

Sentencing Council

CONFIDENCE AND COMMUNICATIONS SUB GROUP 4 June 2015 - Meeting Notes

Attendees

Council:	Michael Caplan, (Chair), Lynne Owens, Julian Goose, Jill Gramann
OSC:	Nick Mann, Emma Marshall (for A&R team update only), Helen Stear, Anthony Walker, Gareth Sweny
Other:	Marc Birch from <i>Bang</i> joined for the item on digital work

Aims of meeting

1. To discuss revised terms of reference for the sub group.
2. To agree monitor progress against actions listed in the action log.
3. To update on digital work including the members' area and the MCSG.
4. To seek input from the group regarding an opportunity to present to the police.
5. To provide an update from the Analysis and Research team on current priorities.

Opening

Michael updated the group on membership and announced that Martin Graham has agreed to join the group from the next meeting.

1. Terms of Reference

The sub group members agreed that a brief update should be given to Council after every sub group meeting to inform the full Council of our recent activities. Group members also agreed to take on a new role to provide assurance that the communications budget and risks are being reviewed regularly and managed effectively by the office. The Head of Communications has agreed to report to the group on expenditure and risk at every meeting and raise any issues of concern with them. The sub group also agreed to assist with finding and making contacts and networks in areas where they have influence. They also agreed that the frequency of

meetings can be reduced and a discussion was held regarding the best day and time for meetings, with 9am on Mondays being agreed as the best time for everyone.

Action: Helen will circulate dates on the basis of this discussion, for the remainder of 2015 and the whole of 2016 and will confirm these dates once we have heard back from all members.

Action: Helen will circulate the agreed Terms of Reference.

2. Action Log

Helen briefly highlighted four items on the action log where there had been recent activity:

- A **web survey** would be run on the public-facing website as soon as the members' area has been launched. We will be gathering feedback on the site to ensure visitors are able to find what they need as easily as possible. As with previous surveys, we will then make revisions to the site based on the feedback.
- An email from the Chairman has gone to all 130 **new MPs** in England and Wales introducing them to the work of the Council and encouraging them to get involved with the aim of establishing a positive relationship with the new intake from the outset.
- A bid has been submitted to *Good Housekeeping* magazine proposing a feature article on Heather Hallett – we have had a positive response and are developing our plans as part of our efforts to reach more **women** with information about sentencing.
- We have met with Fujitsu, the suppliers of the proposed **stakeholder tool** and are currently testing Microsoft Office 365 which may have the capability to be customised to meet our needs, namely to be able to store all our contacts centrally and sort them by the topic of their interest, their role, their interest in our work, the nature of our relationship, record what they have said or how they have responded to any consultations and so forth. This will enable us to maintain better relationships and produce more targeted communications.

3. Digital work

Members' area

Gareth gave an update on the members' area. He explained that the content had been updated as far as possible, and that it would be continuously updated. The site

had been made live since the last meeting. He explained that he had added the sub group papers to the page for this meeting for completion, and confirmed that in future sub group papers would be provided via the members' area. There had been some feedback that it was important to be able to open annexes to meeting papers at the same time as the covering paper. He showed members a new format for presenting meeting papers in response to this; a new table had been created which showed a PDF of each annex alongside the main paper. He had also found out that it was possible for annexes to be added as separate attachments within a PDF of the meeting paper, and members were able to test this by viewing a PDF where this had been prepared.

Action: Gareth will continue to liaise with individual members to ensure they have papers in a format which works for them.

MCSG

Helen demonstrated where we are with the development of the digital guidelines for magistrates. She showed the speed, accuracy and flexibility of the search function and all agreed that this was working well. She then showed how two guidelines had been presented on screen – one (animal cruelty) is a guideline originally published by a predecessor body, the Sentencing Guidelines Council, and one (GBH) is a newer guideline published by the Council. Due to this difference, the formats are different and Jill pointed out that perhaps they need to be more closely aligned with the step by step approach being made more apparent on the SGC guidelines. Jill also suggested that the left hand navigation was potentially distracting when looking at guidelines.

Action: Helen and Marc to discuss and consider these issues.

4. Police

Anthony gave some more background about the constitution of the Homicide Working Group and the event itself. He also thanked Simon Brough for bringing about this speaking opportunity. Julian Goose is unable to speak at the event but we are hopeful that Tim Holroyde will be able to speak. Lynne described the Homicide Working Group as a highly influential and positive body. She said that the most effective approach to take will be to focus on how the police can build cases more effectively so they can better serve the public. Lynne made the point that police don't always understand sentencing remarks and this can be frustrating. Looking at the

Sexual Offences guideline a year on from its introduction could be a good way to engage, especially in light of the Met Police's recent report into caseload, but the speech should also cover the relevance of victim's personal statements, the timings of guilty pleas and the importance of remorse. The overall tone of the presentation should be to show them what having a better understanding of sentencing will do for them and ask them what they think about sentencing. It should also be clear on how they can get involved in the guideline creation process. Due to the short time slot it was decided that the presentation should limit its interactive element to questions at the end.

Action: Anthony to secure a speaker for the event and circulate a draft speech to Lynne and her staff.

5. Analysis and Research update

Emma Marshall provided the group with an update from the Analysis and Research team. She informed the group that the annual Crown Court Sentencing Survey publication would be issued on 25 June, that they were looking at some extra analysis work on guilty pleas, that there was further work to be done on the paper presented to Council in April on the costs of sentencing and that the comms team would be involved in presenting this, social research on youths ongoing, that they were looking at how to gather data in magistrates' courts and finally at evaluating the drugs and theft guidelines from the autumn.