

HIGH COURT REFORM PROGRAMME BOARD
TRAINING AND COMMUNICATIONS PLANNING GROUP
NOTE OF MEETING HELD AT ST. ANDREW'S HOUSE

ON THURSDAY, 19 AUGUST 2004

Present:

Wilma Dickson, JD
Emma Knox, COPFS
Paul Smart, JD
Tom Fyffe, JD
John Scott, SoSA

Gerry Brown, Law Society
Anne Keenan, Law Society
Iona Ritchie, Law Society
Allan Finlayson, SCS

1.1 Apologies were received from Derek Ogg, Chairman of the Criminal Bar Association, Peter Gray, Faculty of Advocates, Ruairaidh Macniven, LPPO and Norman Dowie, SCS.

Minutes of Meeting of 16 June 2004

2.1 The Minutes were approved.

Matters Arising

Arrangements for the launch event on 4 October

3.1 After discussion, it was proposed that the programme be revised as follows:

- ◆ The speakers from COPFS, The Faculty of Advocates, the Law Society of Scotland and Victim Support Scotland would be asked to speak for 10 minutes only;
- ◆ There will be a question and answer session after the four have spoken, rather than questions after each individual speech;
- ◆ The speakers will be asked if they wish to take the questioning themselves, or to have another representative of their organisation do so;
- ◆ They will be asked to provide a summary of their speech for circulation, in an attempt to avoid duplication;
- ◆ An approach will be made to Colin Imrie about having someone on the panel to answer questions on legal aid;
- ◆ An approach will be made to the various press offices involved to ensure that a common approach can be formulated for the event as regards press queries etc.

3.2 Wilma Dickson will contact the speakers with these proposals to check that they are in agreement, and will also contact the press office. When all has been agreed, a revised version of the programme will be circulated, and posted onto the website.

3.3 It was agreed that no delegate packs would be issued, or badges provided.

Road Shows

4.1 A discussion took place about whether the road shows should be all embracing, or split into two events, one for the High Court reform programme, and one covering the vulnerable witness provisions. The meeting agreed that two events would be preferable, for the following reasons:

- ◆ A joint event might lasting several hours might be rather too much for practitioners attending after having already done a day's work;
- ◆ The vulnerable witness event might lose out if it commenced at 3.30pm., due to many people still being at work and unable to attend;
- ◆ More people would be likely to attend an evening event; and
- ◆ The split timing will dovetail better as regards the time scales for the introduction of the two components (arrangements for the introduction of the vulnerable witness provisions are proceeding about 2–3 months behind the High Court reform programme). It is more likely that guidance material for the vulnerable witness provisions will be available if the events for this can be held in the New Year.

The link between the two areas should be closely stressed, and participants invited to 'sign up' for both.

4.2 The High Court events will be held in November/December, with the vulnerable witness road shows following on during January–March 2005. Both will take place as evening sessions. Update will arrange the programme, and contact participating organisations to ascertain the names of their speakers and what they propose to cover. They will come back to the group with a finalised programme for approval.

4.3 It was also agreed that Update would issue feedback questionnaires at the events which sought not only views on the training received, but on further training which would be essential/desirable before the new system is introduced. This would enable the Group at its next meeting in January to consider whether further training should be planned and delivered on an inter – agency basis.

4.4 Final arrangements for the launch event and the road shows would be cleared in correspondence, unless there are major differences of view which necessitate a further meeting.

Training events for preliminary hearings Joint training events for judges and practitioners

5.1 The Law Society is supportive of the approach made by the Faculty of Advocates to the Judges as regards the latter being involved in training events, and will write to Lord Macfadyen along those lines.

Internal staff training initiatives

6.1 A training group has been established by SCS to consider what needs to be done regarding implementation of the High Court reform programme and work on this is already well underway. Training will be provided on the use of the new electronic diary, and events will also be held to give staff guidance on the legislative provisions.

6.2 A similar group has been set up by COPFS, and a programme of two day events has been arranged for the period October –December 2004. These will cover High Court issues and, in particular, the protocol on disclosure of evidence that is currently being developed. Many staff from around the country will attend these events and information will be cascaded downwards to those who do not attend.

Act of adjournal and transitional provisions

7.1 The Lord Justice General has indicated that he proposes to issue the draft act of adjournal, a paper on court programming and a draft practice note to practitioners for comment in September.

7.2 It was hoped that the transitional provisions could be finalised by the end of this month and approved by October. The Law Society expressed the hope that sufficient time would be available for comment before the provisions were laid before parliament.

Date of Next meeting.

8.1 The group provisionally agreed to hold one further meeting on 19 January 2005 at 2.00pm in St Andrew's House. At that meeting it will consider feedback from the launch event and roadshows and decide whether any further training or information should be provided on an inter – agency basis.

ALLAN FINLAYSON

JD Secretariat

August 2004.