



Ministry  
of Justice

# The Witness Intermediary Scheme

## QUALITY ASSURANCE BOARD STRATEGY

July 2019

A decorative geometric pattern in the bottom right corner, consisting of a grid of triangles in various shades of blue, with a dark blue line running horizontally across the page and a vertical line running vertically through the pattern.

# **The Witness Intermediary Scheme**

## **Quality Assurance Board Strategy**

Strategy Refresh, Objectives and Workplan

July 2019

## Introduction

1. Registered Intermediaries (RIs) facilitate communication with vulnerable witnesses in the Criminal Justice System in England and Wales as part of the Witness Intermediary Scheme (WIS) which was first introduced as a pilot project in 2004 and rolled out nationally in 2008.
2. The Quality Assurance Board (QAB) is responsible for the quality assurance, regulation and monitoring of the professional standards of RIs. It is accountable to the Intermediaries Registration Board (IRB).
3. In November 2018 the QAB had a workshop to discuss and agree a refresh of its strategic purpose and role, within the Witness Intermediary Scheme (WIS). Drawing on the outputs from the workshop, this paper sets out a refreshed strategic purpose, objectives, key activities and a draft 2019/20 work plan for QAB (Appendix 1).
4. Moving forward, QAB is transitioning to a more strategic position to assure and monitor all aspects of the Registered Intermediary Scheme.

## QAB's strategic purpose, role and key activities

5. The WIS strategic priorities aim to ensure:
  - greater access to support for vulnerable victims and witnesses through an increase in the number of Registered Intermediaries
  - that vulnerable victims and witnesses can maximise their opportunity to provide evidence through a consistent high-quality professional RI; and
  - that opportunities for learning and improvement are increased throughout the RI scheme.
6. The QAB plays an important role in delivering the WIS priorities. The QAB's own refreshed strategic purpose is set out below:

*The Quality Assurance Board is the strategic body responsible for the quality assurance, regulation and monitoring of the professional standards of Registered Intermediaries working within the Ministry of Justice's Witness Intermediary Scheme. It aims to ensure high quality, professional intermediary services are available to victims and witnesses with communication needs.*

7. Supporting delivery of its strategy, the QAB role is to:
  - agree the standards for, and lead on, quality control of recruitment, training, accreditation and CPD of RIs
  - maintain and support the RI register and ensure it is fit for purpose
  - ensure that Registered Intermediaries act in accordance with the Code of Practice and the Code of Ethics
  - ensure that complaints against RIs are fully investigated in accordance with the IRB's complaint's policy and procedure; and
  - monitor and support the development, of all aspects of the RI professional role.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> MoJ Registered Intermediary Procedural Guidance 2019.

8. The QAB's key activities, linked to WIS' priorities, are set out below.

WIS priority	QAB key activities (current and proposed)
<b>Increase the number of Registered Intermediaries</b>	<p>Lead on quality assurance of all aspects of the recruitment process.</p> <p>a) Agree standards and quality control of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• continuous recruitment cycles</li> <li>• quarterly training programmes.</li> </ul> <p>b) Determine and evaluate the post-qualification model of support.</p> <p>c) Review of exit interviews and RI surveys, making recommendations to IRB for action to address recurring issues limiting the effectiveness of recruitment or retention.</p>
<b>Ensure a consistent, high quality and professional service</b>	<p>d) Set, monitor and receive quality assurance reports for all aspects of RI performance.</p> <p>e) Manage a fit for purpose RI register.</p> <p>f) Set out clearly defined standards through the Code of Practice and the Code of Ethics and ensure compliance. Review and update these Codes as needed.</p> <p>g) Determine the processes that operate when quality standards are not upheld and apply these.</p> <p>h) Investigate complaints against RIs.</p> <p>i) Determine the Continuing Professional Development requirements to assure the quality of the RI Scheme.</p>

	<p>j) Monitor and support the development of all aspects of the RI professional role.</p> <p>k) Share and encourage dialogue on best practice.</p> <p>l) Manage feedback (+ve and –ve) to RI's to enable them to learn from feedback and improve individual performance.</p> <p>m) Monitor and triangulate feedback, complaints, CPD evidence acting on this as required.</p> <p>n) Quality assurance review of RI reports.</p>
<b>Ensure that QAB deliver robust assurance of RI performance via transparent processes.</b>	<p>o) The QAB strategy will be published on the WIS gov.uk website.</p> <p>p) Ensure that QAB has access to adequate and agreed data sets to monitor RI scheme performance.</p> <p>q) Publish a suite of policies relevant to ensuring quality standards and maintaining high standards of practice.</p> <p>Report regularly to IRB (through QAB Chair who is an IRB member).</p>

9. Based on the above key activities the QAB has developed draft objectives and a work plan for 2019 (See appendix 1).

10. Future QAB Core membership will be:

- a) Chair
- b) MoJ whose role includes oversight of the people strategy
- c) NCA
- d) Members with specific skill sets to oversee parts of the QAB strategy and associated work-streams. The proposed roles are:
  - a. QA lead for scheme monitoring
  - b. CPD and RI register lead
  - c. Recruitment and training lead
  - d. Mentoring and support lead
  - e. Negative feedback, complaints and sanctions lead.

## **Next steps**

11. The QAB will work with IRB and the MoJ in the coming months to deliver the strategic plan.

July 2019

## Appendix 1

### Objectives and work plan for QAB 2019

The table below sets out the agreed objectives for QAB for 2019/20, the desired outcomes and timelines for delivery.

Objective	Outcome	Due by
1. Complete Review and development of identified policies and procedures	Set of QA policies and procedures to appropriately assure QA of the Scheme	By October 2019 via QAB sub-group.
2. Create central log of complaints	New complaint procedure agreed and in use by July 2019	July 2019
3. Draw up transition road map to strategic QAB	QAB transition and strategic plan agreed within the overall WIS/IRB plan	October 2019
4. Investigate potential operational support roles for QAB with MoJ.	QAB to have sufficient human resource to efficiently conduct its agreed plan	By October 2019
5. 2019 CPD QA round implemented	QAB to be implementing a more robust CPD exercise to assure quality of the scheme including direct monitoring of reports.	October 2019
6. QAB time thresholds and authorisation processes established and agreed with MOJ.	QAB to have level of autonomy and accountability established.	October 2019



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