

**BOARD REPORT**

**AGENDA ITEM: 13  
REPORT NUMBER: SLAB/2023/29**

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| **Report to:** | The Board |
| **Meeting date:** | 31 July 2023 |
| **Report title** | Meetings with Outside Bodies |
| **Report category** | For Information |
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| **Publication of the paper** |
| This paper does not contain information of a sensitive nature and can be published. |

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| **Report** |
| **SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT – JUSTICE**  **MINISTER FOR VICTIMS AND COMMUNITY SAFETY**  **On 13 June:** Ray Macfarlane and Colin Lancaster attended the Scottish Parliament for their first meeting with Siobhian Brown, MSP since her appointment as Minister for Victims & Community Safety earlier this year. As well as serving as a general introductory meeting, the agenda included:   * an overview of the current legal aid landscape, including improvement opportunities that might be offered by reform of the system * Grant Funding * SLAB’s Corporate Plan Objectives 2023-26.   **SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT, DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF JUSTICE, JUSTICE DIRECTORATE**  **On** **19 July:** Colin Lancaster had his regular monthly catch up with Scottish Government’s Deputy Director of Justice, Denise Swanson, to discuss and action outstanding issues in relation to legal aid.  **SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT’S AGE OF CRIMINAL RESPONSIBILITY (ACRA) ADVISORY GROUP**  **On 5 June:** Wendy Dalgleish attended Strathclyde University for two sessions organised by Scottish Government; the Age of Criminal Responsibility (Scotland) Act Advisory Group, which continues to oversee ongoing work around full implementation of the Act. Followed by the Children (Care and Justice) Bill Implementation Group (CBIG). This was the first meeting of the CBIG, which was an interactive session to explore the wider landscape of policy and practice developments and where the Bill falls within that, alongside facilitated implementation discussions on key themes associated with the Bill.  **SCOTTISH CIVIL JUSTICE COUNCIL**  **On 22 May:** Colin Lancaster attended the latest meeting of the Scottish Civil Justice Council (SCJC) at Parliament House. The agenda included an oral update on the Age of Criminal Responsibility (Scotland) Act, Electronic Transmission of Documents, ACRA Forms, the SCJC Draft 2022-23 Annual Report and 2023 Programme, Solicitor Fees, and Council Governance matters.  **On 12 June:** Colin Lancaster and Ian Dickson were invited to attend an event organised by the [**Lord President**](https://judiciary.scot/home/judiciary/judicial-office-holders/senators-of-the-college-of-justice/the-right-hon-lord-carloway) celebrating [**Scottish Civil Justice Council’s**](https://www.scottishciviljusticecouncil.gov.uk/council) 10 Year Anniversary, which was hosted at Playfair Hall, Surgeons Quarter, Edinburgh.  **SCOTTISH CIVIL JUSTICE COUNCIL RULES REWRITE COMMITTEE**    **On 19 June:** Ian Dickson attended a meeting of the Scottish Civil Justice Committee’s Rules Rewrite Committee at Parliament House. The agenda included the Discontinuing use of the signet and Consulting on the Ordinary Procedure Rules.  **SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT, CRIMINAL JUSTICE BOARD**  **On 2 June:** Colin Lancaster attended the first in person Criminal Justice Board at Parliament house, the agenda included:   * Summary Justice Review - Update and Consideration of Digital Images of Productions * Electronic Monitoring * Audit Scotland Report: Criminal Courts Backlog * Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Home Affairs Roundtable Event on 14 June on Support for People Released Directly from Court following Remand. * UK COVID-19 Public Inquiry Request for Evidence   **On 30 June:** Marie – Louise Fox attended the latest Scottish Government Criminal Justice Board on Teams. Agenda included:   * Prison Population: Update * Audit Scotland Report on Criminal Courts Backlogs: System Response * COVID Inquiries   **On 28 July:** Colin Lancaster attended the latest Scottish Government Criminal Justice Board on Teams. Agenda and papers still to be finalised at the time of writing.  **SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT’S CRIMINAL JUSTICE PROGRAMME BOARD**  **On 13 June:** Marie-Louise Fox attended a meeting of the Scottish Government’s Criminal Justice Programme Board on Teams, the Board continues to bring together sector organisations for a collaborative approach to addressing Justice Transformation challenges.  **On 12 July:** Kingsley Thomas attended the Scottish Government’s Criminal Justice Programme Board, which is overseeing various reforms, in particular Person-Centred Justice and System Efficiency developments. This includes the system wide work on Virtual Courts, and the Summary Case Management pilots in Hamilton, Dundee and Paisley.  **SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT’S JUSTICE RESILIENCE SUBGROUB**  **On 20 July:** Kingsley Thomas attended a meeting of the Scottish Government’s Justice Resilience Subgroup on Teams. This is the former Covid-19 Subgroup which now monitors the justice system’s ability to respond to major activities, and the Justice Board’s Recover, Renew, Transform work across the justice agencies.  **SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT’S LEGAL AID BILL PROJECT BOARD**  **On 24 May and 6 June:** Colin Lancaster, Marie – Louise Fox and Andrew McIntosh attended a meeting of the Scottish Government legal aid bill project board to discuss government progress and planning for future legal aid reform.  **On 28 July:** Colin Lancaster, Marie – Louise Fox, Ian Dickson, Hazel Thoms and Andrew McIntosh attended a meeting of the Scottish Government legal aid bill project board in Thistle House to discuss government progress and planning for future legal aid reform.  **SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT’S LEGAL AID PAYMENT RESEARCH PROJECT**  **On 5 June:** Marie-Louise Fox, Colin Lancaster, Matt Taylor, and John Osborne attended a session with Scottish Government colleagues and representatives from the Law Society of Scotland and Scottish Solicitors’ Bar Association, to finalise the project’s specification of research into profitability at legal aid firms and identify suitable members to join the Research Advisory Group (RAG). This was a recommendation of the Payment Panel, which came out of the Legal Aid Review.  **SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT’S SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT’S VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS (VAWG) UNIT**  **On 2 June:** Marie-Louise Fox and Carolyn McLeod met with Lynsay Ross and Jeff Gibbons from Scottish Government’s Violence against women and girls (VAWG) unit to discuss the newly introduced Victims, Witnesses, and Justice Reform (Scotland) Bill, particularly Independent Legal Representation.  **SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT – GENERAL**  **SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT’S LEADING IN A DIGITAL WORLD PROGRAMME**  **ON 29 June:** Carolyn McLeod attended a Scottish Digital Academy Alumni Session entitled **[AI](https://digitalacademy.arlo.co/courses/189-scottish-digital-academy-alumni-session-ai-and-large-language-models-what-do-they-mean-for-the-public-sector?e=c443684d6efe4f40b524391c42ce7236) and Large Language Models: What do they mean for the public sector**. The session acknowledges that innovative AI is now at the fingertips of everyone who wants to use it and the session covered an overview of AI, the limitations/risks, economic and social impacts amidst regulatory issues, and a workshop highlighting the potential use in the public sector.  **UK GOVERNMENT**  **HOME OFFICE**  **On 9 June:** Wendy Dalgleish attended an Immigration Law catch up session on Teams, with colleagues from the Home Office, Scottish Government, COSLA, and Citizens Advice Scotland, to discuss matters arising from the increasingly widespread dispersal of asylum seekers throughout Scotland.  **LAWYERS AND REPRESENTATIVE BODIES**  **CASTLEMILK LAW CENTRE**  **On 23 May**: Colin Lancaster & Marie Louise Fox met with Angus McIntosh, Senior Principal Solicitor of Castlemilk Law Centre and convener of the Scottish Association of Law Centres, to catch up on legal aid related issues and to discuss matters of mutual interest.  **CHILDRENS HEARINGS IMPROVEMENT PARTNERSHIP**  **On 24 May:** Marie-Louise Fox and Liz Cuschieri attended a meeting of the Children’s Hearings Improvement Partnership on Teams. The Partnership brings together a range of organisations to help develop and improve the Children’s Hearings System.  **FACULTY OF ADVOCATES**  **On 19 July:** Colin Lancaster had a general catch meeting with Dean of Faculty, Roddy Dunlop, KC, to discuss legal aid related issues for both organisations.  **IMMIGRATION LAW PRACTITIONERS’ ASSOCIATION SCOTTISH WORKING GROUP**  **On 8 June:** Wendy Dalgleish, Eileen Grant, and Kieran Forbes attended the Immigration Law Practitioners’ Association Scottish Working Group on Teams. The agenda focused on discussing the group’s concerns around the legal aid implications of the Illegal Migration Bill, as well as an update on general developments in practice and procedure relating to asylum and immigration law**.**  **LIVINGSTON BROWN**  **On 23 May**: Colin Lancaster & Marie Louise Fox met with Stuart Munro, Managing Partner of Livingston Brown and Convener of the Law Society of Scotland’s Criminal Law Committee, to catch up on legal aid related issues and to discuss matters of mutual interest.  **LAW SOCIETY OF SCOTLAND, CPD**  [**Trauma-awareness and trauma-informed practice training course**](https://www.lawscot.org.uk/members/cpd-training/events/trauma-informed-lawyer-certification-course/). On various dates throughout May and June Carolyn McLeod undertook the Law Society of Scotland’s Trauma Informed Lawyer’s Certification Course. Trauma-awareness and trauma-informed practice are increasingly at the heart of a fair justice system. This course is designed for all solicitors working with people, no matter their practice area, and is suitable for all levels of expertise.  **On 27 July:** Marie Louise & Hazel Thoms attended a meeting of the Quality Assurance Sub – Committee organised by the Law Society of Scotland via MS Teams.  **JUSTICE SECTOR BODIES**  **COMMUNITY JUSTICE SCOTLAND**  **On 22 May**: Carolyn McLeod together with PDSO’s Head of Service, Nicky Brown and PDSO Edinburgh’s Head of Office, Andrew Docherty met with Karyn McCluskey, Chief Executive of Community Justice Scotland to discuss areas of common interest between Community Justice Scotland and PDSO.  **CROWN OFFICE AND PROCURATOR FISCAL SERVICE**  **On 17 July:** Colin Lancaster had a general catch meeting with Crown Agent, John Logue, to discuss legal aid related issues for both organisations.  **On 25 July:** Carolyn McLeod had a quarterly liaison meeting with COPFS in relation to current issues relevant to the Client Legal Services directorate.  **SCOTTISH COURTS AND TRIBUNAL SERVICE**  **On 5 July:** Kingsley Thomas attended the Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service’s (SCTS) Domestic Abuse project. Officials from the SCTS team were seeking to engage with key stakeholders to create a virtual domestic abuse court that delivers benefits for all, following recommendations made by the Virtual Summary Trial National Steering Group in January 2022, to create a dedicated specialist virtual domestic abuse court model operating across the Sheriffdom of Grampian, Highland, and Islands.  **On 18 July**: Colin Lancaster had a general catch meeting with Eric McQueen, CEO of Scottish Courts and Tribunal Service to discuss legal aid related issues for both organisations.  **OTHER MEETINGS**  **AZETS**  **On 12 July**: Colin Lancaster met with Racheal Weir, Senior Auditor of Azets, a business advisory group who provide external audits, to discuss their external review of our Internal Audit department.  **COSLA**  **ON 16 June:** Carolyn McLeod attended a meeting with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) to discuss their National Appropriate Adult Co-ordinator role. COSLA has hosted this policy manager role since September 2020 and the Policy & Participation Officer (Appropriate Adults) role since April 2022, because of an agreement to work with Scottish Government to implement the new statutory Appropriate Adults Services.  **EQUALITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION**  **On 7 June:** John Osborne and Sarah Halliday met with the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) to discuss progress against SLAB’s action plan as well as details of how we will conclude the s23 agreement in the coming months.  **INTERNATIONAL LEGAL AID GROUP (ILAG) CONFERENCE**  **21 – 23 June:** Colin Lancaster travelled to the USA to speak and take part in the [14th biennial conference of the International Legal Aid Group](https://clp.law.harvard.edu/ilag-2023-challenges-of-access-to-justice/), co-hosted by the Harvard University Law School Centre on the Legal Profession from Wednesday 21 to Friday 23 June. The programme covered a wide range of contemporary access to justice challenges, including: measuring access to justice; UN sustainable development goal 16.3; cost-effectiveness of legal aid; holistic approaches to service delivery; crime and access to justice; where legal aid lawyers of the future will come from; technology and innovative forms of delivery; self-help and litigants in person.  **NEW ZEALAND JUSTICE SECRETARY**  **On 14 July:** Colin Lancaster met with Andrew Kibblewhite, New Zealand’s Secretary for Justice (the senor civil servant responsible for justice, including legal aid). Andrew was travelling to Geneva to lead New Zealand’s delegation for an examination at the United Nations under the Convention against Torture and other ill-treatment in late July. While in Europe, Andrew took the opportunity to go to London and Edinburgh to meet with key people in the justice sector, to build relationships and learn from their experience and innovations within the sector. As an important part of the justice system, Andrew was keen to meet with SLAB to talk about some of the work we do.  **NON DEPARTMENTAL PUBLIC BODIES (NDBP) DIRECTORS OF FINANCE FORUM**  **On 25 May:** Linda Ross attended a meeting of the NDPB Directors of Finance Forum on Teams. The agenda included a Finance In-Year update, Finance Future update, Pay Policy update, and an overview on shared services transformation.  **SCOTTISH PUBLIC PENSIONS AGENCY (SPPA)**  **On 23 May and 23 June:**  Linda Ross, Sarah Halliday and Amy Rennie discussed SLAB pensions & Service Level Agreement (SLA) with Leeanne Aimers of the Scottish Public Pensions Agency. Linda provided an update to staff on plans to reform the SLAB pension scheme during a live Q & A session also on 23rd May.  **TAIWANESE DELEGATION**  **On 13 June:** Colin Lancaster and Andy McIntosh met with a delegation from the Taiwanese Judicial Yuan which is the highest judicial organisation in Taiwan, responsible for judicial administration, interpreting the Constitution, adjudicating trials, and vested with disciplinary power. The delegation was led by Honourable Judge Ms. Yu-Shun Kao, Director-General of the Department of Judicial Administration. The delegation requested a meeting with SLAB to learn and exchange views on legal aid in Scotland. |