

Twenty-third Progress Report of the Litigants in Person Reference Group

(Meeting 19th February 2025)

Introduction

At its inaugural meeting on 12th 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-third of those reports and relates to the meeting held on 19th February 2025.

1. Twenty- second Progress Report

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

2. Presentation on the proposed Webex Solution (NICTS)

Ruth Moore Head of Digital Modernisation NICTS gave a detailed presentation on the NICTS move from Sightlink to Webex. Use of Sightlink is being discontinued from December 2025 as it does not provide sufficient administrative functions and has limited features. Webex has been chosen as the replacement, and it will be deployed across NICTS by the end of October 2025.

The presentation was followed by a Q&A during which a number of specific concerns were raised relating to various aspects of accessibility. RM agreed to come back to the RG with responses to those specific issues.

The RG also expressed its support of online hearings and asked to be kept updated on the rollout generally.

3. External Engagement

Meeting with Justice Minister

It was noted that the Justice Minister had been unavailable to attend today's meeting but that it was hoped she would attend the next meeting (May 2025).

Invitation to meet the Minister for Communities

It was noted that the Chair has been invited to a meeting with the Economy Minister in March 2025 regarding personal litigants in Industrial Tribunals. All agreed that the invitation should be accepted.

Themis Programme Meeting held on 13 December 2024

Three members of the RG attended this meeting. It was a productive meeting with the emphasis within the programme on 'digital first.' There is to be online tracking of cases, vulnerable groups will be catered for, and the programme is to run parallel to the modernising of the court estate. Access to Causeway is outside the remit of the Themis programme.

It was noted by the RG that access to ICOS is currently unavailable to litigants in person and it is hoped this online solution will address the disparity that this currently causes. The issue of CJSM access, which restricts litigants in person accessing documents at the same time as other participants in the proceedings, was also highlighted. It was agreed these matters should be raised at any future engagement on Themis.

LCJ Consultation on Vulnerable Parties and Witnesses

The draft response that had been circulated to RG members was discussed and a number of amendments/additions were agreed in light of that discussion.

4. Other developments

UU School of Law Update

It was noted that the draft Charter is to be launched at Law Society House on 18th March 2025 and that all members of the Reference Group are most welcome to attend.

Law Society Website

An update was provided on the work to the Law Society website. Although it was confirmed by the Law Society that accessibility standards have been met, it was

agreed that it would be useful and important for the RG to provide any suggestions it has for further improvements in order to maximise access for all and model best practice.