

Equalities, Human Rights and Civil Justice Committee

7th Meeting, 2023 (Session 6), Tuesday 14 March 2023

Access to Justice roundtable

Note by the Clerk

Introduction

1. The Equalities, Human Rights and Civil Justice Committee agreed to hold a number of roundtable meetings about subjects within its remit.
2. It held its first civil justice roundtable session at its meeting on [30 November 2021](#), which focused on the use of remote hearings within the civil justice sector as a result of Covid-19 and the sector's experience and future plans for digital justice as we recover from the pandemic.
3. At its meeting on [22 February 2022](#), it held a family law roundtable which focused on the law applying to disputes between parents and the care of their children.
4. The next session – an access to justice roundtable - will be held at the meeting on 14 March 2023. It will focus on how services are currently supporting people who are seeking advice, challenges these services are facing, access to funding as well as hearing views on legal aid reform.

Participants

5. The following people will be taking part in the roundtable—
 - **Jen Ang**, Director, JustRight Scotland;
 - **Gillian Fyfe**, Strategic Lead-Strong Communities, Citizens Advice Scotland;
 - **Colin Lancaster**, Chief Executive, Scottish Legal Aid Board;
 - **Fiona McPhail**, Principal Solicitor, Shelter Scotland;
 - **Rachel Moon**, Senior Solicitor and Legal Services Manager, Govanhill Law Centre; and
 - **Jim Stephenson**, Convener, Access to Justice Committee, Law Society of Scotland.

Format

6. The meeting will be held in hybrid format with some Members of the Committee and witnesses attending in person and others joining virtually.

Topics

7. The roundtable evidence session on access to justice will be a chance to discuss topics such as—
 - **The current issues and challenges faced by services such as barriers to people accessing support and how problems are being resolved**
 - **Gaps in service provision**
 - **Support available to people to challenge discrimination or exercise their human rights**
 - **Whether current services are able to meet demand**
 - **Access to funding**
 - **How digital exclusion can be addressed and whether the increase of online engagement since the pandemic has created further challenges.**
 - **Legal aid reform in Scotland and whether services would like to see greater coordination between legal and support/advice services**

**Clerks to the Committee
March 2023**