

# Twentieth Progress Report of the Litigants in Person Reference Group (Meeting 11<sup>th</sup> June 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 twentieth of those reports and relates to the meeting held on 11<sup>th</sup> June 2024.

## **1. Nineteenth Progress Report**

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

## **2. External Engagement**

### Estate Strategy Working Group

At the meeting of the Estate Strategy Working Group held 30 April 2024 NICTS sought information on any user surveys of which the RG is aware in relation to the experiences of litigants in person. It was agreed to refer them to surveys published on the Scottish Legal Aid Board website.

### Consultation Responses

#### *1. McKenzie Friends Practice Direction Consultation*

It was noted that the final draft of the Practice Direction had taken onboard some of the comments contained in the RG's response to the consultation. However, the recommendation that all parties should be courteous to the courts, rather than just McKenzie Friends, had not been accepted. [ Following the meeting, a final version of the Practice Direction was subsequently provided to the RG secretariat and shared with the RG members- [Practice Note 03-12 \(Revised 7 June 2024\) - McKenzie Friends \(Civil and Family Courts\).pdf \(judiciaryni.uk\)](#)].

#### *2. Civil Legal Aid Review Consultation*

It was noted that the Civil Legal Aid Review is ongoing with three questionnaires issued. DOJ reported that it is hoped that options for the Minister's consideration on Modernisation would be ready in September/October 2024. It was agreed that the RG should do a consolidated response to the questionnaires and that any draft

response would be brought back to the RG for consideration before being submitted. It was also indicated by DoJ that once initial analysis of responses is complete the intention is to share the analysis with stakeholders prior to any changes to policy.

A question was also raised as to whether the questionnaires would reach enough interested groups, particularly those dealing with vulnerable people. It was agreed that those leading the review would be asked to contact the RG to discuss what further groups could be added to the list of consultees.

### DOJ Update

It was noted that the first meeting of the new Stakeholder Reference Group (referred to in the RG meeting on 26<sup>th</sup> March 2024) had just taken place with the Equal Opportunities Forum still to hold its inaugural meeting.

### Meeting with British Association of Social Workers (BASW) and Registered Intermediaries (RIs)

BASW has indicated its willingness to attend a meeting with the RG. It was therefore agreed that an invitation be extended for the September meeting.

Following a suggestion from one of those present who had a beneficial experience of RIs, it was agreed that it would also be worthwhile to invite a representative of the RIs to an RG meeting to speak about the role. DoJ agreed to provide a short briefing paper on the scheme by way of background.

### **3. Internal Sub-group (work planning)**

The RG sub-group had met to discuss various issues of interest to the group and were considering how technology could be used to overcome hurdles faced by litigants in person. They would be meeting again in the coming weeks, and it was agreed they would prepare a paper on their work for discussion at a future RG meeting.

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### **4. Seminar – Equal Treatment Bench Book**

It was confirmed that the online seminar would be held on Monday 24 June, Lady Justice Eleanor King is to be the keynote speaker with the introduction to the event by the Lady Chief Justice. It was agreed another panel member would be beneficial, especially a Litigant in Person. [The revised and updated Equal Treatment Bench Book can be found via this link- [Equal Treatment Bench Book \(July 2024\)](#) ([judiciary.uk](http://judiciary.uk))]

## **5. Other developments**

### UU School of Law Update

It was reported that UU's work with the Law Society on a Code of Conduct is ongoing with the overall aim to develop a Charter. It was agreed to keep the RG informed of developments as and when appropriate.

### Terms of Reference

It was noted that the review of the RG Terms of Reference is ongoing, and the draft revised document will be brought back to RG for consideration.