

Exploring the Future of Open Justice



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Policy Lab is a small team of designers, anthropologists and policy makers based in the Cabinet Office and working on projects across government. We were established to develop, test and demonstrate experimental and people-centred approaches to tackling the government's most complicated policy challenges.

How do we maintain open justice in a digital world?

This pack contains seven scenarios that are aimed to provoke discussion around this question. All scenarios centres around a character who wants to view (or at least get information on) a court case and uses digital services to do so. Six of these describes hypothetical digital services and interactions, and one describes what is currently in place. The pack also contains a number cards where participants can draw and describe their own scenario.

How to use:

Ideally used in a focus group or one-to-one interview. Though you are free to experiment with the structure, we recommend getting the participant(s) to either read to themselves or out loud (if in a group) a scenario, and to discuss it before moving onto the next. We would hope that the discussion will be free flowing but you can help facilitate by asking questions such as, but not limited to:

What are your initial thoughts?

What do you think [the character] is feeling or thinking?

If you were in [the character]'s position, would you do this?

What appeals to you, if anything?

What concerns, if any?

What could be the consequences (good or bad) if this digital service was in place?

What's missing?

Try to tailor your questions. Some scenarios may have more specific questions on the digital service itself. For example, on guidance you may ask what kind of content participants would like to have included.

Attempt to give each scenario an equal amount of time for discussion, but be flexible. Encourage open conversation and don't be afraid of going to unexpected places. If you feel that it is going too off-track, try to bring it back by asking a question or moving on to the next scenario.

It is important to relay to the participants that these are **not proposed government policy**, nor are they necessarily meant to show 'good' solutions. They are prompts to explore how participants may feel about the future of open justice.

After listening to a true crime podcast series, Julia is curious to see a courtroom in action.

“Oh right,” she thinks, “courtrooms are open to the public, I can go on my day off!”

She didn’t want to just turn up randomly and wasn’t sure where to go.

Julia searches online and find a list of courts that hears criminal cases. There aren’t any listings of what cases are being heard on what day, and she can see that these courts also hears lots of other types of cases.

Julia isn’t really interested in seeing anything other than a criminal case, but is sure she could grab a hold of some listings if she emails the general enquiries address. No such luck. She is told she would have to turn up on the day and see what’s available.



Tom has always been a little curious about courtrooms. He is vaguely aware that people can go and see cases, perhaps a friend had mentioned it to him in the past or he had read it somewhere. Though he would like to go, he has no idea how or what it would entail.

One day, he googles ‘viewing a court case’, and the first result is a government website with a ‘how to’ guide. After reading the guide, he notices that the website has a link to a search engine. It lets him search for upcoming cases by type, name and location. Tom also discovers that old cases are available to watch and these can be filtered by outcome.

“Great, there’s a case that looks interesting near me... though maybe I can watch a few recent ones,” he thinks, “just to see what they’re like before I go.”



Open Justice has become part of the national curriculum for citizenship.

Dipesh and his classmates are in Year 10. Their citizenship class that day was about how you go about watching a court case.

His teacher explains the concept of open justice, and shows them a live stream of a real court case as part of the lesson. Dipesh had never really thought about court cases beyond TV shows before today's class, and is looking forward to chatting to his parents about what he has learnt. He is also excited about their class trip to the courtroom next week.

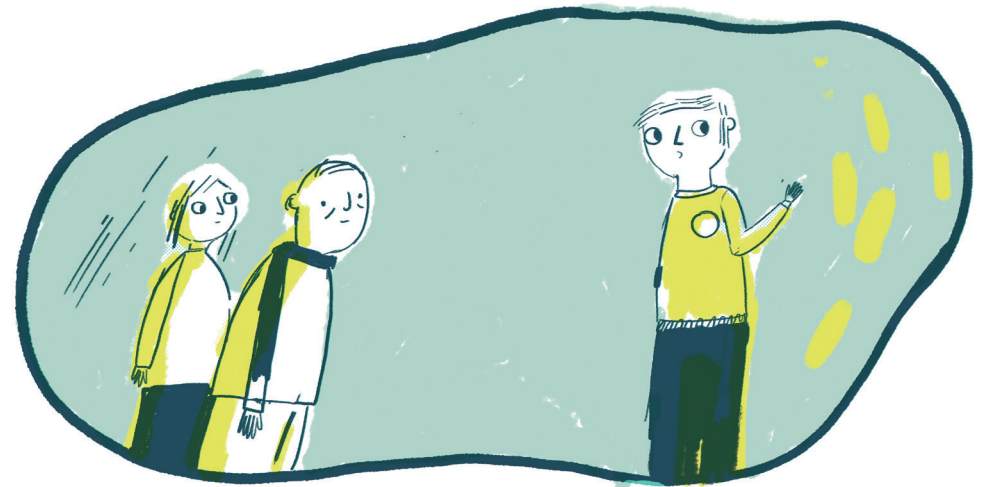


Megan is a law student and goes to her local court to observe cases often.

When she visits, she goes to an individual viewing booth where she can bring her books to take notes and look up references, as well as bring a well needed cup of coffee!

In the booth, she can search for a case based on type, location and defendant name, and watch any live court case around the country. There is also a selection of historical court cases from the last 3 years that she can watch, which she can also filter by outcome. On her first visit, she remembers watching an introductory video with a virtual tour of the courtroom.

Sometimes her study group will book a group booth in advance. While individual booths are set up as study spaces, group booths are designed to be interactive, allowing them to have discussions. Volunteers are sometimes available to speak to group bookings to help them understand what's going on in the case.



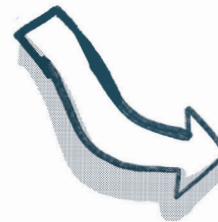
Brian had wanted to see a court case since he was a child but never gone because he was anxious about accessibility.

One day, a close friend sends him a link to the Open Justice Youtube channel where they have a selection of livestreams from court cases around the country.

Excited, Brian has a quick look at all the livestreams before picking one that seems interesting. It is a robbery case in the Crown court. While he is watching, his flatmate comes over and lets out a gasp of surprise. "I know him!" she says, pointing to the defendant, "he used to be in my class at school!"

She leans over Brian and screenshots the video quickly.

"Can you send me the link? I have to send this to my old school friends!"



Lucy has recently viewed a court case. While she was leaving the courtroom, she saw a poster that said she could sign up online for automatic email updates on any case.

She was interested in the outcome but thought it unlikely that she would come back again to see anymore of it. She went to the website as directed and searched to find the case she attended. She signed up for updates. It is now a few weeks later. She is out walking her dog when her phone buzzes. There is an email letting her know that the case has been resolved and telling her what the outcome was.

Later, Lucy chats to friend who tells her that she had signed up updates when she was viewing a court case online. There was a button she could click that automatically signed her up, and she heard there was a similar function in viewing booths.

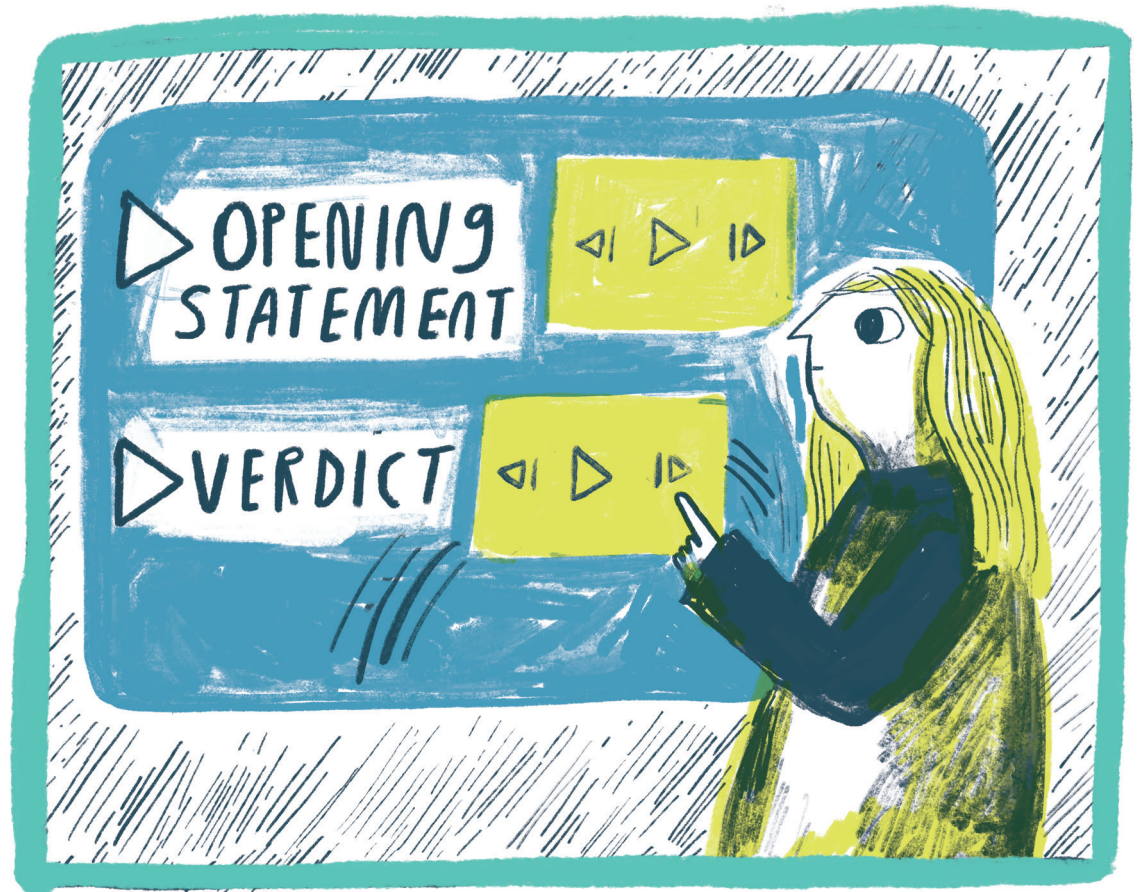


Daniella is watching a historical case in a viewing booth for an essay she was writing for school, but is having trouble understanding what is happening. The case is several hours long and she is struggling to keep her attention from drifting. Much of it seems irrelevant or too technical. She notices that there is a link next to the full video that takes her to an abridged version.

It is an hour-long video of 'highlights,' a compilation of snippets from the case including key moments such as the opening arguments and the verdict.

"Great, these are the bits I need!"

When she goes home, she looks up another case that she wants to include in her essay and finds, to her relief, that it also has an abridged version.



Draw Your Own

Draw your scenario here...

Describe your scenario here...