Notes and actions of the EAG meeting held meeting room M23, 1A Parliament Square, Edinburgh, on the 15th of August 2013 between 10.00 and 13.00hrs.

1. **Arrival & Coffee**

Attending:

Colin Lee - CEMVO Scotland, Chair.

Daniel Donaldson - Consultant for LBGT equality and human rights.

Rohini Sharma Joshi – Trust Housing Association Ltd.  
Suzanne Munday – MECOPP.

Christine Jess – Critical Friend specialising in disability issues.

Stephen Coulter - Scottish Court Service (SCS) Corporate Secretary.

Nicola Dean – SCS, Court Services Branch.

George Malone – SCS, Admin Support (notes).

Colin Lee welcomed the members of the advisory group and in particular Christine Jess who joint the EAG today. Colin also asked that a note of thanks be added to the minutes regarding members who have recently moved on to other challenges, namely:

Gordon Ellis – Consultant to SCS for SCS Field and Court management issues.

Niki Kandirikirira - Engender Scotland.

Brenda Mackay – JustSign Sign Language Interpreting Service.

Colin thanked the former members for their many valuable contributions and time. This was warmly agreed by the group. The issue of replacement members will be discussed later in the agenda.

1. **Matters arising from the February 2013 meeting.**
2. LGBT Group: Daniel and Stephen had both attended in support of the SCS LGBT team and a number of issues had been explored with them. It was agreed that there were a number of practicalities in taking the group forward that need to be worked on. Daniel felt that there was a need for the group to reach out and establish links with LGBT service users and local groups. It was suggested that perhaps an “Open Day” approach would foster improved communications, education between groups and better relations. It was also felt that the staff support content on the SCS Intranet required a refresh and improved content. (AP Feb13/001 – discharged).

**AP Aug 13/001 – Add LGBT development to the agenda for future meetings (SC / GM).**

**AP Aug 13/002 – Invite the SCS Head of Communications to a future meeting to include the action Feb13/004 regarding translated literature.**

1. Nicola Dean has spoken to the chair of the staff disability group to find out if any members were experiencing difficulties with getting time away from their office / place of work to attend meetings. There was no evidence of any difficulties reported. (AP Feb13/002 – discharged).
2. Colin Lee has contacted the OPG and discussed the POA and Guardianship training / engagement process. (AP Feb13/003 – discharged).
3. Disabled access to Perth SC – progress was on-going regarding improved access to this building with extensive plans for both external and internal access under development. A budget is available for this work.

Daniel Donaldson expressed serious concerns that the recent refurbishment at Dundee SC was sub optimal regarding access issues. Stephen Coulter explained that extra funding for building works had arrived, due to circumstances, towards the end of the financial year and that a hasty programme of work had been developed to spend this money before it was “lost” in the year end turn over. The issue of the planning guidance has been raised with the SCS Estates team to ensure that access issues are addressed properly in future.

Nicola Dean advised the EAG that an initiative, led by the Crown, was looking at access issues across the “whole life” process – arrest to imprisonment – of justice system users.

Questions were raised by the EAG members on the scope of the accessibility issue within the SCS estate and it was felt that an estate wide survey would be useful. Stephen Coulter reminded the EAG of the work done by Capability Scotland regarding court surveys and that that work has led to a refocus by SCS Estates Management. In addition, as the impact of the “Future courts structures” review started, more funding would be available to improve accessibility in the remaining courts.

The EAG reiterated concerns that the accessibility issue appeared to be of a recurring nature and that they would like to raise this with the SCS Estates management team. The EAG requested that the Estates Director be invited to the next meeting in November to discuss progress and were in support of a SCS wide audit of premises to identify the scale of the access issue faced by SCS. It was felt that the audit could help the SCS by prioritising the problem areas.

A question was also raised regarding best practice / local best practice being captured and shared with other court staff. Stephen Coulter acknowledged this was a weak area but that the SCS Board had this on the agenda for future improvements.

**AP Aug13/003 – Stephen Coulter to write to David Currie (Temp Director Estates management) to express the concerns and suggestions of the EAG regarding accessibility issues. David should be invited to the next meeting of the EAG if possible.**

1. Membership – to be raised as agenda item 4 today.
2. Accessibility to services and the SCS Internet and publications was continued and included in the new action point Aug 13/002, where the possibility of improved links to the LGBT community was discussed (the original issue for the communication manager being the need for additional literature for people who do not understand English and that translated documentation should include a translation in sign language as well).
3. Vice-chair role to be discussed as agenda item 4 today (AP Feb13/005 discharged).
4. Interpreter Oaths – issue raised with the Sheriffdom business manager and Sheriff advised accordingly regarding the oath (AP Feb13/006 – discharged).

Additionally the issue of affirmations for interpreters has been addressed by the SCS Court Service Branch and involving Sheriff Welsh (Judicial Training) (AP Feb 13/007 – Discharged).

1. Mainstreaming Equality Report – Colin Lee had produced the foreword to the document as requested (AP Feb13/008 - discharged). Stephen Coulter has finalised the report and had agreed the comments regarding equality outcomes (AP Feb13/009 and 010 – discharged).

**3) Equality Action Plan**

Stephen Coulter presented the Equality Action Plan with the latest updates. The plan will be published on the SCS Internet on a quarterly basis. The EAG agreed that the plan made sense and were very pleased by the inclusion of the carers element to the plan (AP Feb13/011 – discharged).

A general discussion took place around carers in the workforce and their need for supporting employers. Suzanne Munday requested permission for MECOPP to use the SCS Carers policy as a good example of what could be done. Carers Scotland are currently working towards a Kite Mark registration and it could be a good idea to see if the SCS could qualify for the award.

Discussion took place around the “E” learning for staff regarding “One Service” (equality training). This is a mandatory course to be completed on an annual basis for existing staff and during induction for new people.

**AP Aug 13/004 – Stephen Coulter to talk to Alan Swift regarding the use of the carers policy towards obtaining a kite mark award for SCS.**

**AP Aug 13/005 – George Malone to provide Suzanne Munday with Alan Swift’s contact details.**

**AP Aug 13/006 – Stephen Coulter talk to Alan Swift regarding the LGBT team development in support of the outreach suggestion raised by Daniel Donaldson.**

**AP Aug 13/007 – Include the Equalities Action Plan as a permanent agenda item for future meetings.**

1. **Members Recruitment and Terms of Reference**

It was agreed that the EAG Terms of Reference (TOR) required reworking and the remit strengthened. An example of a reference to “gender” being missing in the TOR was given.

Following this, a discussion took place about the recruitment of future members and the current method of engaging them. At the moment, external members of the EAG are seen as voluntary critical friends. They are not remunerated, but can claim expenses for attendance at meetings. The subject of formal (via public appointments) versus informal (Ad Hoc suggestions from members) recruitment methods were discussed, as was the implication of a more formal structure and hierarchy, including future honorarium. A number of preferences were expressed by the team with, additionally, a concern that “mission creep” was leading to extended (unpaid) roles for the members.

Stephen Coulter stated that he needs to consider the role of the Consultant Vs. Critical Friend and the implication of liabilities versus personal opinion. Stephen will also reflect on payments and contracts.

In the meantime a number of names and organisations have been put forward for the EAG to consider:

Engender Scotland – Emma Ritchie, Gill Woods, Marsha Scott

Scottish Woman’s Aid

Age Scotland

Abused men in Scotland

A short debate took place about the need to appoint a vice chair for the EAG. Daniel Donaldson was nominated by the board and accepted the offer.

**AP Aug 13/008 – Stephen Coulter to review the EAG TOR and remit.**

**AP Aug 13/009 – Christine Jess to provide a copy of Healthcare Scotland volunteer policy.**

**AP Aug 13/010 – The future recruitment / volunteer / consultant issue to be reviewed at next meeting.**

**AP Aug 13/011 – Suzanne Munday to approach Age Scotland and Scottish Women’s Aid to enquire about volunteers to attend the EAG.**

**AP Aug 13/012 – Daniel Donaldson to approach Abused Men in Scotland to enquire about volunteers to attend the EAG.**

1. **Changes to SCS Senior Management**

Stephen Coulter outlined the changes to the senior structure within the SCS and promised to provide an updated organization chart to the team once all the repositioning had taken place.

The major changes currently underway are:

Stephen is now the Corporate Secretary. Cliff Binning is now the Chief Operating Officer for Court and OPG operations. Neil Cook is the new Chief Financial Officer. Lawrence McDonald is the new IT Director. In the meantime two new Directors are being recruited for a) Estates Management and b) Operational Policy.

Stephen Coulter’s new role was briefly discussed and is still under development.

**AP Aug 13/013 – Stephen Coulter to provide an organisational chart of the new SCS management structure to the EAG team members when the final appointments have been made.**

1. **Joint Justice Systems working arrangements**

Joint meetings are taking place on a six weekly basis with SCS, Crown Office, Joint Justice Board, Prison Service, Scottish Government and the Scottish Legal Aid Board. The purpose of the meetings is to agree and work towards reform of working practices, while improving services to justice users, and reducing the overall cost of justice. Nicola Dean is on the Justice Board version of the EAG and is working to a detailed plan of action arising from the Criminal Justice Disability Project. This covers all access aspects for disabled people within the criminal justice system (all disabilities).

The publication, “The keys to life - Improving Quality of Life for People with Learning Disabilities” was discussed at the meeting. It is the new learning disability strategy in Scotland and follows on (and up) from “The same as you” – the previous strategy.

1. **AOB**
   1. **CEMVO Event**

Congratulations to CEMVO and Colin Lee (Host) on the successful and entertaining event. Sheriff Welsh sent his apologies at missing it due to some late business. The goody bag was well appreciated by all the recipients but (amusingly) a bit gender specific.

* 1. **Publication of EAG Minutes & notes**

The EAG agreed that the minutes of previous meetings could be published on the SCS Intranet.

* 1. **Pen Pictures**

The EAG agreed to supply pen pictures to George Malone

* 1. **Kirpan Agreement**

The Lord Justice Clerk signed of the policy and protocol. The issue appeared on Sikh national TV channel in the UK. It was worthwhile noting that many Sikh women also wear the 5 K articles of faith. In order to avoid any potential embarrassment it would be a good idea to check the press release and instructions to SCS staff to ensure that women devotees are covered by the protocol.

**AP Aug 13/014 – Nicola Dean will double check the Kirpan protocol and work instructions to ensure women devotees are covered.**

**e. Court Closures update**

The orders have been approved by Parliament and the closures start from October onwards. Work is ongoing regarding video links to courts from other public buildings in the areas where courts are closing. This also applies to vulnerable witnesses.

1. **Complaints / FOI**

Development of the new SCS complaints system is ongoing. The hope that an off the shelf system could fit the bill was dashed as some of our requirements are outwith standard specification. However progress is being made and the system should be launch during the autumn. There was one FOI request in the last quarter regarding when signage was put in place at a court. This follows an accident at that court where a user slipped.

1. **Previous AOB: People Committee attendance**

The actions around EAG membership of the people committee have been addressed and consequently actions Feb 13/012 and 013 have been discharged.

1. **Date of next meeting:**

The date of the next EAG is 21st of November 2013 and the venue has been suggested as Parliament House (new member induction) thereafter a round- robin approach would be adopted.

Summary of action Points for this meeting:

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