

Thirteenth Progress Report of the Litigants in Person Reference Group (Meeting 27th September 2022)

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 thirteenth of those reports and relates to the meeting held on 27th September 2022.

1. Twelfth 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

Engagement with the Judicial Studies Board

It was confirmed that the Secretary to the Judicial Studies Board (JSB) has accepted an invitation to attend the RG meeting in December 2022. It will be an opportunity for the RG to hear about the work of the JSB and to feedback on the work of the RG and the experiences of Litigants in Person in the court system.

3. Courts' Modernisation Programme

Royal Courts of Justice Focus Group

In July 2022 the first meeting of the RCJ Focus Group took place at which the RG was represented by one of its LiP members. The Focus Group had discussed plans to improve the mechanical and electrical infrastructure of the RCJ and, where possible, to reconfigure internal spaces. There were many stakeholders present at the July meeting. Amongst the items discussed were the provision of meeting rooms and a 'quiet' room and more effective ways to alert parties to last minute changes of venue for hearings. All of these are potentially beneficial to Litigants in Person. It was

also suggested by the RG that the RCJ Project Team should also be asked to build in audit exercises as the changes roll out to ensure that they are effective and enhance service delivery.

The RG will continue to be represented at future meeting of the RCJ Focus Group and it is hoped that a sub-group from the RG will have a separate meeting with the Project Team in the near future to focus on the RG's particular issues.

6. Miscellaneous

Family Law Information and Pathfinder Tool (UU)

It was noted that resources have now been secured for three years to maintain this important tool.

There was discussion on take up of the Pathfinder. It was reported early indications are that many people are coming across the Pathfinder by searching as opposed to being signposted to it. The more signposting from trusted sources the better as there is a tendency for people to regard anything hosted by UU is primarily for students. More work will be required on this, with which the RG may be able to assist.

NISRA Research on Remote/hybrid Hearings

It was noted that the result of the NISRA-led research on remote/hybrid hearings is expected to be available shortly.

Assembly Question

The Assembly Question to the Justice Minister on work underway to support litigants in person in court and tribunal settings had been discussed at the RG meeting on 27th September. The Minister's response can be found at the link below.

<http://aims.niassembly.gov.uk/questions/printquestionssummary.aspx?docid=374319>