Notes and actions of the EAG meeting held at High Court of Justiciary, Saltmarket building, Glasgow on 21st February 2013 between 10.00 and 13.00hrs.

1. **Arrival & Coffee**
2. **Welcome and apologies**

Attending:

Colin Lee - CEMVO Scotland, Chair

Gordon Ellis – Consultant to SCS for SCS Field and Court management issues.

Daniel Donaldson - Consultant for LBGT equality and human rights

Niki Kandirikirira - Engender Scotland

Rohini Sharma Joshi – Trust Housing Association Ltd

Brenda Mackay – JustSign Sign Language Interpreting Service  
Suzanne Munday - MECOPP

Stephen Coulter - Scottish Court Service (SCS)

Nicola Dean - SCS (notes).

Colin Lee welcomed the members of the advisory group.

1. **Matters arising from the 15th November 2012 meeting**

1. Stephen advised the group that the members of the LGBT group were struggling on what was the purpose of the group. The group were having difficulty to attract new members as there did not appear to be a huge wave of enthusiasm amongst staff to join. Daniel commented that the group members were asked to create a business plan and that the members felt it was too early in the process to be undertaking this type of work. Daniel would attend the next meeting.

**AP Feb13/001** – Stephen to attend the next meeting of the LGBT group in April 2013 and both he and Daniel will report back to the group with an update.

1. Niki attended a meeting with Gillian Mawdsley from the Judicial Institute of Scotland this week and has been asked to provide training to members of the Judiciary. Niki got really positive feedback on the training that she recently provided to Justices of the Peace. Stephen informed the group that Sheriff Welsh and the Judicial Institute were looking into the possibility of including training on forced marriages into the Judicial training for this year. Colin said that CEMVO were also planning on providing training to members of the Judiciary in the coming months.
2. Nicola gave an update to the group on the SCS staff disability group. The group’s remit has now been agreed and there will also be disability contact team.

**AP Feb13/002** – Nicola to speak to the chair of the staff disability group to find out if any members were experiencing difficulties with getting time away from their office/ place of work to attend meetings.

1. The group discussed the progress made with OPG regarding powers of attorney.

**AP Feb13/003** – Colin to contact OPG to discuss an engagement event/ training in respect of Powers of Attorney and Guardianships.

1. Stephen informed the group that disabled access to Perth Sheriff Court had not yet been improved but an architect has visited the site and a meeting to discuss his findings will take place in the coming weeks. Suzanne stated that there were organisations who would undertake audits on accessibility to premises. Stephen said that Capability Scotland had undertaken an audit of Parliament House, Jedburgh and Kilmarnock Sheriff Courts.
2. Stephen said that he was keen to get another person representing disability issues to join the group as Elspeth has left. The group provided some suggestions on organisations/ persons who could be invited to join the group. Daniel asked if SCS were any further forward in locating someone who may be interested in joining the group representing age related issues. Stephen stated that he has contacted Young Scot about the group and they seem interested in joining.
3. Daniel asked about accessibility to services and the SCS internet and publications were discussed. The group were in agreement that these need to more accessible to persons who do not understand English as the prompts to obtain publications in other languages are all in English. Suzanne said that proposed literature should be proof-read/ audited by the SCS groups and/or EAG. Brenda said that staff need to be reminded that when documents/ literature are to be available as translated documents then they should be translated using sign-language as well.

**AP Feb13/004-** Stephen to invite the Head of Communications to attend a future meeting of the EAG to discuss the issue of translated literature.

**AP Feb13/005 –** Vice- Chair role to be discussed at the next meeting

1. Stephen reminded the group that he had emailed them all about the May meeting. He has asked for it to be moved from 16th to 23rd May, still in Dundee. Stephen said that any group members who require overnight accommodation should contact George Malone.
2. **Interpreter Oaths**

Brenda spoke about an issue that was encountered by a lip speaker who attended court a few weeks ago. The lip speaker is a devout Christian and had stated that they could not “swear to God” during her oath and would rather take an affirmation. The lip speaker had three appointments and at the first two appointments there was no difficulty with her request; however at the third appointment, the Sheriff refused to deviate and the interpreter was asked to leave the court which resulted in no interpreter being available for the accused. Brenda contacted Stephen about this and he contacted the Sheriffdom Business Manager for that area and he will speak to all concerned.

**AP Feb13/006** – Stephen to pass Brenda the contact details of the Sheriffdom Business Manager undertaking the investigation.

Brenda also raised the issue about the variation of oaths that are administered by the members of the Judiciary across the country. The question was also raised if there was an affirmation for interpreters.

**AP Feb13/007 –** Court Services Branch to look into affirmations for interpreters (that does not include the word, “swear”).

1. **Mainstreaming Equality Report**

The group thought that the report reads very well. Gordon commented that it was nice to see in black and white the progress that has been made in recent years. Stephen asked the group who the mainstreaming report should be aimed at. The group stated that it should be aimed at stakeholders, equality groups, justice partners and Scottish Ministers.

Niki said that the “Purpose” section should talk about commitment and not just compliance.

**AP Feb13/008 –** Colin to produce a foreword for the report

**AP Feb13/009 –** Stephen to finalise report and send to the EAG for review prior to publication.

Suzanne raised issues with the SCS Equality outcomes one and two. She said that outcome one was an activity and outcome two is a duty. Niki provided a suggestion on how outcome three could be expanded to incorporate staff. The group all agreed that the sentiments are correct but the wording for the first two objectives should be tweaked.

**AP Feb13/010 –** Stephen to tweak the equality outcomes and send to the EAG for review prior to publication.

**AP Feb13/011 –** Stephen to update the SCS Equality Action Plan

1. **AOB**
   1. **People Committee attendance**

Stephen confirmed that he had spoken with Alan Swift and arranged for Colin to attend the next meeting on 15th April. Suzanne asked for some background on the People Committee. Colin said it may also be nice for a few of the EAG members to attend the People Committee.

It was also agreed that there requires to be more linkage/ communication/ interaction between the EAG, People Committee and the Board.

**AP Feb13/012 –** Stephen to put a paper up to the People Committee (along with the mainstreaming report) explaining the background to the EAG.

**AP Feb13/013 –** Stephen to find out if there are enough spaces at the meeting on 15th April for 3 EAG members to attend.

* 1. **Working with other justice organisations**

Stephen informed the group that Scottish Government’s justice department is trying to co-ordinate equality activity. He said that he has also spoken with Ruth McQuaid from Crown Office, Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS) about joint community outreach programs.

* 1. **SCS Disability Group**

Nicola gave the group an update on the staff disability group earlier on in the meeting.

* 1. **SCS senior management changes**

Stephen updated the group on changes that have occurred at senior management level since the last EAG meeting. Eric McQueen has been appointed the new Chief Executive and will continue to be an equality champion. Stephen will be moving to work under the Chief Executive but has assured the group that he will still have Equality in his portfolio. Cliff Binning has come back to SCS from secondment to Scottish Government and is currently holding the post that Eric McQueen previously held which will be boarded shortly. There will be also be a recruitment exercise for a new Chief Financial Officer.

* 1. **CEDAW**

Niki informed the group that Engender and EHRC are hosting a joint seminar called, “Challenging discrimination against women: Using CEDAW to hold Government to account” on 18th March 2013 with a guest speaker from the UN CEDAW Committee.

* 1. **Strasbourg Court**

Daniel gave the group an update on the recent rulings from the European Court of Human Rights regarding four UK Christians who had claimed to have suffered workplace discrimination because of their faith. Only one of the cases were upheld; therefore you cannot discriminate against a person by refusing to provide a service on the basis of faith.

Summary of action Points for this meeting:

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