state.”

To be clear, the injunction I made on 10th November 2025 is nothing to do with Ms Fleming's Turkish lawyer. It is to do with Ms Fleming personally and her own conduct. However, whether Ms Fleming misunderstood my order or simply saw in it what she chose to see, as she so often does, I am satisfied so that I am sure that post was by her and alleged a crime and professional misconduct by Ms Lawrence and Ms Rose, in breach of paragraphs 2(c) and (d) of the injunction of 10th November 2025.

23. Whilst it is not part of the committal application, Ms Fleming's 'side of the story' post of 7th January 2026, on the same Facebook Page, also requires to be addressed:

“On 19 February 2024, I threw a spanner into the works of Richard [Wood] and Rebecca [Ward]'s plan to misappropriate my children's inheritance in their own interests. Since then, they have, instead of releasing their plan, failed, realising their plan failed because an uncontested English grant of probate was absolutely critical to the success of their fraud. They doubled down on their tactics, became even more illicit and harmful to the children. These tactics included: (1) Concealing the existence of a trust fund left for the children's maintenance until they were forced to disclose it on 7 June 2024;

(2) treating the 2.4 million company they misappropriated on 8 January 2024 as if they owned it absolutely; (3) Making anonymous malicious social services referrals to Omagh health services, telling them to get out there as the mother is neglecting and abusing the children by obstructing administration of children's deceased father's estate. (4) Repeatedly telling the mother they cannot pay anything towards the children's maintenance unless the mother lifts the caveat. This financial coercion lasted over eight months. (5) Abusing s.125 Company Act two more times by their agents Michelle Rose and Fiona Lawrence of VWV solicitors. They misappropriated another £1.6 million worth of company shares and have since declared all company income is reserved to the companies; (6) The same VWV solicitors agents also made fraudulent declaration to HMRC that Brendan domiciled in the UK so they could justify flash selling company assets without probate to connected third parties, mostly Lindsay Kaplan, who had arranged for the will to be witnessed. Then they'd say the sale proceeds cannot go to the children because the IHT liability has gone up by over £2 million due to Brendan's false UK domicile; (7) They secretly asked Jimmy Tindal [i.e. myself] to make an order that states the mother must not make any published criticism of Richard and Rebecca. Of course he agreed, as always. Then, within two weeks of the order, they applied to Jimmy to commit the mother to prison for breach of the ex parte secret order. Again, Jimmy agreed, as always. (8) They made secret applications to the court in Kaş, Turkiye, which included many lies, [including] The mother cannot be traced, the children are living in Northern Ireland, Sophie Fleming is the mother of the youngest unrecognised child. Sophie Fleming cannot be traced....All false. No one at Kaş court made any proper checks. They have blocked the children from receiving their inheritance or income from their inheritance; (9) They spend £588,000 on legal fees and encouraged Trevor, the children's cousin, to spend another £100,000, expecting to be refunded from the children's inheritance. They also expected their agents from VWV solicitors to collect around £300,000 for themselves; (10) They collected around £25,000 from Brendan's bank accounts using the same will they knew was officially contested; (11) They told the mother that if she spends any money on lawyers, she is abusing the trust fund payments meant for the children and they will stop payments; (12) Through their VWV solicitors agents they threatened the mother's Turkish lawyer with prison in England if he reports the fraud scheme to the Turkish prosecutor; (13) They asked Jimmy [i.e. me] to sentence their mother to prison in January 2026 so she can't show up to a hearing in Turkiye in February 2026 and prove they have been lying to the Turkish court since April 2024. They hoped to perfect their fraud at that hearing so they can finally get grant of probate in England, based upon the court of Brendan's home country, accepting them as estate officers. When are these idiots going to wake up and realise that their fraud scheme failed in February 2024? None of their illicit tactics or their applications to Jimmy can fix it."

24. Other than the absurd and grotesquely insulting allusion between myself and the notorious paedophile Jimmy Saville, I would only briefly observe that I had previously found all these allegations about Mr Wood and Ms Ward to be utterly false. In brief, at the hearing in November 2024, I rejected all Ms Fleming's allegations against Mr Wood and Ms Ward – including that they had referred Ms Fleming to Omagh Social Services. Far from Mr Wood and Ms Ward blocking Ms Fleming's children's inheritance, it has been her own irrational and unevidenced accusations against all and sundry which have done that, which is why I found she was not a suitable Litigation Friend for her own children in the probate proceedings. Moreover, far from committing Ms Fleming to prison, to be fair, I deferred consideration of penalty – which I will address later. Having heard Ms Lawrence's evidence, I am also sure there is nothing whatsoever in Ms Fleming's equally wild and incoherent allegations against Ms Lawrence, Ms Rose and their colleagues at VWV, which I reject completely. However, as that post followed the committal application, it is not a pleaded breach.
25. In short, I am satisfied so that I am sure that not only has Ms Fleming not taken down the previous posts which led me to make the injunction on 10 November 2025, but also that she has continued to make posts of a similar kind in breach of that injunction which I calibrated to respect her freedom of expression under Art.10 ECHR and so my findings of contempt to not infringe Art.10 either. In summary, they are as follows:
- a. In breach of paragraph 1 of the Applicants' Order, the Defendant has failed by 24th November 2025 to remove Facebook posts regarding the Applicants, Veale Wasbrough Vizards LLP, and/or its employees, namely 2 posts dated 2 June 2025, 2 posts made on 13 June 2025, 2 posts made on 29 July 2025, a post dated 29 September 2025 and a post dated 13 October 2025
 - b. 22.11.2025 In breach of paragraph 2 of the Applicants' Order, the Defendant published a Facebook post on 22 November 2025 picturing the Applicants and, reading "Probate Fraud"
 - c. 22.11.2025 In breach of paragraph 2 of the Applicants' Order, the Defendant published a Facebook post on 22 November 2025 referring to the Applicants by name and, reading "Relying on Mr Tindal's Ultra Vires Orders to help yourself to Estate Funds is THEFT"
 - d. 28.11.2025 In breach of paragraph 2 of the Applicants' Order, the Defendant published a Facebook post on 28 November 2025 (quoted above)

(After further submissions)

Penalty for Contempt

26. Having set out the breaches of the 10th November 2025 injunction I find proved by Ms Lawrence and Ms Rose, I should return to the breaches of the 2nd July 2024 injunction I found proved by Mr Wood and Ms Ward in November 2024. In summary, they were:
- a. On 4th July 2024, Ms Fleming made five abusive online posts about Mr Wood and Ms Ward, including one saying:

"Good news for criminals of England and Wales. You can easily get your victim imprisoned, sees their home, etc. by making an ex parte application to a judge, even if all the evidence you presented the judge proves your crime."

- b. On 6th July 2024, Ms Fleming also made a further five posts in breach, including
“Since Brendon died, Rebecca Ward and Richard Wood have embezzled his children's inheritance”.

Indeed, most seriously, Ms Fleming made a gratuitously personal post against Mr Wood which I apologise to him for repeating:

“Richard, why is your alcoholic suicidal wife relevant to your efforts to leave Brendon's children without any parent or any inheritance?”

- c. On 7th July 2024, Ms Fleming posted a Facebook post, this time targeted at Ms Ward, who after Mr Fleming's death was leading his firm Brendan Fleming Solicitors, almost exclusively a public law children firm. Ms Fleming said:

“You'll be a huge risk if you choose the solicitors based upon their previous excellent reputation, and they suddenly get closed down when a fraud is exposed.”

- d. Similar posts were made by Ms Fleming on 8th July 2024, for example:

“Eight days after Brendan died, Richard Wood, a financial adviser who's been setting Brendan up to embezzle his estate since 2013, and Rebecca Ward, an employed solicitor, presented a redacted will and false evidence to the court to have their company shares transferred to them. They gave undertakings to get grant of probate ASAP, but six months later, all they are doing is starving Brendan's dependent family of funds to coerce them into consenting into their invalid will. They refused to propound it because they know it is invalid.”

- e. On 9th July 2024, Ms Fleming also specifically attacked Mr Wood's financial advice firm, specifically calling him a fraudster.

- f. On 10th July 2024, Ms Fleming made six further posts, largely re-posting earlier posts, but also added this familiar allegation:

“Richard Wood and Rebecca Ward stole the children's inheritance by an act of fraud.”

- g. Finally, on 11th July 2024, Ms Fleming released a YouTube video and story reels, which made similar allegations against Mr Wood and Ms Ward.

27. As Mr Day rightly reminds me, I can only impose a penalty on the breaches that I have found proved. There is plenty of evidence, to which I have already referred, that Ms Fleming has continued to make posts, and indeed I have referred to some of them which attack Mr Wood and Ms Ward when giving my judgment on the committal application of Ms Lawrence. For example, Ms Fleming's post on 7th January 2026:

“On 19 February 2024, I threw a spanner into the works of Richard [Wood] and Rebecca [Ward]'s plan to misappropriate my children's inheritance in their own interests. Since then, they have, instead of releasing their plan, failed, realising their plan failed because an uncontested English grant of probate was absolutely critical to the success of their fraud. They doubled down on their tactics, became even more illicit and harmful to the children....” (I need not repeat the rest).

28. Although I cannot sentence in respect of that continuing conduct after July 2024, it illustrates the fact that not only the injunction order that I made on 2 July 2024, but also the committal itself, has not stopped Ms Fleming’s conduct against Mr Wood and Ms Ward (although it did appear to reduce in the first six months or so of 2025). That is a relevant factor on sentence, because it cannot be said on behalf of Ms Fleming that her conduct in July was an isolated ‘storm which blew over’. Sadly, she still blows hard.
29. In relation to penalty, the principles are helpfully set out in Mr Day's Skeleton Argument. These are civil contempts as they are breach of Court Orders. The objectives of sentencing (or ‘penalty’) for civil contempt were stated as rehabilitation compliance and punishment in *Lovett v Wigan Borough Council* [2022] EWCA Civ 1631, although that was a very different context of breach of an anti-social behaviour order by neighbours. In *Attorney General v Crosland* [2022] 1 WLR 367 (SC), a case of criminal contempt relating to the breach of embargo on a judgment (but applied to penalty for civil contempt in *Breen v Esso* [2022] EWCA Civ 1405), The Supreme Court said:
- “1. The Court should adopt an approach analogous to that in criminal cases where the Sentencing Council’s Guidelines require the court to assess the seriousness of the conduct by reference to the offender’s culpability and the harm caused, intended or likely to be caused.
 2. In light of its determination of seriousness, the Court must first consider whether a fine would be a sufficient penalty.
 3. If the contempt is so serious that only a custodial penalty will suffice, the Court must impose the shortest period of imprisonment which properly reflects the seriousness of the contempt.
 4. Due weight should be given to matters of mitigation, such as genuine remorse, previous positive character and similar matters.
 5. Due weight should also be given to the impact of committal on persons other than the contemnor, such as children of vulnerable adults in their care.
 6. There should be a reduction for an early admission of the contempt to be calculated consistently with the approach in the Sentencing Council’s Guidelines on Reduction in Sentence for a Guilty Plea.
 7. Once the appropriate term has been arrived at, consideration should be given to suspending the term of imprisonment. Usually, the Court will already have taken into account mitigating factors when setting the appropriate term such that there is no powerful factor making suspension appropriate, but a serious effect on others, such as children or vulnerable adults in the contemnor's care, may justify suspension.”
30. I start – as is made clear in *Crosland* that I must - by considering whether a fine would be a sufficient penalty for the breaches relating to Mr Wood and Ms Ward, and/or Ms Lawrence and Ms Rose. I raised with both Mr Day and Mr Learmouth in submissions whether a fine may be an appropriate alternative to imprisonment, which may be unenforceable if Ms Fleming is in Turkiye; and which may only provoke her into continuing her harassment; and indeed imprisonment would affect her children and appears to be why she said on 20th and 21st January she would not attend this hearing.

31. However, I am persuaded by Mr Day and Mr Learmouth these disadvantages also apply to a fine. Since the 2nd July 2024 injunction itself prompted a spate of posts by Ms Fleming in the following week, it seems to me that whatever the penalty imposed, she will react in some way and the Court should not be dissuaded from imposing the appropriate penalty by risk of further breach when a key purpose of sentence is to promote compliance. Likewise, a fine too would be unlikely to be enforceable whilst Ms Fleming is in Turkiye. Whilst her post on 7th January 2026 railed against the costs orders I have made as reducing her children's inheritance from Mr Fleming, they can in fact be enforced directly against Ms Fleming's own property in Northern Ireland. However, a fine cannot in the absence of sequestration/confiscation. Ms Ward does not seek that as it may simply end up leading to the seizure of the children's remaining belongings in Northern Ireland not Ms Fleming's. It is a credit to Ms Ward as a family lawyer that, despite Ms Fleming's behaviour towards her, Ms Ward's focus remains on the children's welfare. If a fine were not enforced against property in Northern Ireland and cannot be enforced against property in Turkiye, it can only be deducted from the estate, again harming the children. By contrast, the impact on the children of a prison sentence for Ms Fleming can be moderated by suspension as mentioned in *Crosland*.
32. In any event, as is clear from *Crosland*, the appropriate approach is to not to impose the simplest or easiest penalty, but to focus on whether a fine is sufficient, or whether the breach is so serious that only a custodial penalty would suffice, before considering its length and whether it should be suspended. I took into account the balancing exercise with Art.10 ECHR when making the injunctions and findings of contempt and whilst I bear Ms Fleming's freedom of expression in mind, that does not mean that only a fine is a sufficient penalty. Indeed, as both Mr Day and Mr Learmouth said, whilst these are civil contempts, they engage some of the public interest in administration of justice as do criminal contempts like *Crosland*. As Mr Learmouth said, in August 2024 (with Ms Fleming's agreement – the only order she has agreed) I appointed Ms Lawrence and Ms Rose as Interim Administrators of the will – and so as officers of the Court. As was said of Trustees in Bankruptcy in *Phillips v Symes* [2004] EWHC 2329 (Ch), such officers of the Court are entitled to the Court's protection and the enforcement of orders for their benefit. If they are abused, that is a direct assault on the administration of justice. Whilst Mr Wood and Ms Ward are not Court-appointed officers, as Mr Day observed, the harassment they have endured from Ms Fleming relates to the probate litigation itself and so also interferes significantly with the administration of justice.
33. However, the impact of Ms Fleming's conduct has not only been on administration of justice, it has had a huge personal impact on all four Claimants, especially Mr Wood and Ms Ward who have endured it for longer and more personally than Ms Lawrence and Ms Rose (although what they have endured is bad enough). This is one of the reasons I read out that appalling post relating to Mr Wood's wife, because this was not simply public criticism of another person involved in litigation. This has always been intensely personal, and Ms Fleming has made it intensely personal, with a hugely personal effect on Mr Wood and Ms Ward which I saw for myself when they were giving evidence before me in November 2024 at the committal proceedings. Mr Day reminded me that in making my findings of contempt in November 2024, I found Ms Fleming's conduct was an 'ferocious online campaign of harassment', deliberately targeted at them. The impact on Ms Lawrence and Ms Rose has also been serious, but as they accept, shorter-lived.

34. A further aggravating feature is the impact on others associated with the Claimants, such as Ms Lawrence and Ms Rose's junior colleagues at VVV, as Ms Lawrence vividly described; but also on Mr Wood's and Ms Ward's colleagues at their respective financial advice and solicitors' firm. Indeed, Ms Fleming's harassment of Ms Ward and her current and Mr Fleming's former colleagues at his firm is particularly bizarre as her own children (but not herself, to her evident frustration) have an interest in it under his will. Ms Fleming has been prepared recklessly to attack and undermine Mr Fleming's legacy, as shown by her social media post I read seeking to dissuade parents facing public law proceedings about their children from instructing the firm. I can only imagine the dismay Mr Fleming would have felt about that conduct had he lived.
35. Therefore, in my judgment, the combination of Ms Fleming's intensive personal abuse and vilification of the Claimants and their colleagues over and again, together with the effect on the administration of justice, means that a fine would not be a sufficient penalty for any of the breaches, relating either to Mr Wood and Ms Ward or to Ms Lawrence and Ms Rose. The seriousness of Ms Fleming's conduct is such that only a custodial sentence can be justified, albeit one measured in days rather than weeks.
36. The only mitigation whilst Ms Fleming has is what I am prepared to accept is her genuine – but utterly wrong-headed – belief that she is acting in the interests of her children to protect their inheritance, even though time and again I have tried to explain to her that her conduct is actually harming her children's inheritance. After two years of dealing with this case, I conclude there is simply no reasoning with Ms Fleming. Indeed, as I said, it was the effect on her children of a prison sentence she mentioned in her posts of 20th and 21st January 2026 explaining what she would not attend today. Consistent with the principles in *Crosland*, the impact on her children of an immediate – or in her absence, better described as unsuspended - prison sentence is both mitigation and justifies the suspension of the sentence of imprisonment which I must impose, which also avoids problems about the enforceability of immediate imprisonment.
37. A suspended sentence is also consistent with the principles of contempt sentencing discussed in *Lovett*: rehabilitation, compliance and punishment. I have no confidence that Ms Fleming will ever come to see the error of her conduct, or indeed that any Court Order can ever effectively secure future compliance. As Mr Day says, that leaves me with punishment. Punishment by imposition of a custodial sentence, albeit suspended, means that there is a risk to Ms Fleming of continuing this behaviour. It is possible she may realise that if she carries on with her harassment, the Court is going to be left with no other option but to activate the custodial sentence and to issue a warrant for her arrest. That probably cannot be executed if she remains in Turkey, but can be in the United Kingdom, including Northern Ireland. It is just possible that may have some deterrent 'Sword of Damocles' effect as deferment of sentence did briefly in early 2025.
38. For those reasons, concurrently in relation to the breaches in relation to Mr Wood and Ms Ward, I impose sentences of 28 days imprisonment suspended for two years. In relation to Ms Lawrence and Ms Rose, Mr Learmonth and indeed Ms Lawrence rightly recognise that what they have had to endure is not the same as what Mr Wood and Ms Ward have had to endure. For the breaches I found proved by them, I would impose a sentence of seven days suspended for one year. That is a shorter period of suspension and sentence, because it is a less serious breach and it is likely that the ongoing dealings with Ms Fleming for Ms Lawrence and her colleagues will be over sooner than I fear for Mr Wood and Ms Ward, who are still involved in Turkish proceedings.

39. Speaking of those Turkish proceedings, where there is a hearing listed on 6th February 2026 as Ms Fleming mentioned in her recent posts, I will direct the transcript of this and my earlier judgments can be sent to the Turkish Court. As Mr Day said, the imposition of a custodial sentence would mark to the Turkish court the seriousness with which the English Court has treated Ms Fleming's conduct. Frankly, that Turkish Court should be aware of Ms Fleming's conduct, since her recent posts suggest she is already starting to level the same sort of wild accusations at participants in those proceedings as she has in the English proceedings (including the lawyers and myself). Indeed, whilst at the moment Ms Fleming may see my Turkish judicial colleagues as her allies in getting what she wants, I fear there is a high risk that if she is displeased with their decisions, she will turn on them as she has on myself and I would want to forewarn them of that risk. I only hope my Turkish brethren are spared my own experience.
40. I sincerely hope that concludes my own involvement in this most challenging case. However, that depends on whether Ms Fleming finally complies with the injunctions.

Epiq Europe Ltd hereby certify that the above is an accurate and complete record of the proceedings or part thereof.

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This transcript has been approved by the Judge