

## REPORT WRITING WORKSHOP

First 20 minutes: **WRITE A REPORT**

Ask participants to write a report for Dr Nick Hallett, RCPsych Medicolegal Training Lead, on 'The best location in the British Isles for expert psychiatric witness training' and refer them to the map which is for their assistance.

Have highlighted words on flip-chart and reveal this at same time as starting timer.

Do not tell them how long they have.

Set timer for 20 minutes.

Take note of any conferring: ask later what they were talking about: if about the issue, ask them if they referred to the discussion in their report and identified with whom they discussed the issue.

If anyone asks how long, tell them.

If anyone asks for clarification, provide it as best you can and think about what lesson arises from this apart from the importance of clarifying instructions if unsure. E.g. Does location mean town/city or venue? I suggest you say town/city.

When timer sounds, pens down and exchange/pass report to left.

Hands up those who have not finished. Why not? Did not have enough time, why not ask. Knew deadline but running out of time, why not ask for more time.

Discuss about clarification of instructions / issues if they raise them after they have finished writing.

Ask a few for their answer to the ultimate issue. As soon as you have several 'best locations', ask one of those proposing the most popular location if the report mentioned any of the others = range of opinion.

Ask if anyone has a report that refers to the map. If none, ask why it has not been mentioned. It is part of the instructions – substance of all material instructions. If someone says, no use, did they write it in report and explain why = assessing the reliability of evidence. If someone says yes, get them to read it out. Does it explain how useful it was?

At some point, particularly if it appears someone having difficulty reading report, discuss legibility.

Ask them to hold up the reports: is that the paper on which you would write an expert report? = paper quality / size / type / font / font size, etc.

Pick someone at random: 'To whom is your report addressed?' = address to the court.

Pick someone at random: does the author of your report explain their qualifications for providing report.

Does anyone know Dr Hallett? If yes, did you explain this in report and say whether it amounted to a potential conflict of interest.

Can you tell who wrote it?

Is it signed?

Is it dated?

Does it use headings/subheadings?

Are pages numbered?

Suggest they score the report in front of them

Legible
Report quality paper
Report paper size A4
Date
Addressee
Author
Signature
Conflict/potential/none
Summary of conclusions
Reasons for opinion
Evaluation of map
Range of opinion
Qualifications for giving opinion
Pages numbered
Paragraphs numbered
Headings and / or sub-headings

Score /16. Give back to author. Scores otherwise confidential. Alternatively, counting down from 16 find out who has got highest score and give a prize.

### **REPORT WRITING – THE BASICS**

You can brainstorm on different flip-chart pages:

Contents of report

Format of report

Relevant ethics and principles

Readability

Key points to get across:

Separate fact from opinion

Provide range of opinion

Provide reasons for opinion

If unable to finalise opinion, make clear report is provisional

Full compliance with procedural rules

Ask what is the most important word in a report – ‘because’. Assistance (what it is all about) stands or falls depending on ‘reasons’. The word ‘because’ can obviously be implicit. Keep emphasising ‘the R word’ = reasons.

Introduce the mnemonic for the absolute basics:

**Facts**

**Opinion**

**Reasons**

**Truth**

You can also brainstorm in groups of 2/3/4. Each group takes one topic:

**Relevant ethics and principles**

	<b>Comments</b>
Independence	Partisan; ‘hired-gun; pros/defence, claimant/defendant ratio; number of instructions from same solicitors; identification with team; unconscious bias; ‘our case’.
Honesty	‘The truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth’. If other reasonable opinions might be reached and you have not mentioned them, is your opinion ‘the whole truth’?; copying other experts; plagiarism; misleading as to time spent / hourly rate; falsified CV.
Objectivity	Painstaking analysis without pre-judging issues.
Flexibility open-mindedness	‘When the facts change ...’
Respect	Criticism of other experts; deferring to more experienced expert; for judge or jury as ultimate fact-finder/s as they hear all the evidence and make findings according to legal rules.
Dignity	Neutral language; restraint in court even under stressful c-ex.
Evidence-based	Reliance on (a) experience (b) literature (c) knowledge and practice of colleagues.
Accuracy	Incorrect dates/times;
Thoroughness	Omissions; missed inconsistencies
Transparency	Cards on table; trial by ambush
Rational	Opinion withstands analysis of reasoning and any assumptions
Sceptical/critical	Forensic analysis
Credible	Being satisfied and satisfying court that you are qualified to assist
Competent	Being satisfied and satisfying court that you are competent to assist and issue/s within field of expertise
Reliable	Opinion grounded in evidence/facts
Politeness	Forms of address; court etiquette
Professionalism	Appropriate dress; appropriate language; appropriate behaviour
Confidentiality	Dining out on cases; anonymity of parties;

**Format**

Plastic cover, clear front, so front page visible
A4 paper or pdf
If paper, printed one-sided
If paper, hole-punched for standard lever arch file or ring binder
If paper, slide binder
Margins at least 5 cm
Line spacing 1.5 or 2
Font size 11 or 12
Numbered paragraphs
Use of headers and footers
Footnotes for sources of information, e.g. p. 7/260, GP recs pdf; p. 56/468, Bloggs WS pdf

Expect overlap with .....

### Readability

Stand alone document
Typed
First person
Active voice
Short sentences / paragraphs
Facts clearly separated from opinion
Clear, concise, succinct
Medical/technical terms explained / Glossary

Can then have a plenary brain-storm of **Front Page**

Top section	Case details
Court	Top left in header (first page only)
Case number	Top right in header (first page only)
Party or parties	

Middle section	
On the instructions of	Name and address of instructing solicitors
Who act on behalf of	Person or party, e.g. The defendant
Their reference	
Specialist field	e.g. Child and adolescent psychiatry
Subject matter	e.g. Psychiatric assessment of defendant
Date/s of instruction	
Date of report	
Report reference	
Date of consultation	
Place of consultation	
Mode of consultation	e.g. in person, remote (Teams), telephone
Consent	Written / Verbal / Not applicable

**Report for, and addressed to, the court by Dr Melanie Klein, MD, FRCPsych**

<b>Bottom section</b>
Status / appointment
GMC/MC Number
Full professional / contact address
Telephone number
Email address
Personal assistant
PA's email address
PA's telephone number (if different)

<b>Appendices</b>	
1	Abbreviated 1 page CV adapted to issue/s
2	The process of psychiatric assessment
3	History and mental state examination
4	Documents and materials
5	Glossary
6	References / medical literature
7	Chronology

Reference:

Chapter 6 in EPE, particularly Boxes 6.1 and 6.2 and p. 77.

However, there's a more up-to-date version in the orthopaedic book, so I'll attach that. It does have an orthopaedic slant but it's the generic content that is updated. Those attending can have a copy on the understanding that they do not copy it to anyone or share with anyone as the orthopaedic book is stuck at the moment in a transfer of copyright process. I'll also attach the ortho specimen report which will have the advantage of them not being distracted by content and therefore using it to focus on structure and format.