

**VULNERABLE WITNESSES ACT IMPLEMENTATION STEERING GROUP  
EQUIPMENT AND ACCOMMODATION SUB-GROUP**

**Friday 24 September 2004, Room GW.01, St Andrew's House, Edinburgh**

**1. Welcome and introductions**

Paul Smart (Chair) SEJD Victims and Witnesses unit  
 Shona Barrie, COPFS  
 Alan Girvan, SCS  
 Bill Moore, SEJD Victims and Witnesses unit  
 Frances Roberts, SCRA  
 Frank Russell, VSS  
 Claudine Persaud (Secretary) SEJD Victims and Witnesses unit

**Apologies:**

Ron Lancashire, ADSW  
 Alistair Mackie ACPOS

**2. Minutes of last meeting**

Agreed

**3. Matters arising**

Section	Comments/issues	Action
<p><b>Responsibility for identifying and running remote sites.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Responsibility for running remote sites needs to be agreed as a priority. A meeting between Scottish Executive and Chief Executive of the Scottish Court Service was required urgently to resolve this matter.</li> <li>• It was accepted that the running of the remote location would have resource implications e.g. staffing, training, which would need estimating.</li> <li>• It was agreed that the integrity of the remote site was of paramount importance and as such it should be seen as an extension of the courtroom.</li> <li>• It was agreed that views of the Lord President and Sheriffs' Association would be helpful as they would require assurances about a remote locations integrity.</li> <li>• It was noted that a better estimate of costs for operating remote sites would be needed. Who met the costs would also need to be considered. SE does have a modest programme budget for implementing the Act and consideration could be given to using some of this to assist with transitional costs of operating remote locations.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Victims and Witnesses unit to arrange meeting with SCS Chief Executive.</li>   <li>• Victims and Witnesses unit to consult with judiciary after meeting with SCS.</li>   <li>• COPFS to provide Child witness figures as gathered by COPFS for a separate study to support estimate of need.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It was noted that lack of clarity regarding responsibility for and costs of remote locations could hinder smooth operation of High Court procedure reforms.</li> <li>• It was suggested that only a 'neutral' body could provide remote locations which met the requirements of the court and of those citing the witness.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>SCS Technical specification, list of equipment and roll out timetable.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SCS provided a list of equipment and roll out timetable with the technical specification. SCS also explained that back up systems were available at all courts in case of equipment failure.</li> <li>• It was agreed that complementary systems of communication between the court and a remote site would be required and that the commissioned work on roles and responsibilities for those operating the equipment and best practice guidance would cover this.</li> <li>• SCS explained that in addition to units in court that could be used in other locations, 2 spare mobile CCTV units were available although more probably would be required.</li> <li>• The group discussed the probable requirement for a full room view as well as view of the witness and were informed by SCS that this would require double the existing equipment and ISDN lines.</li> <li>• Paul Smart suggested that existing the VSS interview rooms may be suitable and as neutral body with experience in field the group agreed that VSS would be ideal hosts.</li> <li>• Possible contradictory legislation highlighted - concern was expressed in respect of live TV links between court in that the Vulnerable Witnesses Act only allows proceedings to be moved to another court where there is suitable equipment within the same sheriffdom in direct contradiction to other legislation which allows for proceedings to be moved to a court in another sheriffdom</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Field officer to scope areas surrounding court locations for existing video conferencing facilities or locations with ISDN links in places which may be suitable and could be linked to court</li> <li>• SCS to investigate the possibility that 2 signals can be sent from existing equipment.</li> <li>• VSS to do a scoping study of existing rooms (considering DDA, general ambience, size and ISDN line installation &amp; possible cost of upgrade to meet requirements )</li> <li>• SCS to clarify position with possible contradictory legislation.</li> </ul>

<b>Monitoring and evaluation</b>	This was identified as a medium priority work due to other pressures identified.	
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**4. Re-drafted remit. Paper (VWEA/1/04)**

Agreed

**5. Draft Specification for work. Paper (VWEA/5/04)**

<b>Section</b>	<b>Comments/issues</b>	<b>Action</b>
(A)The production of draft National Standards and a draft model protocol to enable the identification and operation of remote locations for providing live TV links to courts, and taking evidence on commission.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It was agreed that this work should be outsourced and that it was dependant on the identification of who will run the remote location.</li> <li>• It was suggested that the dovetailing of the field officers and the work that was being commissioned to produce draft guidance on the non-technical practicalities of taking evidence on commission was essential.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Field officer to join sub-group.</li> <li>• Sub-group invited to make further comment on (A) by email by close of business 4 Oct 04.</li> </ul>
(B) The production of a draft specification for equipment to be used at remote locations to provide live TV links and the taking of evidence on commission together with draft good practice guidance (including roles and responsibilities) for those people who will be	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It was agreed that there was no requirement to outsource this work as it was simply a matter of re-working existing in-house specification which would be best done using existing SCS knowledge.</li> <li>• Concerns were raised about the equipment &amp; processes required for taking evidence on commission and an outline of the process was requested by the group to clarify requirements. It was explained that work to produce draft guidance on the practicalities of taking evidence on commission was being commissioned and that it might be too late to ask contractors to draw up such an outline. The possibility of a discrete pilot was considered. It was accepted that implementing evidence on commission would probably not be possible from April 2005.</li> <li>• Alan Girvan had been invited to join sub-set of the training and communications</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SCS agreed to draft specification for equipment to be used at remote locations including additional equipment that may be required to facilitate dual views of the interview room.</li> <li>• SCS agreed to draft good practice guidance.</li> <li>• Victims and Witnesses Unit to consider what can be done about drawing up an outline re taking evidence on commission.</li> <li>• Victims and witnesses unit to provide SCS, with the specification for the “Scotty” mobile kit.</li> <li>• Victims and witnesses unit to raise concerns re. Evidence on commission with main steering group.</li> </ul>

responsible for operating the equipment.	sub-group to give guidance on technical side of the recording prior statements.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Victims and witnesses unit to re-draft specification as per discussions and re-issue to sub-group.</li> <li>• Alan Girvan to join sub-set of training and communication sub-group.</li> </ul>
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**6. AOB - None**

**Next meeting** – Monday 8 November from 10:00 am GW01, SAH

Victims and Witnesses Unit  
24 September 2004