

Sentencing Council

Business Plan **Financial year 2023/24**

Contents

Business Plan	1
Financial year 2023/24	1
Contents	2
Chairman’s introduction	1
Background and membership (as at 1 April 2023)	4
Appointments to the Council	4
Members	4
Sub-groups	6
Objectives	7
Statement of Purpose	8
Statutory duties	8
Strategic objectives 2021-2026	9
Delivering the Sentencing Council’s work	9
Resources	18
Staff headcount (as at 1 April 2023)	18
Budget	18
Annex A: Rationale for the prioritisation of guidelines	19
Annex B: The Office of the Sentencing Council (as at 1 April 2023)	20
Annex C: Sentencing Council Guideline Work Plan – 2023-2024¹ (as at 1 April 2023) ..	21

Sentencing Council

Chairman's introduction

I am pleased to present the Sentencing Council's 10th business plan, setting out the Council's aims for the financial year 2023/24.



This is my first business plan as chairman of the Sentencing Council, a role I took over in August 2022. I would firstly like to pay tribute to my predecessor Lord Justice Holroyde, who was chairman of the Council from 2018 until his appointment as Vice President of the Court of Appeal Criminal Division last year. Under his stewardship the Council has continued to embed sentencing guidelines as a central feature of the criminal justice system. Virtually all major offences seen regularly by the courts now have dedicated guidelines and, with the publication of revised Motoring offence guidelines later this year, all the guidelines produced by the predecessor body, the Sentencing Guidelines Council, will have been updated. Lord Justice Holroyde has also set the Council on a clear direction for the coming years in producing the Council's strategy for 2021-26, which guides the priorities set out in this year's business plan.

In the year 2022/23 we have successfully carried out the projects which were set out in last year's business plan. We have published revisions to the Council's existing guidelines for burglary, terrorism, and sexual offences, and consulted on and published new definitive guidelines for underage sale of knives and revised child cruelty guidelines. We have also consulted on and published the second tranche of annual miscellaneous amendments to guidelines, resulting from updates to the law and feedback on how guidelines are operating.

We have consulted on guidelines for perverting the course of justice and witness intimidation, revised Animal cruelty guidelines, new and revised guidelines for motoring offences, and on a revised overarching guideline for totality. In the last year we have also published research on public perceptions of sentencing, a review of the available research on the effectiveness of different sentencing disposals, sentencing data related to drugs offences, and on equality and diversity in the work of the Sentencing Council.

In the coming year, we will:

- publish definitive revisions to animal cruelty guidelines
- publish new and revised guidelines for motoring offences
- consult on revised guidelines for aggravated vehicle taking
- publish definitive guidelines on perverting the course of justice and witness intimidation

- consult on a revised overarching Imposition guideline
- develop new guidelines for immigration offences and
- consult on guidelines for blackmail and threats to disclose private sexual images, kidnap and false imprisonment offences.

Consultation is a vital aspect of the Council's work, and one which we take very seriously. For guidelines to succeed they must be informed by the knowledge and expertise of those people who have legal or practical experience in the area we are examining, and by the views of those with an interest in our work or in the operation of the wider criminal justice system. We are always grateful to the people and organisations who give their valuable time to contribute to our consultations, and who help us to make improvements before publishing definitive guidelines.

In addition to publishing guidelines, the Council is required to monitor and evaluate their operation and effect. In January 2023 we launched a data collection exercise in all magistrates' courts and all locations of the Crown Court. This six-month study covered 13 specific offences. Any data collection exercise of this kind is an imposition on magistrates and judges. It became apparent as the exercise progressed that it was placing too great a burden on sentencers. Consequently we reduced the number of offences to which the data collection applied. We remain grateful to all those magistrates and judges who provide data in relation their sentences. It is of critical importance to all aspects of the Council's work.

In the coming year we will also continue our evaluation work which will cover looking at guidelines covering bladed articles and offensive weapons, intimidatory offences and breach offences. We will also publish findings from an assessment of the impact of the Imposition guideline and undertake work to review the expanded explanations that accompany some of the guideline factors. This review of the expanded explanations will supplement external work being undertaken on user testing of the guidelines and which will explore how sentencers use and access guidelines in practice.

We will continue this year to develop You be the Judge, an online, interactive guide to sentencing. You be the Judge will use video stories to show the public how sentencing works in magistrates' courts and the Crown Court. We are developing the tool in partnership with the Judicial Office and will be promoting it to teachers for use in schools and to public audiences of all ages.

Throughout the year, we will continue to inform public audiences, including victims, witnesses, offenders and their families, about sentencing and sentencing guidelines by developing content for our website designed to reach non-expert audiences, seeking coverage in the mainstream and specialist media relating to key Council activities and working with other organisations that can help us reach a wider public.

The purpose of publishing our business plan is to make sure that everyone who has an interest in our work is kept informed of developments. The Council's priorities can, and do, change throughout the year and from one year to the next. We have a statutory duty to consider requests from the Lord Chancellor and the Court of Appeal to review the sentencing of particular offences. We may also need to consider

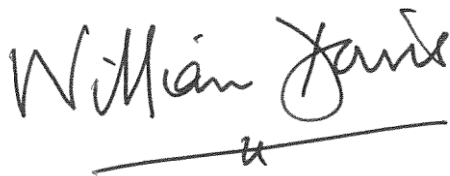
amending our work plan if we are required to undertake work on new or particularly complex areas of sentencing, for example as a result of new legislation.

Subject to other matters arising which may affect our priorities, the current workplan can be seen at Annex C. We will review the plan in the autumn and publish updates, as appropriate, on our website.

There have been a number of changes in personnel on the Council throughout 2022/23. In July 2022, Rosina Cottage KC's tenure on the Council came to an end after two terms. Dr Alpa Parmar served as an academic member on the Council between 2019 and 2022. Maura McGowan KC and HHJ Rebecca Crane left the Council in the first part of 2023, both having served two terms. I would like to thank them all for their service to the Sentencing Council over the years and wish them the very best for the future.

In May 2022, we welcomed Stephen Leake as the district judge representative on the Council, and in July Dr Elaine Freer joined the Council as an academic representative. In August 2022 Richard Wright KC joined the Council to provide the defence community's perspective. Most recently, at the start of 2023 we welcomed Mr Justice Wall as a High Court judge on the Council.

Finally, I would like to pay tribute to the staff of the Office of the Sentencing Council. They are the Council's most valuable resource and I am very proud of the high quality of the work which they produce. We operate within a limited budget and it is testament to the staff's ability and dedication that the Council continues to have the success that it does.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "William James". Below the signature is a horizontal line with a small mark in the center, possibly a flourish or a signature mark.

April 2023

Background and membership (as at 1 April 2023)

The Sentencing Council is an independent, non-departmental public body (NDPB) of the Ministry of Justice (MoJ). The Council was set up by Part 4 of the Coroners and Justice Act 2009 (“the Act”) to promote greater transparency and consistency in sentencing, whilst maintaining the independence of the judiciary. Our primary role is to issue guidelines, which the courts must follow unless it is in the interests of justice not to do so. The Council generally meets 10 times a year; minutes are published on our website.

Appointments to the Council

The Lord Chief Justice, the Right Honourable Lord Burnett of Maldon is President of the Council. In this role he oversees Council business and appoints judicial members, with the agreement of the Lord Chancellor.

The Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice appoints non-judicial members, with the agreement of the Lord Chief Justice.

All appointments are for a period of three years, with the possibility of extending up to a maximum of 10 years. Membership of the Council as of 1 April 2023 is as follows:

Members

The Council comprises eight judicial and six non-judicial members, although there is currently a vacancy for a judicial member following Rebecca Crane’s departure.

Chair: The Right Honourable Lord Justice William Davis

William Davis was appointed as Chairman of the Sentencing Council by the Lord Chief Justice, with the agreement of the Lord Chancellor, with effect from 1 August 2022. He was formerly a judicial member of the Sentencing Council between 2012 and 2015.

William was called to the Bar in 1976. He was appointed an Assistant Recorder in 1992, a Recorder in 1995 and QC in 1998. He was appointed to the Circuit Bench in 2008. During 2009 he was appointed a Deputy High Court Judge (QBD and Admin), a Senior Circuit Judge and Recorder of Birmingham. He was appointed to the High Court Bench in May 2014 and was a Presiding Judge of the Northern Circuit from 2016 to 2019. William was appointed to the Court of Appeal in October 2021.

The Right Honourable Lord Justice Holroyde

Tim Holroyde is a Lord Justice of Appeal and Vice-President of the Court of Appeal (Criminal Division). For many years he practised as a barrister on the Northern Circuit taking silk in 1996. In 2009 he was appointed as a High Court judge, covering a wide range of work including serious criminal cases. He was Course Director of the Judicial College’s Serious Crime Seminar from 2011 to 2015, and judge in charge of the list of terrorism offences from 2016 to 2017, when he was appointed to the Court of Appeal.

He became a member of the Sentencing Council for England and Wales in 2015, and was Chairman between 2018 and 2022.

Her Honour Judge Rosa Dean

Rosa Dean was called to the Bar in 1993. She was appointed as a District Judge (Magistrates' Courts) in 2006, a Recorder in 2009 and a Circuit Judge in 2011. She was appointed to the Sentencing Council on 6 April 2018.

Beverley Thompson OBE

Beverley Thompson has spent over 30 years working in the criminal justice sector initially as a probation officer in London. She was Director for Race, Prisons and Resettlement Services at NACRO for 10 years. She was appointed to the Sentencing Council on 15 June 2018.

Max Hill KC

Max Hill is the Director of Public Prosecutions and head of the Crown Prosecution Service. He was appointed to the Sentencing Council on 1 November 2018.

Diana Fawcett

Diana Fawcett is Chief Executive of Victim Support. She joined the charity as Director of Operations in February 2015 and became Chief Executive in January 2018.

Diana was appointed to the Council on 5 April 2019 and has specific responsibility for promoting the welfare of victims of crime.

Nick Ephgrave QPM

Nick Ephgrave is currently posted to the National Police Chiefs' Council and was previously Assistant Commissioner for Frontline Policing in the Metropolitan Police (Met). He was appointed to that post in March 2020, having previously served as AC for Met Operations and, prior to that, as Chief Constable of Surrey Police. Nick was appointed to the Sentencing Council on 26 May 2020.

Jo King JP

Jo King was appointed to the Sussex Central Bench in 2002. She is currently the lead magistrate on Reform and co-chair of the Magistrates' Engagement Group. She is a member of the Judicial Conduct and Investigations Office disciplinary panels and the Magistrates' Association Board of Trustees. Jo was appointed to the Sentencing Council as the magistrate member on 8 October 2020.

The Honourable Mrs Justice May DBE

Juliet May was called to the Bar by the Inner Temple in 1988, becoming a bencher in 2010. She was appointed a recorder in 2001 and took silk in 2008, being appointed to the Circuit Bench later the same year. She was appointed to the High Court (Queen's Bench Division) in 2015. From 2017-2020 she was a Presiding Judge on the Western Circuit. Dame Juliet was appointed to the Sentencing Council as a High Court member on 8 October 2020.

District Judge (Magistrates' Courts) Stephen Leake

Stephen Leake was called to the Bar by the Middle Temple in 2002 and practiced mainly in criminal law. He was appointed as a Deputy District Judge (Magistrates' Courts) in 2019 and as a District Judge (Magistrates' Courts) in 2021. He is based at Medway Magistrates' Court. Stephen was appointed to the Council as the District Judge member on 23 May 2022.

Dr Elaine Freer

Elaine Freer is a Fellow and College Teaching Officer in law at Robinson College in the University of Cambridge, where she teaches Criminal Law, Criminal Procedure and Evidence, and Criminology, Sentencing and the Penal System, and writes on topics in those areas. She is also a practising barrister at 5 Paper Buildings, where she prosecutes and defends in criminal cases. In 2019 she worked as a Lawyer on the Criminal Team at the Law Commission of England and Wales, involved in the project to reform hate crime laws. Elaine joined the Council as the academic member on 1 July 2022.

Richard Wright KC

Richard Wright was called to the Bar in 1998 and took silk in 2013. He has practised from 6 Park Square in Leeds since 1998 where he has been Head of Chambers since 2013.

Since 2020 he has been Leader of the North Eastern Circuit, leading the professions' response to the Covid-19 emergency and, in 2022, was invited to join the legal team of the UK Covid-19 Inquiry.

Richard was appointed Deputy District Judge (Magistrates' Courts) in 2006, Recorder of the Crown Court in 2012 and Deputy High Court Judge in January 2023. He has been the defence representative on the Sentencing Council since 1 August 2022.

The Honourable Mr Justice Wall

Mark Wall was appointed a High Court Judge in October 2020 having previously been a Circuit Judge based at Birmingham Crown Court. Prior to his appointment to the circuit bench he was a Recorder and Deputy High Court Judge. He was called to the Bar in 1985 and took silk in 2006. He was leader of the Midland Circuit between 2011 and 2014. Mark was appointed to the Sentencing Council as a High Court member on 2 January 2023.

Sub-groups

The Council has sub-groups to provide oversight in three areas: analysis and research, confidence and communication and governance. The sub-groups' roles are mandated by the Council, their membership reflects a broad range of judicial and non-judicial members, and all key decisions are made by the full membership.

Analysis and research: this group advises and steers the analysis and research strategy, including identifying research priorities so that it aligns with the Council's statutory commitments and work plan. Chaired by: Dr Elaine Freer

Confidence and communication: this group advises on and steers the work programme for the Communication team so that it aligns with the Council's statutory commitments and work plan. Chaired by: Her Honour Judge Rosa Dean.

Governance: the Governance sub-group supports the Council in responsibilities for issues of risk, control and governance, by reviewing the comprehensiveness and reliability of assurances on governance, risk management, the control environment and the integrity of financial statements. Independent member: Elaine Lorimer, Chief Executive, Revenue Scotland. Chaired by: Beverley Thompson OBE.

The Council has also established a working group to advise on matters relating to equality and diversity and make sure that the full range of protected characteristics are considered in our work. The group also considers ways in which the Council could engage more effectively with, and take account of the views and perspectives of, representatives of people with protected characteristics, and with offenders and victims. Chaired by: Juliet May.

Where necessary, the Council sets up working groups to consider particular aspects of the development of a guideline or specific areas of business. It also sometimes invites contributions from people who are not members of the Council but who have particular experience and expertise in fields of relevance to the guidelines.

Objectives

Statement of Purpose

The Sentencing Council for England and Wales promotes a clear, fair and consistent approach to sentencing through the publication of sentencing guidelines, which provide clear structure and processes for judges and magistrates, and victims, witnesses, offenders and the public.

Statutory duties

The Council's objectives are informed by our statutory duties under the Act, including:

(Section 120) Publishing draft guidelines and consulting when preparing them (including consulting the Lord Chancellor and Justice Select Committee); publishing definitive guidelines after making necessary amendments.

In preparing guidelines, having regard to:

- the sentences imposed by courts;
- the need to promote consistency;
- the impact of sentencing on victims;
- the need to promote public confidence in the Criminal Justice System;
- the cost of different sentences and their relative effectiveness in preventing re-offending; and
- the results of monitoring.

Under section 124 the Council may be asked to prepare guidelines by the Lord Chancellor or the Court of Appeal and when this happens it should consider whether to do so.

(Section 127) Preparing and publishing resource assessments for both draft and definitive guidelines. These resource assessments should assess the resources required for the provision of prison places, probation provision and youth justice services.

(Section 128) Monitoring the operation of guidelines and considering what conclusions can be drawn, including:

- the frequency with which, and extent to which, courts depart from sentencing guidelines;
- factors which influence the sentences imposed by the courts;
- the effect of guidelines in promoting consistency; and
- the effect of guidelines on the promotion of public confidence in the criminal justice system

(section 119) Publishing a report on the exercise of the Council's functions during the year.

Under section 129 the Council may also promote awareness of matters in relation to the sentencing of offenders, in particular the sentences imposed, the costs of different sentences and their relative effectiveness in preventing reoffending, and the operation and effect of guidelines

Under section 132, the Council has a duty to assess the effect, and prepare a report, where the Lord Chancellor refers any government policy or proposals likely to have a significant effect on resources for prison, probation or youth justice services

The activities for 2022/23 to deliver these statutory duties are outlined in **Table 1**.

Strategic objectives 2021-2026

Following the Council's consultation on our future priorities, coinciding with our tenth anniversary in 2020, the Council set strategic objectives to help shape our work from 2021 to 2026. These objectives set out how we plan to deliver our statutory duties as detailed above, and outline specific actions that the Council will take during the period and from which the activities for the year covered by this business plan flow:

- promote consistency and transparency in sentencing through the development and revision of sentencing guidelines
- ensure that all our work is evidence-based and will work to enhance and strengthen the data and evidence that underpins it
- explore and consider issues of equality and diversity relevant to our work and take any necessary action in response within our remit
- consider and collate evidence on effectiveness of sentencing and seek to enhance the ways in which we raise awareness of the relevant issues
- work to strengthen confidence in sentencing by improving public knowledge and understanding of sentencing, including among victims, witnesses and offenders, as well as the general public

For more information about these strategic objectives and how we are meeting them, you can visit Sentencing Council strategic objectives 2021-2026 [\[LINK\]](#). Alongside this business plan we are publishing an update on the actions under each strategic objective as set out on pages [x to x](#) of the document [\[LINK\]](#).

The Office of the Sentencing Council

In addition to the Council's statutory duties and strategic objectives, as with any successful organisation the Council depends on highly-skilled and well-motivated staff. To that end there are a number of specific objectives focussed on our people, with the goal of:

- delivering our objectives within the budget we are allocated;
- ensuring that the Office has a motivated and collaborative team who feel valued and engaged, and have the necessary capability and autonomy to deliver clear objectives; and
- working together to identify and implement more efficient ways of working and to ensure value for money.

These objectives are set out in section 3 of **Table 1**.

Delivering the Sentencing Council's work

The Council approaches the delivery of our guideline-related objectives by adopting a guideline development cycle. This is based on an adaptation of the ROAMEF policy cycle set out by HM Treasury in the 2022 Green Book) and allows a culture of continuous improvement to be embedded within the development process.

Following this cycle, there are several key stages within the development of a sentencing guideline:



Making the case for developing/amending the guideline

Annex A outlines the Council’s rationale for prioritising which guidelines to produce (or which existing guidelines to amend), after which options for the actual guideline are considered. The work undertaken at this point may include conducting research, assessing options for the scope and remit of a guideline, its objectives, or whether there is in fact a need for the guideline. If the guideline has been requested by the Lord Chancellor, Lord Chief Justice or Court of Appeal or evidence of a sentencing-related issue is presented to us by an interested organisation, this would also be given due consideration.

Developing/amending the draft guideline

Once the Council has decided that a new guideline will be produced, or an existing one amended, and has agreed the objectives, work is undertaken to produce a draft guideline that will be issued for consultation. This involves a variety of different activities including consideration of relevant case law and existing sentencing guidelines or guidance; analysis of current sentencing practice; research and analysis to assess any practical, behavioural or resource implications of draft guideline proposals; stakeholder mapping and engagement and analysis of media reports. We may discuss relevant issues with experts in the field, and will always consider when preparing or revising a guideline whether to seek formal advice from experts. The guideline proceeds through a number of iterations of drafting in order to ensure that different options are fully considered. A monitoring and evaluation strategy is also drawn up to ensure that the guideline can be assessed and evaluated after implementation.

Issuing the draft guideline for public consultation

A draft guideline is issued for public consultation, alongside the analysis and research that supported its development and an assessment of its resource implications and any equality impact. The media and stakeholders are briefed about the main issues and the purpose of the consultation, in order to bring it to the attention of a wide audience and encourage responses. We promote our consultations on our website, via our email bulletin and on social media, and events are held with stakeholders to ensure that those with particular interest in the guideline are aware of the consultation and able to provide their input. Consultations are usually open for 12 weeks, to allow those who wish to provide a response the chance to do so.

Revising the draft guideline and implementing the definitive guideline

Further work is undertaken after the consultation to revise the guideline to take account of the responses received and to review and if necessary test changes to the guideline.

The guideline is published online on the Council's website. A response to the consultation is also published at this point explaining what changes have been made as a result of the responses we have received. Updated data on sentencing practice and a new resource assessment to reflect the final guideline are published at the same time, and a link to the guideline is emailed to stakeholders. The media are briefed, and we use a range of channels to ensure that the public is informed and that all key parties are aware of and able to access the guideline.

The Council works with the Judicial College to help facilitate training for sentencers on using the guideline. There will generally be an implementation period before the guideline comes into effect to allow for awareness-raising and any training to take place. In most instances we aim to bring definitive guidelines into force quarterly, on 1 January, 1 April, 1 July and 1 October.

Since 2021, the Council has also begun consulting annually on miscellaneous amendments to guidelines. The Council has built up a large body of sentencing guidelines that are in use in courts throughout England and Wales and there are inevitably issues that arise with existing guidelines over time. The annual consultation seeks views on a range of amendments which address those issues.

Monitoring and assessing the guideline

The Council adopts a targeted, bespoke and proportionate approach to assessing each guideline's impact and implementation. This work involves an assessment of whether the guidelines are having any impact on sentencing outcomes or incurring any implementation issues. This information will be set against our resource assessments for the guideline to examine whether there was likely to have been an impact on correctional resources, as well as the Council's intention for a particular guideline.

We use a range of different methods for evaluations, drawing on analysis of existing data on sentencing trends over time, collection of data from sentencers on the factors that influence their sentencing of different offences, surveys, interviews and focus groups, and content analysis of Crown Court sentencing transcripts; if possible data will be collected "before" the guideline comes into force as well as "after" in order to provide a comparison between the two time periods.

We use a variety of different methods of data collection and analysis, both quantitative and qualitative, as necessary.

Gathering and reviewing evidence

The outcomes of monitoring and evaluation, along with any stakeholder or media feedback, are assessed and considered by the Council. Following this assessment, the guideline cycle moves back into the phase of making the case for developing/amending the guideline, this time addressing the potential need to review the guideline and make improvements. If this is found to be necessary, the cycle begins again. The timescale for this process will vary, depending on a number of factors including the extent of monitoring and evaluation and the urgency for taking any action.

Timing and prioritisation

The Business Plan sets out an indicative timeline for preparation and publication of guidelines based on the Council's current priorities and our rolling work programme. The plan will be subject to bi-annual review and updates will be published, as appropriate, on the Sentencing Council website.

Cross-cutting work

The plan also includes timescales for more cross-cutting work that the Council undertakes in support of the whole range of its statutory duties. This includes, for example, publication of data related to sentencing, research on perceptions of guidelines, analysis of the risk that guidelines have unintended impacts on different groups, user testing of guidelines and ongoing work to maintain public confidence in sentencing.

Table 1: The main activities to deliver our statutory duties and planned timescales are as follows:

Work area	Key planned deliverables	Target (end of quarter)
SECTION 1: GUIDELINES		
Animal cruelty (revision)	Publication of definitive guideline, consultation response, and resource assessment	Quarter 1 2023/24
Totality (revision)	Publication of definitive guideline, consultation response, and resource assessment	Quarter 1 2023/24
Perverting the course of justice and witness intimidation	Publication of definitive guideline, consultation response, and resource assessment	Quarter 2 2023/24
Blackmail and threats to disclose private sexual images, kidnap and false imprisonment	Publication of consultation, resource assessment and statistical bulletin	Quarter 3 2023/24
Aggravated vehicle taking	Publication of consultation, resource assessment and statistical bulletin	Quarter 3 2023/24
Imposition (revision)	Publication of consultation and resource assessment	Quarter 3 2023/24
Miscellaneous amendments to guidelines	Publication of consultation	Quarter 3 2023/24
	Publication of revised guidelines and consultation response	Quarter 4 2023/24
Immigration	Publication of consultation, resource assessment and statistical bulletin	Quarter 3 2023/24
Bladed articles and offensive weapons	Publication of findings from guideline evaluation	Quarter 3 2023/24

Breach	Publication of findings from guideline evaluation	Quarter 3 2023/24
Expanded explanations	Publication of findings from guideline evaluation	Quarter 3 2023/24
Intimidatory offences	Publication of findings from guideline evaluation	Quarter 4 2023/24
SECTION 2: CROSS-CUTTING WORK		
Business Plan and Strategic objectives	Publish 2023-24 Business Plan and update on progress on strategic objectives 2021-2026	Quarter 1 2023/24
Annual Report	Publish 2022-23 Annual Report	Quarter 2 2023/24
Digitisation of guidelines	Continue to maintain, refine and support online and offline versions of sentencing guidelines for magistrates (MCSG)	Ongoing
	Continue to maintain, refine and support online versions of sentencing guidelines for Crown Court Judges	Ongoing
	Guidelines user testing project – publish findings of independent review team	Quarter 2 2023/24
You Be the Judge – online tool	Revise and relaunch ‘You Be the Judge’ – interactive sentencing tool on the Sentencing Council website	Quarter 4 2023/24
References received from Lord Chancellor or Court of Appeal under section 124	Respond as required	Reactive only
External representation	Council members and office staff speak at external events throughout the year targeting the judiciary, criminal justice practitioners, academics and special interest groups.	Ongoing
	Promote sentencing guidelines and the Council using all channels, including via proactive and positive engagement with the media, to	Ongoing

	engage with Government, its Arm's Length Bodies, the Judicial College and organisations with an interest in criminal justice and sentencing.	
	Promote public confidence in sentencing by tailoring and targeting our external communications, developing relationships with key advocates such as the police service, working with partner organisations and developing the public-facing content of our website.	Ongoing
	Provide assistance to foreign jurisdictions via visits, advice and support work.	Ongoing
SECTION 3: EFFICIENCY AND OUR PEOPLE		
Efficiency	<p>Publishing all guidelines and other documents online, with the exception of the annual report.</p> <p>Ensure value for money in the procurement of goods and services, making savings where possible and complying with departmental finance, procurement and contract management rules.</p> <p>Learn from lessons of each project, making improvements to future guidelines as a result; and improving efficiency on the basis of experience of what works.</p>	Review quarterly
Capability	<p>Enable the Council to operate digitally, through development and support of secure online members' area, digital Council papers and online collaboration tools.</p> <p>Ensure all staff undertake at least five days of targeted learning and development to develop skills, capability and career.</p>	Touchpoint meetings every 2 months

	Hold lunchtime seminars for staff to share knowledge and expertise about the work of the Council, the criminal justice system and Whitehall/ Government.	
Engagement	Implement an action plan arising from the findings of the people survey, based on priorities identified by staff.	Quarter 2 2023/24

TIMELINE OF PUBLICATIONS AND GUIDELINE EFFECTIVE DATES 2023 to 2024		
April 2023	Miscellaneous amendments to guidelines	Revisions in effect
April 2023	Child cruelty (revision)	Revised definitive guideline in effect
April 2023	Underage sale of knives	Definitive guideline in effect
April 2023	Animal cruelty (revision)	Publication of revised definitive guideline
May 2023	Business Plan	Publication of Business Plan
May 2023	Totality (revision)	Publication of revised definitive guideline
June 2023	Motoring offences	Publication of new and revised definitive guidelines
July 2023	Animal cruelty (revision)	Revised definitive guideline in effect
July 2023	Totality (revision)	Revised definitive guideline in effect
July 2023	Motoring offences	New and revised definitive guidelines in effect
July 2023	Perverting the course of justice and witness intimidation	Publication of definitive guideline
July 2023	Annual report and accounts	Publication of statutory annual report to the Lord Chancellor
September 2023	Miscellaneous amendments to guidelines	Launch of consultation
October 2023	Perverting the course of justice and witness intimidation	Definitive guideline in effect
October 2023	Blackmail, kidnap, false imprisonment and threats to disclose	Launch of consultation

Resources

Staff headcount (as at 1 April 2023)

Area of activity	FTE ¹
Head of Office and support	2
Policy	3.6
Analysis and research	8.7
Legal	1
Communications	3
Total	18.4

Budget

Summary of budget and resource allocation

	2022/23 (actual) £000s	2023/24 (budget) £000s
Total funding allocation	1,789	1,885
Staff costs	1,436	1,546
Non staff costs	224	339
Total expenditure	1,660	1,885

¹ FTE: full-time equivalents

Annex A: Rationale for the prioritisation of guidelines

Under section 120 of the Coroners and Justice Act 2009 the Sentencing Council must prepare sentencing guidelines on:

- the discharge of a court's duty under section 73 of the Sentencing Code (reduction in sentences for guilty plea);² and
 - the application of any rule of law as to the totality of sentences.³

Section 120(4) provides that the Council may prepare sentencing guidelines about any other matter.

The overarching aim of the Council in publishing guidelines is to promote a clear, fair and consistent approach to sentencing. In agreeing its rolling work plan, the Council will prioritise the publication of guidelines that will fulfil that aim.

The Sentencing Council will schedule guideline production on the basis of one or more of the following factors:

- The Lord Chancellor or the Court of Appeal formally requests the review of sentencing for a particular offence, category of offence or category of offender and the Council considers that the production or revision of one or more guidelines is justified.
- Existing guideline(s) have become significantly out of date because of amendments to legislation or other external factors.
- New legislation or other external factors have created a demand for new guideline(s) among court users, and the Council considers that the necessary evidence is available to develop such guideline(s).
- There is evidence (from the Council's own research or evaluations, interested groups or other sources) of issues relating to sentencing that the Council considers could be addressed by the development or revision of one or more guidelines. Such issues may include but are not limited to:
 - evidence of inconsistency in the sentencing of an offence or group of offences;
 - evidence of inequality in sentencing between different demographic groups;
 - evidence of sentencing being too high or too low for a category of offence or category of offender; and/ or
 - evidence relating to the effectiveness of different sentences.

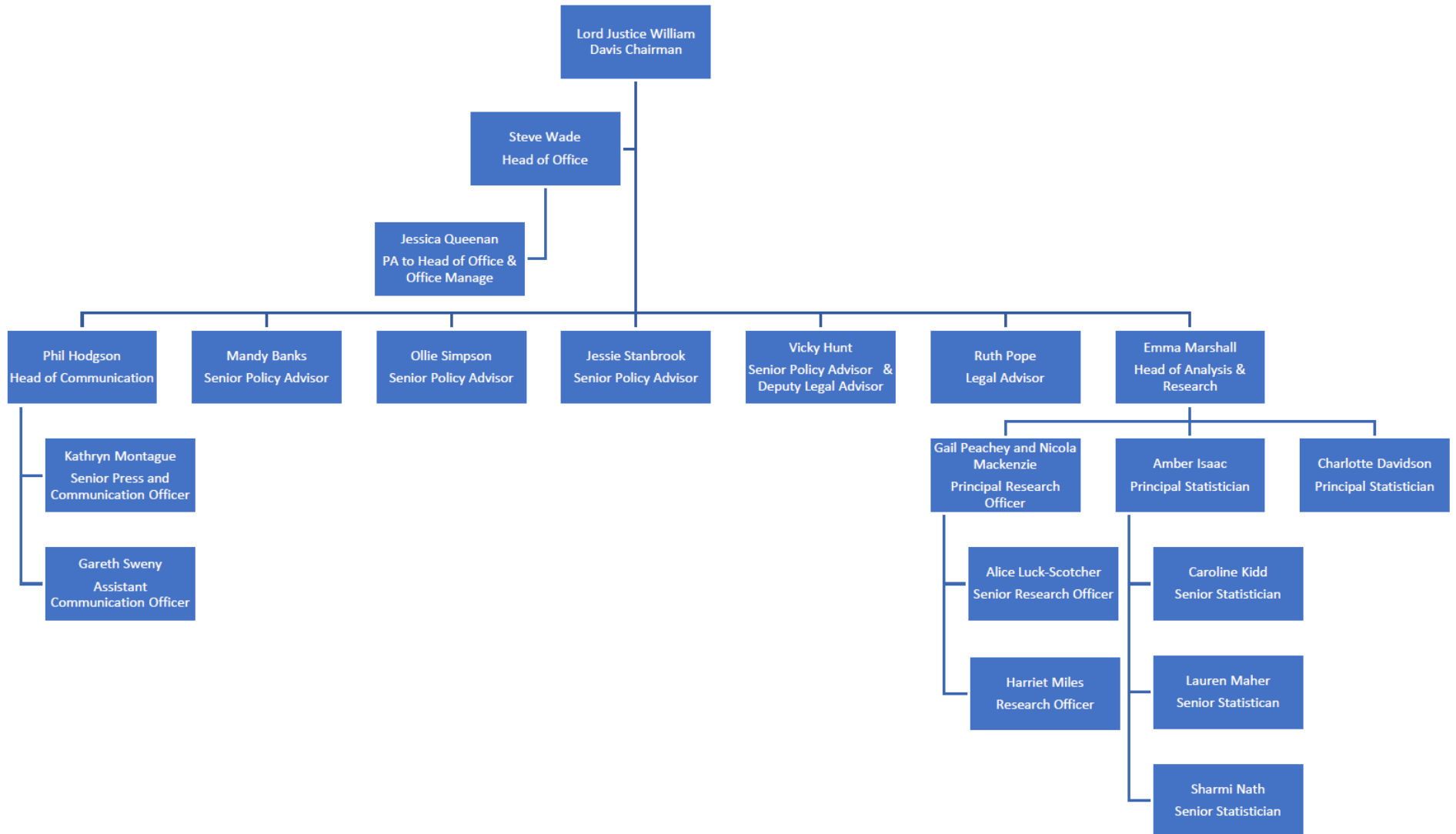
A further factor that the Council will take into account in all cases is the resource available to produce or revise guidelines. The Council is unlikely to undertake the development or revision of a guideline at a time when legislative changes that would affect that guideline are pending.

² s.120 (3)(a)

³ s.120 (3)(b)

Annex B: The Office of the Sentencing Council as at 1 April 2023

The Sentencing Council is supported in its work by a multi-disciplinary team of civil servants, as shown below.



Annex C: Sentencing Council Guideline Work Plan – 2023-2024¹ (as at 1 April 2023)

Guideline	Consultation period	Publish definitive guideline	Definitive guideline in force ²
Animal Cruelty	May 2022 to August 2022	April 2023	1 July 2023
Totality revision	October 2022 to January 2023	May 2023	1 July 2023
Motoring offences	July 2022 to September 2022	June 2023	1 July 2023
Perverting the course of justice and witness intimidation	March 2022 – June 2022	July 2023	October 2023
Annual miscellaneous amendments ³	September 2023 – November 2023	March 2024 – publication of response to consultation	Amendments will come into force annually on 1 April
Imposition	Late 2023	2024	2024
Aggravated vehicle taking	Late 2023	2024	2024
Blackmail, Threats to disclose private sexual images, Kidnap and false imprisonment	Late 2023	2024	2024
Immigration	Late 2023/early 2024	TBC	TBC

¹ The dates shown in this work plan are indicative.

² In most instances we aim to bring definitive guidelines into force quarterly, on 1 January, 1 April, 1 July and 1 October.

³This is an annual rolling programme of updates and corrections to guidelines the content of which will vary from year to year