



Agenda:

Media Working Group meeting

09 December 2019 - 16:00 – 18:00

Venue: Conference room 1A - 102 Petty France, London, SW1H 9AJ

Dial in details:

UK Freephone:

Participant passcode:

	Time	Item	Lead	Detail
1.	16:00	Welcome	-----	Welcome the group members
2.	16:05	Action log	-----	Review ongoing actions
3.	16:15	Transparency in the Family Courts: Guidance by the President of the Family Division	-----	Questions session about the reviewed Family Court guidance
4.	16:30	Regional Roundtable events	-----	Ian Murray to report back on Regional Roundtable events which took place throughout 2019
5.	16:35	HMCTS media guidance to staff	-----	Annual review of the Media guidance
6.	16:45	Supporting staff guidance	-----	Review of draft Supporting staff guidance
7.	16:55	HMCTS Protocol	-----	Review of draft, updated HMCTS Protocol
8.	17:15	High-Profile cases Guidance	-----	Review of draft, updated 'High-Profile cases guidance'
9.	17:35	Next steps/coms for updated guidance	-----	Discussion regarding updated guidance – our next steps and communication approach
10.	17:40	A new specialised court reporter module developed at Bournemouth University	-----	Discussion about the new court reporter module being developed at Bournemouth University and ongoing research into the court reporting deficit and what affect this is having on local communities
11.	17:55	AOB	All	



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09 December – 16:00 – 18:00

Venue: 102 Petty France, London, SW1H 9AJ

Members:

Attendees:

Apologies:

Actions

The group agreed the following actions

AP1 - HMCTS will ask for further input from the group members with respect to the format of the published SJP court lists data.

AP2 - -- will whether there has been a delay in the transparency review.

AP3 - HMCTS (-----) will look at this point again and look whether there is a scope for adding a managerial level to determine whether the conviction is spent and only spent convictions older than 6 months would go to judges for determination.

**AP4 - -- to update the accreditation section and agree wording with -----
----.**

AP5 - -- to find out what is being done by MoJ in the area of court fees.

1. Welcome and Intro

-- welcomed the group and introductions were made. -- informed the members that the function of secretariat for the group will be moved to HMCTS Communications team and the Terms of Reference and the membership of the group will be refreshed in the new year. Suggestions for new members are welcomed.

Actions from previous meeting were discussed. -- provided group with an update about the Rules Committee meeting which took place on 9th November and amendments to Criminal Procedure Rules which were discussed during the committee meeting to reflect the provision for the process for obtaining case mitigation information by media. -- updated the group about the progress on the CTSC staff training and the proposed visit by ----- to the CTSC in ----- . This will take place in the early part of next year. He also updated the group about progress with the development of a specific pending list of SJP case for the media which will contain more detailed information regarding cases such as full name, address and date of birth of the defendant. The Crime Programme have agreed to start work on this and we would welcome the group's views on what format this data would be most beneficial in – RADAR is proposing EXCEL but PDF (as it is also searchable) would meet the criteria for media. **AP1 - HMCTS will ask for further input from the group members with respect to the format of the published SJP court lists data.**

2. Transparency in the Family Courts - Guidance by the President of the Family Division:

There were no questions in relation to the published Guidance as to reporting in the Family Courts but members wanted to know more about the Transparency in Family Courts review carried out by the President. **AP2 – -- will confirm whether there has been a delay in the transparency review.**

3. Regional Roundtable events:

-- updated the group about the Regional Roundtable events which took place at various locations nationwide throughout 2019. These were very successful and brought the regional courts and the regional media together. The events highlighted that the regional centres found the HMCTS media guidance for staff very useful but also various local practices which will be picked up at the end of the events, summarised and included in the media guidance.

4. HMCTS media guidance to staff and Supporting staff guidance:

The group discussed the draft HMCTS media guidance to staff and supporting jurisdictional guides which were shared with the group prior the meeting. -- confirmed that the guidance will be published in the early part of next year (February) and we would like to get the group's thoughts and approval before that happens.

-- summarised the changes in comparison with the previous (currently published) version which has been suggested by staff and media representatives. These are mainly areas where more clarity was required. The main changes include the split of the high-profile cases from the HMCTS media guidance into a separate sub-guide, youth courts, foreign media and adding more information about accreditation of journalists

Next step will be to collate suggestions and views from members on improvements to this draft version, followed by further internal updates in the upcoming months.

Proposed amendments, mainly focusing on Criminal Courts jurisdictional guide, raised by the media group members at the meeting included:

Section on court register and court lists:

Wording in this section currently suggests that there is a link between information for cases going from Magistrate's Courts to Crown Courts and that media aware of cases in Magistrate Courts will also know about these cases if transferred to Crown Court – this is not the case and it won't be useful to make the Crown Court staff think that the media already have the background to cases when they reach Crown Court.

Historic cases – 6 months and older:

The group discussed how the details of historic cases are currently provided to media (via MoJ Press Office) and the change in the Criminal Courts guidance which is that it is going to be a judicial function. This is supported by Criminal Procedures Rules and advice from Legal teams and the Judicial Office. The group members highlighted that it might mean that obtaining the required information may take longer than under the current provisions. The discussion also covered offences which are not spent after the 6-month period.

AP3 - HMCTS (-----) will look at this point again and look whether there is a scope for adding a managerial level to determine whether the conviction is spent and only spent convictions older than 6 months would go to judges for determination.

Jury site visits:

The group discussed the extent to which general, long-distance photography of jury site visits is permitted and examples were given where this has happened in the past.

HMCTS (specially-----) agreed to clarify the application of the general prohibition under s41 of the CJA 1925 applied in these circumstances, and reflect the same in the guidance.

Charges and names:

The group wanted to know whether the guidance can be amended to say that the 'full name and full charge, including particulars of case' is available to media on request. -- confirmed that this overlaps with HMCTS protocol and that anything in this guidance should reflect processes that are already in existence.

5. HMCTS Protocol

The discussion mainly focused on accreditation of press/media which are currently identified by The UK Press Card. This is still reflected in the updated HMCTS Protocol as such and the UK Press card poster link is also imbedded within the document.

This was followed by a discussion about whether there are any provisions for foreign media and international press reporting, which will not have the UK Press Card and are not bound by the same reporting rules as the UK media/press, and how are these provisions going to be reflected in the Protocol. This will need to be discussed further. The group members also suggested that HMCTS could consider a process where the courts will also have their own accreditation for regular journalists, which would be especially useful for longer lasting cases.

The group also discussed that the position for 'student journalist' and their reporting needs to be made clear in the Protocol and any guidance. **AP4 - -- to update the accreditation section and agree wording with ----- and -----.**

6. High-Profile cases guidance

The group discussed the draft High-Profile cases guidance and proposed amendments/points which need to be clarified further:

Operational media notes paragraph and restrictions on use of electronics:

Needs to be clarified further.

Public gallery and use of electronics:

A further clarification is needed with respect to media/press sitting in the public gallery (due to press seating areas being full) and their right to behave as though they were in the well of the court (e.g. use electronic devices).

Managing media outside the court:

The line in bold font and underlined, relevant to family courts, will be amended to be in normal font and the line about vulnerable court users should be removed as not relevant in this context.

7. Next steps/coms for updated guidance:

-- confirmed that next step will be to collate suggestions and views from members on improvements to these draft versions, followed by further internal updates in the upcoming months. The second drafts will be then provided to members to review again in the early part of next year, before being published in February.

-- also confirmed that HMCTS is also working on a simplified version of the guidance for daily use by the operational staff. This will include CTSC's staff.

8. A new specialised court reporter module developed at

-- introduced ----- and her colleague from ----- who have been developing a new specialised court reporter module.

----- then talked about the projects piloted in the -----, one of which is 'Boot Camp' focused on upskilling qualified journalist who have not reported in a while and also on non-qualified journalist to help them get the required qualifications. They will also help journalists to reach the required criteria for court reporting. Other options are (if can't take part in boot camp) to upskill via an online learning portal. They are also working closely with colleagues in the US and run research on their court reporting modelling. These projects then can be used by other universities if successful.

Next steps are to keep the pilots sustainable and bidding for to DCMS's Pilot News Fund.

-- confirmed that HMCTS supports their projects and encouraged them to bid for NESTA funds.

9. AOB

The group members appreciated that HMCTS took their comments from previous meetings on board and acted on them and they are grateful for changes that have been implemented so far.

As a topic for future discussions, they would like HMCTS to review the Civil Procedure Rules, particularly the court fees for court documents. -- confirmed that HMCTS is already looking in to this and will be seeking input from the group members at some point next year. **AP5 - -- to find out what is being done by MoJ in the area of court fees.**

-- finished with thanking everyone for attending.

ENDS