



glasgow bar association
established 1959

Room 1.29
Glasgow Sheriff Court
1 Carlton Place,
Glasgow
G5 9DA

17th March 2021

By Email only

Moira Orr, Procurator Fiscal, Glasgow,
Anne Sweeney, Assistant Procurator Fiscal, (Summary), Glasgow

Dear Moira and Anne,

GBA Criminal Defence Members' Issues with Pre-Intermediate Diet Meetings

In anticipation of our meeting to discuss matters in relation to the efficient disposal of criminal business at Court, the Executive Committee of the Glasgow Bar Association has collated information from our members about their experiences and challenges in using the new PIDM online booking system. We summarise these as follows:-

- The booking system is extremely convoluted and time consuming. We were given a link to a presentation by SP Anwar, which simply extolls the virtues of the system but has no practical information about installing the system. We received a link to a ten minute instructional video about the Booking system itself. The fact it is ten minutes long suggests this is not user friendly.
- Practitioners received an email indicating we would receive a separate email containing a username and password. Then we received an email with a password only.
- Supply of a two page FAQs sheet.
- Supply of a 28 Page User Guide.
- No initial instructions about how PIDM is to be booked and when they applied. This was compounded by the court not having assigned these diets and the issue of further correspondence about when bookings should be done.
- No consultation with defence about these diets taking place over two days.

- Some practitioners do not have the operational systems or smart phone technology to access the Booking system. Please note we have received no funding from the Scottish Government during lockdown to invest in technology or PPE.
- Once system has been set up it is still time consuming to book the appointment.
- Clarity required about one practitioner being able to discuss multiple cases in one booking slot. This would lead to efficiencies in use.
- Issues with booking through Microsoft and whether there is need for additional security.
- Insufficient time slots for the PIDM and no availability at a time that suits.
- Only the solicitor and not the solicitor's secretary can book the PIDM. Verification code cannot be sent to an office phone.
- The PIDM can only be booked a few weeks in advance. Preferable to book the PIDM when dates have been set.
- When confirmation email is sent it does not contain details of accused or PF reference.
- Have to fill in the same boxes on each occasion.
- Once the PIDM has been set up there has been no contact from the Crown and cases have had to call in court.
- Another example is of having booked a slot and when that took place the practitioner was advised that a PIDM had already taken place without the solicitor.
- There is no telephone number for the COPFS IT Department for practitioners to discuss matters re set up.
- There is no designated number at COPFS Glasgow or a booking system email address as an alternative to those encountering difficulties using the national online Booking system. It is however accepted that the written records email

address is being utilised for this purpose and that the plea resolution email address is available for those cases that can be pled.

- Using the general telephone numbers at COPFS Glasgow are time consuming when practitioners require to phone the PF to allow a PIDM to take place as unable to book. There is a general concern that a call back will not be facilitated.
- Be able to have contact details to allow PIDM to take place. Could contact details be sent at commencement of case? e.g. A letter of engagement is produced and COPFS Deputes can call the practitioner.
- Report not submitted by Crown and case having to call in court.
- Copy of Report to the Court not issued to the defence.
- No Crown disclosure in advance of PIDMs. This is crucial to allow the defence to have discussions with their clients and obtain instructions to allow progress to be made.
- Is this any more efficient than the Written Record process? Please be aware these additional measures implemented during the pandemic have not so far been met with any additional fee for the Defence from the Scottish Government.

We attach comments provided to us by practitioners to give a sample of the issues being encountered.

In our recent meetings with the Sheriff Principal and in our communications with you, we have now issued the attached correspondence to our members, we have highlighted to them the alternative email addresses for booking a PIDM and for plea resolution and we have encouraged members to seek assistance from colleagues we have designated tech champions. In summary, the use of the online booking system is a challenge for some practitioners and reasonable alternative measures are welcomed.

We will be publishing materials relative hereto to partner Agencies to highlight these issues with a view to overcoming them.

Kind regards,

The Executive Committee of the Glasgow Bar Association