

# **Twenty- first Progress Report of the Litigants in Person Reference Group**

## **(Meeting 10<sup>th</sup> September 2024)**

### Introduction

At its inaugural meeting on 12<sup>th</sup> February 2019, it was agreed that a Progress Report summarising key decisions and activities of the Reference Group (RG) should be published following each meeting. This is the twenty - first of those reports and relates to the meeting held on 10<sup>th</sup> of September 2024.

### **1. Twentieth Progress Report**

This was considered and approved. It is to be added to the RG's website (<https://www.litigant-voice.co.uk>)

### **2. Seminar held on 24 June 2024 – Equal Treatment Bench Book**

This online seminar which focused on the Equal Treatment Bench Book (ETBB) was attended by 70 people. Lady Justice Eleanor King was the keynote speaker with an introduction by Lady Chief Justice Dame Siobhan Keegan (LCJ). The feedback was very positive with the event regarded as very beneficial.

It was noted by the RG that the ETBB had been revised and updated in July [link to ETBB- [Equal Treatment Bench Book \(July 2024\) \(judiciary.uk\)](#)]. It was noted that, although the ETBB is guidance only, it is nonetheless a very important document for the judiciary. It was therefore agreed that the RG should write to the LCJ asking her to promote the revised ETBB with the judiciary and other stakeholders.

### **3. External Engagement**

#### Annual Meeting with the Lady Chief Justice

In her address at the opening of the legal year on 5 September 2024, the LCJ announced she was establishing a judicial working group, to explore the current Family Court system and make recommendations for improvements and reform.

It was agreed that the RG's annual meeting with the LCJ should be arranged once the scope of the judicial working group is confirmed and any potential opportunity for the RG to input becomes clearer.

## Economy Assembly Committee Meeting – 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2024

The Chair indicated that, if invited to attend, he would be prepared to speak at an Economy Assembly Committee meeting on 23 October looking at Industrial Tribunals and support for personal litigants.

### Estate Strategy Working Group

It was noted that there have been no further meetings of the Estate Strategy Working Group since the last meeting of the RG.

### McKenzie Friends Practice Direction

It was noted that this has now been published and can be accessed at the link below [Practice Note 03-12 \(Revised 7 June 2024\) - McKenzie Friends.pdf](#)

### Civil Legal Aid Review

It was agreed that it would be beneficial to seek a separate RG meeting with the Minister, preferably once the outcomes of the Civil Legal Aid Review consultation are known.

## **4. Other developments**

### UU School of Law Update

It was noted that work between the Law Society and Ulster University is ongoing. Workshops are planned for October/November with a fictionally created case scenario being taken forward by a legal representative and a litigant in person. The aim is to work through the issues as the fictional case progresses and based on the results, develop guidelines that all parties can sign up to. These guidelines would then form part of the case bundle. It was agreed that this is a potentially important and groundbreaking initiative in this jurisdiction.

## **5. AOB**

### Law Society Website

Concern was raised about the Law Society website as the list of services noted for law firms appears to be out-of-date. In response, it was confirmed that a new website is in development. The Law Society representative indicated that he is happy to highlight any issues with the developers of the new website that the RG wishes to raise.

### Employment Tribunal Research

It was reported that the Department for the Economy is considering research into dealing with disabled applicants in Employment Tribunal cases. This research will be discussed with the Law Centre and UU. It was confirmed that Disability Action is pushing for the research to reach as broad a range of disabled people as possible.