



Ministry of Justice

FAMILY PROCEDURE RULE COMMITTEE
Via Microsoft Teams
At 10.00 a.m. on Monday 14 June 2021

Present:

Sir Andrew McFarlane	President of the Family Division
Mrs Justice Theis	Acting Chair
Lord Justice Baker	Court of Appeal Judge
Mr Justice Mostyn	High Court Judge
Her Honour Judge Raeside	Circuit Judge
District Judge Suh	District Judge
District Judge Branston	District Judge
District Judge Williams	District Judge
Fiona James	Lay Magistrate
Michael Seath	Justice Clerk
Poonam Bhari	Barrister
Rhys Taylor	Barrister
Graeme Fraser	Solicitor
Bill Turner	Lay Member

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND APOLOGIES

- 1.1** Apologies were received from His Honour Judge Godwin, District Judge Williams and Tony McGovern.
- 1.2** Formal announcements on the appointment of Tony McGovern; Bill Turner; Poonam Bhari; Graeme Fraser and Rhys Taylor as well as the re-appointment of Melanie Carew were posted on Gov.UK on 7 June.
- 1.3** The Acting Chair said that the questionnaire seeking Committee Member's views on the meeting content, structure and direction as discussed in May was sent on Thursday 10 June and the Acting Chair urged all of those who attend Committee meetings to respond in full before the closing date of 17 June.

MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING: 10 MAY 2021

- 2.1** The Committee asked that the list of attendees be amended as appropriate.

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- 2.2** Following the amendments raised in 2.1, the minutes were approved as a correct and accurate record of the meeting.

ACTIONS LOG

- 3.1** MoJ Policy provided brief update status reports on the Divorce, Dissolution and Separation Act 2020 Implementation; Domestic Abuse Bill Implementation; Deed Poll Name Changes; Slip Rule; Fees Consultation; UKSC G v G judgment (which will now return in July) and Contempt Forms.

MATTERS ARISING

Brexit Working Group

- 4.1** MoJ Policy said that the position regarding the UK's accession to the Lugano Convention had not changed since the update provided in May. It was therefore decided that the FPRC EU Exit Working Group should be stood down temporarily until significant progress had been made on the international stage. It was confirmed that if there are any changes, draft amendments to the Family Procedure Rules can be presented to the Committee and remotely to the Working Group if and when they are needed.
- 4.2** MoJ Policy also confirmed that significant progress has been made to Gov.UK to reflect EU Exit related amendments to the Family Procedure Rules and Practice Directions and these are near completion.

Amendments to the Overriding Objective

- 4.3** MoJ Policy confirmed that, following discussion in May, where the Committee asked whether work on a holistic review of the overriding objective could begin in the Autumn of 2021, a further update will be provided at the October 2021 meeting. This will provide an update on potential scope of work and plans for a working group. The intention is that the working group will meet in late 2021 or early 2022.

ACTION

MoJ Policy to present a timetable and working group plans at the October meeting

Migration of FPR 2010 to Gov.uk and inaccuracies in the justice website

- 4.4** MoJ Policy said that there are two distinct areas requiring an update. The first is in relation to the migration work of material from the Justice to Gov.UK site, which is making steady progress although the Justice site will be in operation for a further year while this work continues. The Judicial led Working Group will be provided with a further update towards the end of June.
- 4.5** MoJ Policy said that the second issue related to anomalies in the online content, which will require quite substantive work to reflect Rule and PD changes introduced over a number of years. Issues relating to a recent Correction Slip in relation to amendments to the FPR, amendments to the Annexes to PD34A that were made in 2014, recent amendments to PD41A, amendments made to the FPR by the Family Procedure (Amendment) Rules 2021, and the content of PD6C were specifically highlighted as needing remedying. In addition to bringing the online content up to date to reflect past amendments, PD6C was viewed as needing a comprehensive overhaul and the

Committee were informed that this will be an intensive exercise which will require considerable resource to tackle the issues raised.

STANDING ITEM: CORONAVIRUS RELATED ITEMS

Practice Direction 36Q/Practice Direction 36R

- 5.1** MoJ Policy provided the Committee with an update on work considering the future of Practice Directions 36Q and 36R, which allow several temporary flexibilities required to assist family courts during the coronavirus pandemic. MoJ Policy confirmed that whilst the Practice Directions are stated to expire on 31st October 2021, both Practice Directions are inherently linked to there being an ongoing coronavirus pandemic (therefore if the pandemic is deemed to have ended before 31st October 2021, then courts will no longer be able to use the flexibilities). MoJ Policy confirmed that data on the functioning of Practice Direction 36Q since its introduction is still being collected and analysed, therefore the MoJ is not able to make a final recommendation on any permanent ongoing flexibility and/or alterations to the CAP.
- 5.2** The Committee were updated further on the questionnaire which sought views from Designated Family Judges (DFJs) and Magistrates on the impact of Practice Direction 36R (specifically the temporary extensions to the functions of justices' legal advisers). HMCTS had now collated the second round of responses and the response rates are now roughly 30% of Magistrates and 74% of DFJs. MoJ Policy confirmed that DFJs were largely supportive of the extension of justices' legal adviser powers as were legal advisers, noting the positive effect it has had on the effective running of their court. The responses from Magistrates were more mixed in that although almost 50% agreed that increased case management by legal advisers increased the efficiency of lists and allowed Magistrates to focus on contested hearings. However, concerns were raised regarding the 'de-skilling' of Magistrates. The Committee were concerned about the low response rates for Magistrates. MoJ Policy said that a fuller evaluation of the responses is being completed and this will be shared with the Courts and Tribunals Judicial Functions and Staff (CATJAFS) Working Group.
- 5.3** MoJ Policy said that they are exploring the possibility of proposing new pilot Practice Directions which offer the same flexibilities as PD36Q and PD36R in the short term whilst their impact is evaluated. The new Practice Directions would not inherently be linked to an ongoing pandemic and could be in place for a further 6 months from September 2021. MoJ Policy confirmed they intend to discuss this at the June meeting of the Family Justice Reform Implementation Group (FJRIG) where the available data on PD36Q, the questionnaire results on PD36R and this potential way forward can be discussed. The results of this discussion will then be brought to the July FPRC meeting where the Committee will be asked for its view on the suggested way forward.
- 5.4** The Committee raised the point that in relation to PD36Q which allows local practices and initiatives to be operated differently to the framework of the CAP in PD12B, that further evaluation was essential to prevent the proliferation of a number of schemes. The Committee proposed that future Practice Directions will need to make clear to court users what the local practices are in their courts. This should be publicised either online or at court.

ACTION

- 1. MoJ Policy to contact the CATJAFS Working Group following the FJRIG June meeting.**
- 2. MoJ Policy to return in July with draft new practice direction.**

STANDING ITEM: Private Law Reform Update

a. Private law pilots (including IDAC)

- 6.1** MoJ Policy updated the Committee on work to progress the Private Law Reform pilots, including the Integrated Domestic Abuse Courts (IDAC) pilot.
- 6.2** MoJ Policy confirmed that work on the IDAC pilot was now aligned with the wider programme of reform pilots to ensure a holistic approach. The Private Law Advisory and Pilots Group are currently progressing design of pathfinder pilots with system leaders and the intention is to recruit two Local Implementation Managers to support the required local development of this work.
- 6.3** The Committee were informed that the core model formed in conjunction with key partners involved early Gatekeeping and Information Gathering; the Multi-Disciplinary Team; Out of Court Options; and the Review Stage. Next steps will include drafting pilot Practice Directions to underpin and set the parameters of the pilot scheme for the two pathfinder courts as the proposed core IA model differs from the current CAP in PD12B. The Committee requested sight of the model at the July meeting.
- 6.4** Mrs Justice Knowles, who is attending the Committee as the judicial lead in the Family Division Domestic Abuse asked whether she could be invited to attend the forthcoming meeting to update Mr Justice Cobb on the agreed model.
- 6.5** The Committee said that there is some pushback around "overstating" ADR as some practitioners take the view that if there is DA, then ADR is not appropriate. MoJ Policy said that the IA model is not only for cases involving DA.

b. Wider Harm Panel Implementation

- 6.6** MoJ Policy said that they are working to publish an update, one year on from the Harm Panel report and that the update will be shared in advance with the Family Justice Reform Implementation Group.

PARLIAMENTARY ITEMS

DIVORCE, DISSOLUTION AND SEPARATION ACT 2020 IMPLEMENTATION: PRACTICE DIRECTIONS AND CONSEQUENTIAL AMENDMENTS

- 7.1** MoJ Policy referred to communication which alerted Committee members to the written parliamentary question answered by the Government which explains the decision to defer implementation of the DDSA reforms which will now come into effect on 6 April 2022.
- 7.2** MoJ Policy referred to discussion at the May FPRC meeting where the Committee gave detailed consideration to proposed changes to Practice Directions relating specifically to Part 6 and Part 7 FPR and to other Practice Directions which are consequential on the amendments to Parts 6 and 7 FPR and to PD6A and PD7A.
- 7.3** The Committee were content and signed off on amendments to Part 6 FPR and supporting Practice Directions to Part 6.

- 7.4** MoJ Policy spoke to Part 7 and thanked HHJ Waller for his work in relation to costs and amendments to draft rules 7.10 and 7.32 in particular and for his covering note and draft guidance on costs. The draft amendments to rules 7.10 and 7.32 had the effect that any application for costs should not be made in the principal application. Instead, such application in a disputed case should be made at the hearing of the application; or in a standard case, by application notice under Part 18. The purpose of these changes is to discourage speculative applications for costs being made at the outset of proceedings as this could undermine the policy intention to reduce conflict in the legal process of divorce. In a standard case, costs orders should only be made on an exceptional basis, such as where there has been litigation misconduct including for example the deliberate evasion of service by a respondent party.
- 7.5** The Committee referred to the draft guidance and suggested that a few examples would be helpful for the court as to the sort of circumstances in which the conduct of the parties in relation to the proceedings (whether before or during the proceedings) could be considered “reprehensible or unreasonable”, and as a result of which costs have been incurred or increased. The Committee were of the view that “reprehensible” might be perceived to create an unnecessarily high threshold. It was difficult to conceive of conduct that would be regarded as reprehensible which was not also “unreasonable”. The consensus view was that “unreasonable” was a better test. On the question of whether it was helpful to include examples of unreasonable litigation conduct, The Committee favoured the inclusion in the guidance of up to three examples which could provide a practical point of reference for the court while case law develops. On balance, the Committee thought that the inclusion of such examples would not restrict the court’s ability to award costs where in all the circumstances it was appropriate to do so.
- 7.6** The Acting Chair proposed that further review of costs be undertaken one year after implementation.
- 7.7** The Committee were content with the proposed amendments to Part 7 in respect of costs and the draft guidance on costs, subject to those amendments; and that a separate application for costs should now be required, either at the hearing on the principal application in a disputed case or via a Part 18 application in a standard case. The Committee were also of the view that there is no need to consult separately on the proposed Part 7 amendments on costs and these were therefore agreed.
- 7.8** The Committee were also content with the proposals in relation to concluded overseas proceedings and were in particular keen to record thanks for how these were drafted.
- 7.9** The Committee were content with the amendment to PD2C.
- 7.10** MoJ Policy updated the Committee on recent staff changes and said that new members of staff would be joining the team shortly. The focus of work would now intensify around the other vital strands of work to finalise and test the revised digital divorce service, to identify amendment to court forms and leaflets, and to identify changes to online content. As part of this work officials would consider commitments made during the passage of the Divorce, Dissolution and Separation Act to improve signposting to services of potential benefit to divorcing couples. More detailed timetabling work would now take place and the Committee will be provided with an update at the October meeting.

ACTION

MoJ Policy to provide an updated timetable at the October meeting

DOMESTIC ABUSE ACT IMPLEMENTATION UPDATE

- 8.1** MoJ Policy said that the newly established Working Group met at the end of May and thanked the members for their time to date. The Working Group discussed amendments and consistency in relation to PD12J in light of the definition of “domestic abuse” in the Act, as well as its recognition of children as victims and family special measures. The Working Group intend on discussing the prohibition of cross examination at their next meeting and how rules and PDs can deal with the issues raised. The Committee will be updated further at the July meeting.

SUBSTANTIVE ITEMS

DEED POLL NAME CHANGES (DRAFT REGULATIONS AND AMENDMENTS TO PRACTICE DIRECTIONS)

- 9.1** MoJ Policy provided an update to the Committee on the reforms. The intention had been to consider a draft Family Practice Direction and set of Regulations for the enrolled deed process for name changes, but in the event, members had not seen the papers, the Committee will now consider the drafts in July. The report also provided an update on the other elements of the reforms.
- 9.2** MoJ Policy raised an issue proposed by the working group in relation to adding child name change applications to the list of private law proceedings for which the requirement for a MIAM as part of the process is not required. The working group proposed amending PD3A to add the list of circumstances where the proceedings are for an order authorising deed poll enrolment as this will not require a Family rule SI and the proposal achieves the same reform outcome. The Committee said that this should apply to those requiring deed poll name change.
- 9.3** MoJ Policy updated the Committee on the proposal that existing forms be used to enable proposals. The working group concluded that the existing form C100 can be used for name change proceedings as they qualify as Section 8 (Children Act) specific issue order applications. The Committee were therefore invited to consider whether Section 3e of form C100 should be amended so that child name change applications are listed to the cases listed as exceptions to the requirement for a MIAM as the current form does not include a box for other exemptions provided for by the Practice Direction. The working group also suggested that significant amendments to the guidance for applicants will be needed and this work is currently being undertaken.
- 9.4** The Committee were also updated on concerns raised in May in relation to fees and the concern that a two-tier approach with one set of fees considerably higher than the other will be in existence. The working group agreed with this concern and that further work is being undertaken to try and achieve alignment of fees for adult and child name change applications.
- 9.5** MoJ Policy said that on the issue of training raised in May, the working group will commence work on training materials for the family judiciary once the reforms are finalised, liaising with family course directors at the Judicial College as well as presenting draft materials to this Committee.

ACTION

MoJ Policy to return in July with draft amendments to Family Practice Direction 3A and the draft amendments to the Enrolment of Deeds (Change of Name) Regulations 1994.

PARENTAL ALIENATION EXPERTS

- 10.1** MoJ Policy updated the Committee further to the issue raised by the Office of the Independent Victims' Commissioner for London to the President of the Family Division concerning the use of 'parental alienation experts' acting as expert witnesses in the Family Court. The briefing from the London Victims' Commissioner questioned the evidential basis of reports on parental alienation and outlined concerns around practice and professional standards.
- 10.2** This issue was previously discussed in February 2021, and the Committee confirmed their previous decision that PD25B was sufficiently robust to ensure that, wherever possible, experts have appropriate credentials, (including relevant professional registrations), for submitting evidence to the court. It was further highlighted that PD25B already outlines that the court has a duty to restrict evidence to that which is necessary.
- 10.3** The Committee said that unregulated experts can pose challenges in terms of accountability but accepted that there may be circumstances where they add value. However, the Committee agreed said it was important to establish their role pre and post fact finding. The Acting Chair said that this issue might be further reinforced by effective judicial training.
- 10.4** The President of the Family Division agreed with the comment that judicial training and guidance had a part to play but was of the view this was not an issue for the Committee.
- 10.5** MoJ Policy said that parental alienation is referenced in the statutory guidance being prepared to accompany the Domestic Abuse Act and agreed to provide the Committee with further detail following Home Office consultation on the statutory guidance.

ACTION

The President of the Family Division to provide an update on judicial guidance and training with specific reference to the issue of expert evidence and reports pertaining to parental alienation.

DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION FROM FAMILY PROCEEDINGS TO IMMIGRATION TRIBUNALS

- 11.1** MoJ Policy said that the Home Office is seeking permission to use documents originating from family proceedings in the Immigration decision making process after it has become apparent that individuals making immigration applications are regularly submitting documents arising from family proceedings in support of their applications without permission from the court to do so. The Committee were asked to consider three options, being to introduce a general "permission to disclose" to be included in all orders made in family proceedings, to put in place a streamlined application process for permission to disclose, or to make amendments to PD12G and PD14E to provide that disclosure of information in the types of family proceedings covered by Parts 12 and 14 FPR can be made to the Secretary of State for the Home Department or Tribunals, in specified circumstances, without amounting to potential contempt of court. MoJ Policy noted that more discussion with the Home Office was needed before a recommendation could be made on which option would be preferable.
- 11.2** The Committee were concerned about parties "cherry picking" what information to disclose, but equally concerned that the disclosure of wholesale material might not be appropriate, especially in instances where the complete file contains information that one party will not want the other party to have sight of.

- 11.3** The President of the Family Division said the initial action will be for him to have discussions with the President of the Upper Tribunal (Immigration and Asylum Chamber).
- 11.4** MoJ Policy said that further work is still required in collaboration with the Home Office and an update will be provided to the Committee's October meeting.

ACTION

- 1. The Legal Secretary to the President of the Family Division to set up a call with the President of the Upper Tribunal (Immigration and Asylum Chamber) and relevant judges**
- 2. MoJ Policy to provide an update on its work on Immigration Disclosure to the Committee's October meeting.**

ONLINE PUBLIC LAW SERVICE: UPDATE FOLLOWING DISCUSSION AT MAY 21 MEETING

- 12.1** MoJ Policy provided an update following discussion in May in relation to the position of the HMCTS online public law service and for the Committee to consider recommendations for Practice Direction amendments to facilitate the progress of the online public law service. MoJ Policy confirmed that it had been agreed that the system was not yet in a position for the public law service to be mandated nationally in July 2021, and so mandating use of the service through a phased process is now being worked towards by HMCTS, with the first phase in July 2021 and the next in September 2021. It was confirmed that only the Designated Family Judge courts who express themselves as ready for full implementation will be mandated first.
- 12.2** MoJ Policy recommended that pilot Practice Direction 36M is extended for 6 months to 1st February 2022 to allow time for the concerns raised about the public law service to be addressed before permanent provision is made. This will be discussed further at the July FPRC once the project can provide confirmed DFJ courts for July and September.
- 12.3** The President of the Family Division said that he was in favour of extending Practice Direction 36M as proposed but wanted structural matters to be resolved throughout that period with quite intensive stress testing deployed.

ACTION

MoJ Policy to return with this issue as a full agenda item in July including a list of court locations selected for the first phase.

SLIP RULE – PROPOSALS FOR NEW PD TO UNDERPIN r29.16

- 13.1** MoJ Policy introduced the issue discussed in April as to when court staff can amend administrative errors in orders without reference to a Judge or justices' legal adviser. At the April FPRC meeting, the Committee concluded that court staff cannot act under r29.16 FPR without reference to a judge or JLA; and that a new Practice Direction should set out the limited circumstances in which a member of court staff could amend an order without reference to a judge or JLA. The Committee were asked to consider a new Practice Direction 29D which sets out the limited circumstances in which a member of court staff may amend an order without prior reference to a judge or Justices' Legal Adviser. Due to its technical nature MoJ Officials proposed that no consultation was required.
- 13.2** The Committee welcomed the drafting within the new Practice Direction and agreed that no consultation was necessary.

ACTION

New PD29D to be included in the next PD Update.

BULK SCANNING: PROPOSALS FOR NEW RULE AND UNDERLYING PRACTICE DIRECTION(s)

- 14.1** MoJ Legal said that there are two pilot PDs making provision for bulk scanning currently in place. It is proposed that there be a new rule inserted into Part 5 FPR 2010 to enable permanent (as opposed to pilot) provision to be made in PDs for bulk scanning. The proposal is that the new rule come into force on 4 April 2022, and that the two pilot PDs currently in place be extended to end on 3 April 2022. The Committee were asked, given the technical nature of the proposed new rule and PD provision, and the success of the pilot schemes to date, whether or not to consult on these proposals.
- 14.2** The Committee agreed with the proposal, and with the recommendation not to consult, and MoJ Legal said that this item will return in October 2021 with a draft new Part 5 FPR rule for consideration, and to a further meeting (likely November 2021) with a draft new PD to replace pilot PD360 for consideration.

UPDATE ON PLANS FOR THE FAMILY PROCEDURE (AMENDMENT No.2) RULES 2021

- 15.1** MoJ Policy updated the Committee on the forthcoming plans for amendments to the Family Procedure Rules 2010 (FPR) via the Family Procedure (Amendment No.2) Rules 2021. The SI is due to be laid on the 22nd July 2021 and it is proposed to include amendments to the special measures regime, amendments to Part 10 FPR to clarify that the court may direct means of service other than personal service, and amendments to rule 29.6 FPR which applies to proceedings in gender recognition cases within its provisions, although this last item remains under discussion with GEO.
- 15.2** MoJ Policy also provided the Committee with plans for remote signing of the SI.

FORWARD PLANNING AND UPCOMING MEETINGS

OTHER PROCEDURE RULE COMMITTEES AND FAMILY PROCEDURE RULE COMMITTEE LINK

- 16.1** MoJ Policy said that the Civil Procedure Rule Committee had discussed and agreed the modified drafting to CPR PD 5B (to align with FPR) at their June meeting on removing the requirement to email credit or debit card details when emailing applications to the court, subject to some minor changes.
- 16.2** The Committee asked whether any further progress had been made in establishing an online rules committee which will have the remit in providing separate rules for online procedures. MoJ Legal said that this is on the list of future considerations for new primary legislation, but there is no present certainty about this being taken forward.

PRIORITIES TABLE

- 17.1** The Committee asked whether the work in relation to correction of anomalies on the Justice/ Gov.uk websites for the FPR and PDs could be added to the list of priorities.

ACTION

MoJ Policy to ensure that the work on inaccuracies on the website be added to the Priorities Table

UPCOMING PRACTICE DIRECTIONS AMENDMENTS

a. Forthcoming PD Update (Provisionally to be signed July 2021)

- 18.1** MoJ Legal asked the Committee to note the upcoming Practice Direction Update No. 5 of 2021 which contains amendments to five permanent practice directions and the extension of the end dates of five pilot practice directions. The final content of the PD Update will be discussed at the July meeting.

FORMS WORKING GROUP UPDATE

- 19.1** MoJ Policy presented the table listing current work being considered by the Forms Working Group.

19a. FL401 FORM

- 19.2** MoJ Policy asked the Committee to consider the final set of changes to the forms and guidance for the revised FL401 which were agreed by the Working Group. The Committee were content with the changes and the final form and guidance were signed off and will now go forward for translation into Welsh language.

19b. CONTEMPT FORMS

- 19.3** MoJ Policy said that comments received on the FC600, FC601 and FC603 forms have all been considered and reflected on the updated versions. The Forms Working Group agreed to the changes and with the proposal not to proceed with a separate form to be used where a suspended committal, made under part 37, is activated.
- 19.4** The Committee signed off the suite of Contempt Forms and agreed that adequate lead in time should be applied to ensure that stakeholders and practitioners will have time to prepare for the changes.

19.C A58 FORMS AND GUIDANCE

- 19.5** MoJ Policy said that the Welsh translation of the form and guidance to reflect the additional consideration in relation to the statement of truth is near completion and it is expected that this form will go live ahead of the July Committee meeting.

ANNUAL REPORT 2020-2021

- 20.1** MoJ Policy presented the draft annual report for the 2020-21 period. The Acting Chair asked that the dates be clarified to confirm that it covers the period April 2020-March 2021. The Acting Chair asked the Committee to send the Secretariat any changes to enable the document to be published before the summer recess.

DRAFT JULY AGENDA

- 21.1** MoJ Policy said that the draft agenda will be amended to reflect any changes following this Committee meeting.

WORKING GROUP MEMBERSHIP

- 22.1** MoJ Policy presented the list containing the current working group membership. This will be amended to reflect a further addition to the Domestic Abuse Working Group.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

LEGAL BLOGGERS PILOT - PD36J

- 23.1** MoJ Policy asked the Committee to consider whether to make permanent the pilot to allow legal bloggers access to family proceedings heard in private. The pilot is due to expire on 31 December 2021, and if the Committee agree, it was proposed that the current pilot should be made permanent as part of the upcoming July 2021 Statutory Instrument and related PD Update. The Committee agreed as proposed.

ACTION

Provisions to make the pilot permanent to be added to the July 2021 Statutory Instrument and Practice Direction Update.

FUTURE MEETINGS

- 23.2** The Acting Chair reminded all to complete the questionnaire as that will help inform future meetings. The meeting rooms at the Royal Courts of Justice normally used for Committee meetings are currently out of commission and members views are sought on how to take forward face to face meetings.
- 23.3** The Acting Chair thanked all for their participation on what is again, a relatively full agenda.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

- 24.1** The next meeting will be held on Monday 5 July 2021 at 10:00am via MS Teams.

Simon Qasim – Secretariat

June 2021

simon.qasim3@justice.gov.uk