

# **Thematic Report on the Knowledge Bank**

## **Follow-up**

**August 2015**

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## **Part 1: Introduction and Background**

1. It is the practice of the Inspectorate of Prosecution in Scotland (IPS) to conduct follow-up inspections in order to promote improvement and assess the effectiveness of recommendations and their outcomes.
2. This report details the findings of the IPS follow-up inspection on the Knowledge Bank, published in December 2013.
3. A knowledge base is a library of information organised in a logical manner to allow easy access to information support to assist staff to perform their duties efficiently and effectively. A quality information knowledge base where information is relevant to users' needs, readily accessible, accurate and up-to-date with built in measures to review documents is an invaluable resource for service delivery organisations.
4. The Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS) Knowledge Bank was established in 2008 as a 'Legal Knowledge Database' to provide legal staff with an information tool to research the law and provide guidance on how to conduct cases in court.
5. The aim of the inspection was to examine the operation of COPFS Knowledge Bank and consider the extent that it provides complete, useful, relevant, specific, accurate, and timely information support to all staff. We found COPFS was committed to providing staff with a quality information support system but there were constraints imposed by the IT capability of the COPFS internal website and content management system. These constraints had been recognised by COPFS and were to be addressed with the implementation of a new software platform. A new internal website has since been developed and launched.
6. The aim of this follow-up review is to assess and report on the progress that has been made against our recommendations and to provide an update on the upgrade of the COPFS intranet.

## **Methodology**

- Interviews with key personnel;
- Review of guidance, practices, procedures and systems, protocols and policy;
- Demonstration of the new internal website.

## Part 2: Progress against recommendations

7. The report made six recommendations. The table below sets out the recommendations and the actions taken by COPFS. We are pleased to report that all of the recommendations have been implemented.

No.	Recommendation	Progress at June 2015
1.	To develop and support a shared vision of the role of the Knowledge Bank, it is recommended that a clear direction and strategic focus for the Knowledge Bank is set and communicated. Further, actions and objectives on how to achieve the overarching aims are identified and recorded within the performance agreements of those responsible for delivering these aims, including the Legal Editor, with measurable outcomes that can be assessed.	
Action taken	The Staff Information Unit that has responsibility for editing and updating the Knowledge Bank has been subsumed within Policy Division and has a central role in delivering the COPFS communications strategy. Objectives and measurable outcomes have been incorporated into performance agreements.	Achieved
2.	It is recommended that desk instructions are created for the processes and work relating to the management and maintenance of the Knowledge Bank.	
Action taken	Task instructions have been produced, including references to National Standards on providing and maintaining a knowledge base.	Achieved
3.	A reminder should be issued to all staff responsible for submitting information to the Knowledge Bank that a Communications Cover Sheet must be submitted and that the library staff are available to provide advice on format, especially where large documents are involved.	
Action taken	Guidance relating to use of the communications cover sheet has been published on the intranet and it is being completed more frequently.	Achieved
4.	To assist with improving quality assurance of the current material on the Knowledge Bank and in particular eliminating duplication and out-of-date guidance and to move towards the Knowledge Bank	

	as a single source of all information, it is recommended that consideration is given to providing additional support to the existing resource available to the Legal Editor.	
Action taken	An additional part-time member of staff has been appointed to the Staff Information Unit to assist with editing out-of-date and duplicated material.  The upgraded intranet uses wiki links to group relevant guidance together. Editing and updating the guidance will be an ongoing process.	Achieved
5.	It is recommended that the relevance of the content of the Knowledge Bank for <b>all</b> staff is publicised through PF Eye and team briefings with specific examples provided to demonstrate the usefulness and importance of the information contained in the Knowledge Bank.	
Action taken	The scope of the content of the Knowledge Bank, along with helpful tips on its use, has been published in staff notices, the COPFS internal newsletter (the Bulletin) and on the COPFS intranet - PF Eye. A range of 'How To' guides have been developed to assist staff to maximise their use of the Knowledge Bank. This includes a number of DVDs providing guidance on various legal and non-legal issues.	Achieved
6.	It is recommended that the Legal Editor and Staff Information Manager take account of suggestions made by staff in our feedback survey when making future improvements to the Knowledge Bank.	
Action taken	The new internal website was launched in October 2014. It provides increased flexibility and interactive features such as DVDs, RSS feeds and blogs. The design of the Knowledge Bank on the upgraded intranet took account of feedback from a number of sources including the IPS survey, COPFS workshops and a COPFS survey. It introduced many functions suggested by staff. In particular the search function has been improved and there is provision for online feedback.	Achieved

## Overview

8. The introduction of the upgraded intranet has strengthened the flexibility of the Knowledge Bank and facilitated the provision of a wider range of formats and materials, including e-learning videos. The addition to the complement of the Staff Information Unit and its incorporation within Policy Division has enhanced the ability of the Knowledge Bank to become a one-stop shop for guidance and policy, including practical help on preparing for and conducting courts, offence specific guidance, case law, legislation and helpful hints.
9. Confidence in the Knowledge Bank is demonstrated by the 233 hits it receives, on average, each day. The online facility to provide feedback should assist with ensuring that it remains relevant and accurate as a source of information for COPFS staff.

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