



Report for AGM 10 November 2017

It is now three years since our professional association, **Intermediaries for Justice**, went live and we are holding our third AGM. We would like to report on the activities that have already taken place since November last year and most importantly what we plan for the future.

Membership

We currently have a total of 122 members of whom 108 are intermediaries and 14 associates drawn from different professions.

Committee

Last year there were nine committee members who were Claire Ainscow, Catherine Chamberlain, Rachel Ineson, Jan Jones (Hon Chair), Richard Lambert (Hon Treasurer), Nicola Lewis, Catherine O'Neill, Tina Pereira (Hon Secretary) and Lesley Shipgood (Hon Membership Secretary).

Ferne Brewster, our administrator, had a baby in September 2017 but is already back working for us.

Claire Ainscow had a baby in June and is taking a year off intermediary work and the committee but will be back in June next year.

Catherine Chamberlain resigned from the committee last year because she found it impossible to play the active part she wanted alongside all her other commitments. She enormously helpfully agreed to continue monitoring our information email address info@intermediaries-for-justice.org. We have a number of email addresses which you will find at the end of this report. They are monitored by different members of the committee.

The committee meets about every three months preferably face to face but sometimes on Skype.

We would like to make a special mention of **Hodge, Jones and Allen, Solicitors**, who have allowed the committee to use their conference rooms for some of our meetings.

We would like to thank Lesley Shipgood for looking after the IfJ membership. We know that it is time consuming and can be complicated! We would like to thank Richard Lambert too for his work as treasurer. His knowledge of accounting and accounts is invaluable.

Elections to committee

Jan Jones is retiring from being Chair of IfJ after the AGM and Tina Pereira will resign as secretary when her role is handed over to another committee member. Five intermediaries have volunteered for the committee and we will be asking the membership to vote that they should all be elected. They are Robert Thomas, Janet Smith, Anne Marie Fallon, Esther Rumble and Sharon Richardson. Information about each can be found on the website under

Events – Committee role and voting. Electronic voting will take place during the two weeks immediately after the AGM.

[Website](#)

Over the year the website has been kept up to date with information about events, news, book reviews, research articles, resources and much more. We are currently spending time updating the website and would be very pleased to have comments from anyone who would like to make them. Thank you to those who have already given us suggestions.

We very much welcome any new material which you think would be interesting to our members. Please contact editor@intermediaries-for-justice.org or info@intermediaries-for-justice.org

[Conference — 5 May 2017](#)

In May of this year we held a successful conference entitled '**Understanding the many faces of abuse - in order to enable effective participation in the Justice System**'. It took place at City, London University and 140 delegates attended. Some excellent keynote speakers and other members of the Justice System gave their time to be involved. Particular thanks are due to Sharon Richardson and Catherine O'Neill who arranged the programme. We would also like to thank City for allowing us to use their excellent conference facilities.

[Defendants and Family Courts](#)

Survey. Thank you to Catherine and Nicola who put together the survey and the paper which followed, about working with **defendants**. You will have received a copy of a letter by email and the paper, to which Joyce Plotnikoff and Paula Backen contributed, is on the website. It can be found under the Home button and then the IfJ recommendations and responses dropdown.

The list of intermediaries who work with **defendants** went live in March 2015. The enquiries from solicitors and lawyers subsequently steadily increased. Last year, it looked as if the recommendations in the Criminal Practice Directions 2015 had an impact on the number of referrals received through IfJ and there were for a brief period slightly fewer referrals. That slight reduction was not sustained and the number of referrals for assistance with defendants from October 2016 to September 2017 was 292 and for family courts was 96. A very small number of those referrals were for suspects.

[Newsletter](#)

We have produced three newsletters this year and send them out every three months. Thank you to Rachel Ineson who puts the newsletter together. We would welcome any items of news you think would be of interest to the wider membership. You can send it to info@intermediaries-for-justice.org

Training

The first **workshop** took place in March in Birmingham entitled **Working with Defendants**. Paula Backen and Claire Ainscow ran a very stimulating and informative day. It will be repeated in due course.

IfJ is keen to support and promote the running of **Special Interest Groups** which were initiated and are being co-ordinated by Louise Engers. So far they have been to do with mental health, age related communication difficulties and learning disability. Louise is looking at more topics for the future. More information can be found on the website under Events.

Media

You may have seen that the role of the intermediary was in several newspapers during a week in October. IfJ originally contacted the **Guardian** but other media showed interest. The Daily Mail, the Times, the Sun, the Sun on Sunday and the Independent on line and two local newspapers subsequently covered the item too. The articles were to do with two specific cases, a two year old child witness who was interviewed as a result of which the defendant pleaded guilty and a witness who gave evidence at trial using eye gaze.

The articles have prompted consideration of a documentary to do with the eye gaze case and an extended piece on intermediaries in the Guardian.

We have, through Joyce Plotnikoff, developed a link with an MP who is interested in our role. She has offered to sponsor us to hold a reception at the Houses of Parliament next year.

It would be helpful if we could be alerted to more high profile cases. We would like to develop further our links with the media and hope that we may be able to find more volunteers to join a small media group.

Links with other Justice Departments, bodies and groups

We have linked to a great number of other agencies associated with or from within the Justice System.

Ministry of Justice: Two or three members of the committee meet Baljit Wirk annually to exchange information about IfJ activities and plans.

Future Training of Intermediaries: The IfJ committee wrote a proposal for what should be contained in future training of RIs and has sent it to the MoJ. A copy of the IfJ recommendations can be found on the website: <http://www.intermediaries-for-justice.org/ifj-recommendations-future-ri-training/>

Standing Committee for Youth Justice (SCYJ): IfJ is a member of SCYJ. Members of the committee attend SCYJ meetings when possible and we receive their newsletter. Relevant issues will be shared with IfJ via our newsletters.

The committee was asked to comment on and sign off the SCYJ response to the **Bar Standards Board, New Information and Registration Requirements for the Bar – Consultation on Rule Change**. IfJ agreed with the BSB proposal to require barristers undertaking work in proceedings involving children to register. We agreed too that registration alone is not sufficient to ensure improved standards of advocacy in youth justice and that there should be training for barristers prior to registration and that that expertise

should be maintained. We suggested that training should be highlighted more strongly in the SCYJ response.

Independent inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA): IfJ has been liaising with this organization in relation to increasing awareness of and giving information about the role of the intermediary. We have now been invited to attend two seminars to do with the CJS handling of child sexual abuse cases.

Justice Working Party: There has been input from IfJ intermediaries into a Justice Working Party on **Mental Health and fair trial**. The report, which will be launched on 27 November 2017, will make recommendations to do with **suspects** and **defendants** during all stages of the criminal justice system from investigation to disposal and sentencing. A link will be put on the IfJ website as soon as it is available.

Prison Reform Trust: IfJ has links with the PRT and there is shared information between the two bodies. It has been suggested that IfJ offer to give a presentation at a conference in 2018. Members of the committee attend meetings when possible.

Inns of Court College of Advocacy: ICCA held a conference in June, **Access to Justice for Vulnerable People**. Several committee members attended and manned a stand at the conference. Many delegates were interested in our stand and we had an opportunity to talk to a wide variety of professionals who work within the Justice System.

Tribunals: Joyce Plotnikoff, Shaun Smith QC and a member of the IfJ committee were asked to meet Sir Ernest Ryder, Senior President of Tribunals, to discuss plans for implementing training about intermediaries and their work for judges who sit on Tribunals. We await a proposal from Sir Ernest Ryder's office about what they would like us to put in place in terms of a training programme.

Witness Service: At Tina Pereira's initiation two members of IfJ have met Fiona Beazer who is Area Manager Central Region Citizens Advice Witness Services. The aim is to establish a pathway for effective working between the WS and intermediaries. There will be a presentation to do with this at the seminar on 10 November.

HMCTS Awards – Celebrating Services to Witnesses. Members of IfJ and other intermediaries were invited to the awards ceremony on 20 October. Three intermediaries attended and intermediaries were mentioned during the course of the evening. We understand one intermediary was nominated for an award as were all present and past members of RIRT!

Communicourt and Triangle A number of intermediaries from Communicourt and Triangle are members of IfJ and Lesley Shipgood from Triangle is on our committee.

The Future

Charitable status

IfJ has made much progress in the application process in relation to attaining charitable status. We are currently awaiting further communication and advice from the Charity Commission and will update the membership as soon as we have further information.

IfJ Conference 2018

We will be hosting our fourth conference in 2018. A number of topics are being considered. If members have suggestions about the topics or the venue perhaps they would let us know.

Training

Further training events are being planned. You will find the information when it is available under Events on the IfJ website <http://www.intermediaries-for-justice.org/events/>

Further Special Interest Groups are being planned please find information here <http://www.intermediaries-for-justice.org/events/>

News, Events and Library

Apart from our newsletter, there are regular updates of news and events on our website but as last year we would very much like there to be more.

Those members who have looked at the library pages will have seen comprehensive lists of research articles, papers and references and resources. Our website editor at editor@intermediaries-for-justice.org would be very pleased to receive contributions particularly of recent research. Our research page will become 'live' in December and members will be invited to send in a synopsis of their current research. This will enable others to access information on new and innovative work in the field.

Fundraising

We continue to look for further ways for funding our activities. We have again been very grateful for a donation from Henrietta St George.

In conclusion

It is not possible to thank too much all of the committee for the amount of time they have spent on many various IfJ projects which they are fitting in around all their other work and commitments.

We would particularly like to thank Henrietta St George and also Joyce Plotnikoff. Joyce with her extensive knowledge of and links to the Justice System has been alerting the committee to various initiatives taking place in the Justice System with which members of the committee are now involved. Both David Wurtzel and Richard Woolfson continue to take an active interest in IfJ and readily offer advice when it is requested.

Tina Pereira – Hon Secretary

Jan Jones – Hon Chair

IfJ email addresses info@intermediaries-for-justice.org; events@intermediaries-for-justice.org;
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