

**31 March 2020**

Dear legal representative

**Medico-Legal Report department at Freedom From Torture – COVID-19**

I am writing in relation to the service that the Medico-Legal Report (MLR) department at Freedom From Torture (FFT) is hoping to be able to offer you and your clients throughout what, I am sure you can appreciate, is an exceptionally difficult and unusual time.

**I would like to emphasise at this point that we are still accepting referrals for reports, clinical letters and clinical response letters.[[1]](#footnote-1)**

**Our current plan**

* Any referrals received will be assessed in the usual way. If there are documents you cannot access when making the referral which we would usually require, please let us know and we will show as much flexibility as we can as we understand that legal representatives will be under huge pressure at this time.
* We plan to send a decision letter to you following assessment of the referral. This letter will be more detailed than our usual letter and will, we hope, assist you if you need to make representations to the Home Office or Tribunal on your client’s behalf.
* Those of you who have referred clients to us for reports where all face to face appointments between the doctor and the client have already taken place we envisage being able to complete the report as planned.
* Those of you who have referred clients to us for reports where one more appointment is needed between the client and the doctor, where possible, this appointment will take place via phone / Skype.
* Our offices have now closed for face-to-face client appointments. Therefore, when you refer to us for a combined psychological and physical assessment report at this time, we can offer telephone / Skype assessments resulting in the production of psychological only reports now with final scarring reports (and if needed, an update psychological report) produced at a later date when face-to-face meetings are reinstated.

**Our resources**

While FFT has a pool of doctors who we usually call upon to assess your clients and to draft reports, as I am sure you can appreciate, a number of our doctors have had their hours increased in the NHS; others have volunteered to return to the NHS. Owing to this we unfortunately have a smaller pool of doctors available to assist us at this time than is usual. Those who are available have already confirmed that they will do whatever they can to assist you and your clients. What this means though is that it may take us slightly longer than usual to produce the medical evidence you have asked for.

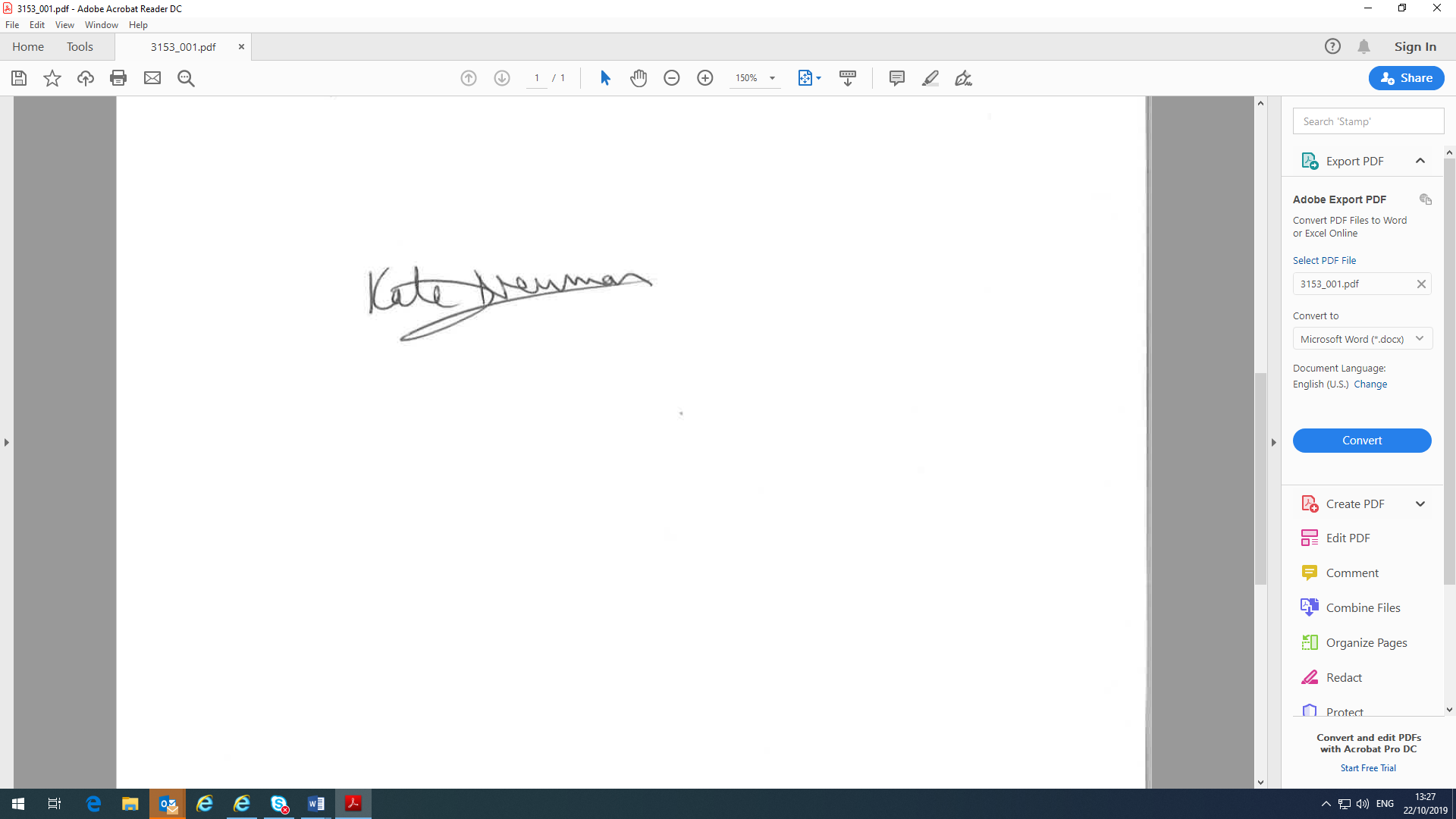
I am conscious that once the outbreak reduces, be that in weeks or months, there will likely be a real need for medical evidence urgently as the Tribunal and the Home Office get back to ‘business as usual’. Over the coming weeks I will do all I can to try to alleviate any backlogs that are at risk of building up at that point by doing what I can now. However, please bear with me and the team; this is unchartered territory for all of us. **Equally, if your client’s case becomes urgent in any way, shape or form, do not hesitate to contact us to discuss this. If we can help with some form of medical evidence, even if it is not our usual form, we will do this for you**.

***Contacting us***

Please continue to submit referrals to us via [MLRReferrals@freedomfromtorture.org](mailto:MLRReferrals@freedomfromtorture.org). If you call a member of our team and choose to leave a voicemail, I strongly suggest that you also send us an email. The MLR team is working remotely and while voicemails are being checked as frequently as possible, as I am sure you can understand, work pressures at this time mean that voicemails may not be picked up as frequently as usual.

I wish you, your colleagues and your families all the best in these challenging times.

Yours sincerely,



**National Medico Legal Report Services Manager**

**Freedom From Torture**

1. We offer a variety of MLRs (psych only, combined psych/physical, interim, addendum and reports by clients’ therapists if they receive therapy at FFT) along with clinical letters which are letters written by a client’s FFT therapist and clinical response letters which is a letter written by our Head of Doctors addressing errors in the interpretation of medical evidence in a negative Home Office or Tribunal decision. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)