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10/01/25

## LAPG Member Update

Issue 1 of 2025

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## LAPG Membership – Renew for 2025

Happy New Year legal aid lawyers! We hope you had a chance to take a proper break over the festive period. We know that legal issues don't disappear over Xmas (and many get far worse) so many of you would have worked right through. We salute your ongoing commitment to your work and your clients, and are looking forward to being by your side in 2025.



The start of a new year is a time of reflection for many as we look back on the previous year and wonder what is in store for the year ahead. We know that for many legal aid practitioners any period of reflection is often dominated by thoughts on how much longer you can sustain legal aid work in such challenging circumstances. With glimmers of hope from the announcements about civil (well some civil) and criminal legal aid fee increases, we are hoping that over the coming year that assessment of what is sustainable might be positive in 2025.

We are incredibly proud of the work of our members. From the life-changing results you achieve at the coalface every day, to the input you provide on policy work and campaigning, it is a privilege to work with so many incredible social justice champions. As a membership organisation, we rely heavily on your support to carry out our activities – consultations, training courses, member updates, conferences, the LALYs, political influencing – all designed to improve the legal aid scheme and increase access to justice. Thank you to the many firms and not-for-profits which have already renewed their membership for 2025. If you're yet to renew, [please do visit our website](#) where you can complete the online renewal process.

As we've done in recent years, we will soon be changing our communications channels to those organisations who have renewed for 2025. Paid-

up members will receive our full range of services, but we're going to have to restrict services for those who have not renewed.

A quick note too on our aging website. We're in the process of updating the platform that hosts our website. Many of you will have received strange, cryptic messages over the festive period, generated by a glitch in our website, one of the many reasons it needs to be updated. Apologies for any confusion caused by those messages. Do get in touch with our membership guru, [Anna Neira Quesada](#), if you have received odd emails from us, or if you have any questions about the membership renewal process.

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## Criminal Legal Aid News

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### Verification Deadline for Stage 1 of the Crime Contract Procurement Process

A quick reminder that the deadline for submitting compliant verification information is **11:59pm on 31 January 2025**.

[You can read the news story here.](#)

**Note also that Stage 2** of the procurement process is open and will close at 23:59 on 30 April 2025. Those tendering in this stage will be able to commence contract work on 1 October 2025 and join duty rotas from January 2026, subject to meeting the stated requirements.

### Overnight accommodation and subsistence rates

A reminder that from 5 December 2024, the guideline rates for overnight accommodation and subsistence increased for both providers and experts. The rates increased to up to £165 in London (within the M25) and up to £100 elsewhere (per person, per night, inclusive of VAT). The overnight subsistence rate will also increase from £21 to £25. The rarely used personal incidental allowance will be removed.

[Read more here](#)

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## LAA's Unbilled Inactive Cases Exercise

Published by the LAA on 9 January 2025:

### **'What is the exercise?**

*In January 2024, we contacted providers who had records in the Client and Case Management System (CCMS), and older civil systems, to ensure that cases that appeared inactive were updated and billed in a reasonable timeframe.*

*Of these cases, we are aware of around 7,000 cases where we have been told work has completed on the case and the provider is intending to bill, but no bill has yet been paid.*

*In January 2025 we will be sending a reminder to any firm with one or more cases in this list and prompting them to submit their claim for payment.*

### **Why these cases?**

*These are cases on which Payments on Account (POA) have been made and in January 2024, flagged in our systems as inactive. This means there has been no significant activity recorded in our case management systems in the past 12 months. Activity in this context means the submission of an Application, Amendment, Outcome, Bill (including POA or bill from counsel), provider transfer request, submission of a Very High Cost Case (VHCC) case plan, allocating costs to counsel or requesting a prior authority over the previous 365 days.*

*The LAA will send prompts to providers where they have cases from the exercise completed in January 2024 and the response was the case was 'work completed, to be billed', but as of January 2025 remain unbilled.*

*Ensuring that only genuinely ongoing cases are in our system helps us to predict legal aid expenditure. This is of financial benefit to providers as it ensures timely payment for work undertaken and ensures effective risk management from an LAA perspective.*

### **What should I expect from LAA?**

*Any provider with at least one case in the list will be sent an email with a spreadsheet containing the case(s) on it.*

*There is no need to reply to the email, instead you should focus billing activity to make sure this case gets*



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paid and closed.

*Where this does not happen The LAA will send one final prompt, after which we will consider whether it remains appropriate to leave the case open and may take steps to close the case and recover any outstanding POA that is live on the case.*

*If you are no longer planning to claim for that case, please inform us and we will take steps to close the case, recoup any outstanding POA and place the case in archive.'*

[You can read the full story here](#)

Please do contact us if you have any questions about this process.

### **HLPAS tender: Barnsley and/or Lancaster**

The LAA is inviting providers who hold a Housing & Debt contract to express an interest in delivering the Housing Loss Prevention Advice Service in Barnsley and/or Lancaster.

[Read the full story here](#)

### **Fees consultation for housing, debt, immigration and asylum work**

As reported in our two last updates, the MoJ intends to consult in January 2025 on increasing legal aid fees for those working in the housing (housing and debt) and immigration (immigration and asylum) sectors. The aim is to increase fees to a rate in the region of £65/£69 per hour (non-London/London), or provide a 10% uplift, whichever is higher. Fixed fees will be uplifted by an amount proportional to the increase in the underlying hourly rate for that work. This will be implemented in 2025-26 with costs scaling up to £20 million by 2027-28. From our conversations with the MOJ, it is encouraging to note that some of the individual fee components will increase by 30% or more, which should make a significant difference.

The consultation period will be 8 weeks, so should run to the latter part of March. We are keen to be as prepared as we can be to respond. In particular, we would like to work closely with some immigration and housing providers to model the potential impact of the fee increases on their services, and to discuss how they will approach any increase in income. We think that modelling the proposals against actual organisational

outputs will help us to provide a robust response to the consultation, as well as provide a framework for pushing for fee increases in other contract areas. If you would like to work with us on this please contact our [Director of Legal Aid Policy, Kate Pasfield](#), to express an interest.

We will provide further information on the consultation itself as soon as we have more details. In the meantime, if you do have any thoughts, please get in touch with Kate.

### **Civil High Cost Family clinic - 22 January 2025**

The LAA's HCF Clinic on 22 January 2025, part of their #HelpUsSayYes campaign, offers the opportunity to book a virtual face-to-face, 20-minute appointment with experienced case managers. Providers can discuss ongoing case specific issues. Registrations are limited and the deadline is Wednesday 15 January.

[Register for webinar here](#)

### **Re-opening the Civil Contract tender process**

A further opportunity to tender for the 2024 Standard Civil Contract opened on Wednesday 4 December 2024. Current providers do not need to submit a response to this procurement process unless they wish to apply for new offices or categories of law. Applicants will be able to tender in all civil categories of law.

[You can read the news story here](#)

Having discussed this with the LAA, the new 'always-on process', which removed LAA-imposed deadlines on the tender process is going well. Some organisations who submitted tenders in December 2024 have already been issued with contracts. Organisations who fell short of the verification process as part of the previous tender have been able to use the 'passporting' process to correct errors in their last tender and submit compliant tenders.

### **Submit a Contracted Work and Administration (CWA) claim online**

For information on how CWA works online: how to claim, bulk loading, outcomes, new matter starts and guidance [read here](#).

### **Updated Civil Finance Electronic Handbook**

[An updated version of the Handbook](#) was published on 20 December 2024.

Page 188 (Appendix 11 – Version History) provides an overview of the amendments.

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## Cross-Cutting News & Events

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### LAA payments to providers

[Check dates for processing](#) (crime and civil) and planned BACS payments, get financial statements, switch to variable monthly payments.

### Civil and Criminal Financial Eligibility Tests

Legislation is now in force to disregard certain compensation payments from the financial eligibility tests for civil and criminal legal aid.

The legislation came into force on Wednesday 20 November 2024 and affects applications for legal aid made on or after this date.

[Read more about the new legislation](#)

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## Sector News & Events

### PLP report: Immigration legal aid: new depths of unmet need?

Public Law Project has published an important new report, which is summarised as follows:

*The Government's new fee increase for immigration legal aid could not have been announced at a more vital time. [PLP's new analysis](#) of potential provider capacity has revealed shocking new depths of unmet need in south-west England.*

*In November 2023, the Ministry of Justice set up a list of providers to give advice remotely to people in the south-west who needed immigration legal aid. But when PLP researchers looked into this list in 2024, they consistently found limited capacity: only 11% of providers on the list could actually take on asylum appeals.*



"The Legal Aid Agency must reassess how they monitor capacity and get a meaningful picture of the state of the sector," said Dr. Jo Hynes. "The Government must also start addressing the long-term structural challenges alongside this very welcome fee uplift."

### **PLP immigration training - Challenging unfairness in the immigration system**

**A series of six 90-min webinars presented over three days on Zoom**

**25 February 2025 - 27 February 2025**

This event is for those seeking to challenge discrimination and unfairness in the immigration system, using strategic legal research and policy work. The topics cover socio-economic discrimination to asylum and trafficking, and a how-to on running systemic cases to challenge unfairness in the immigration system as a whole.

Presented in partnership with the **Immigration Law Practitioners' Association (ILPA)**.

**All sessions will be recorded for delegates to access post-event.**

#### **This training is intended for:**

- Lawyers and advisers across immigration, human rights and public law
- Those working on immigration policy, including in the civil service, think tanks, and policy organisations, and researchers
- Frontline immigration organisations

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## **LAPG News & Events**

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### **LAPG research project – non-chargeable time in legal aid work – PARTICIPANTS NEEDED**

We are still on the look-out for participants for our non-chargeable time research project.

As reported in previous updates, LAPG is conducting a research project in an effort to capture the amount of time spent on non-chargeable tasks generated by undertaking





casework and operating under a legal aid contract – so both casework and non-casework tasks. These tasks can be many and varied taking differing amounts of time. Some are conducted daily, some weekly and others less frequently, such as file reviews and audits.

The overarching aim of the project is to compile robust empirical data on hidden or ‘non-chargeable’ costs of doing legal aid work, in order to influence policy in relation to legal aid funding and the operation of the scheme. We plan to share an anonymised analysis of the data that we capture with the MoJ and the LAA in order to demonstrate the time that legal aid providers spend on work that they cannot charge for. We have three research objectives:

1. Identify and quantify ‘hidden’ but unavoidable costs associated with legal aid contracts.
2. Analyse what tasks are intrinsically linked to the proper management of casework but are not currently claimable time in the Cost Assessment Guidance and Criminal Bills Assessment Manual.
3. Evaluate the complexity of the funding scheme and contractual framework and identify elements that may create complexity without adequate justification. This may include identifying of duplication of tasks required by legal aid contracts and regulatory or quality assurance requirements.

Having completed the pilot phase, we are now recruiting participants for the main phase of the research project and a number organisations have signed up and started recording their non-chargeable time for us. But, we still need a larger pool of legal aid providers to join our project.

We need to ensure that we have as wide a variety of types of providers as possible, so large, medium and small firms and not-for-profits, covering all areas of legal aid practice, including mixed practices who also carry out privately funded work.

Please get in touch with our Head of Learning and Development Andrea Shumaker ([Andrea.Shumaker@lapg.co.uk](mailto:Andrea.Shumaker@lapg.co.uk)) if you want to discuss getting involved. We really do need your help to try to tackle the enormous complexity,

unpaid and wasted time associated with legal aid work.

## **New Toolkit - Introduction to Managing Family and Civil Legal Aid Contracts**

This new Toolkit draws together key information to enable practices to understand their legal aid contract. Particularly useful for those new to delivering legal aid, it links to more detailed sources from the LAA, LAPG and others. Designed as a comprehensive resource for the people in your organisation responsible for day to day management of your legal aid contract.

### **Subscribe to the toolkit here**

This annual subscription will keep you up to date and regularly informed of all key changes.

LAPG Members - **£100** per annum

Non-members of LAPG - **£400** per annum

Included in your purchase is the Toolkit itself as well as access to a Community Board.

The Toolkit has seven main headings:

- Some Key Changes Between the 2018 Civil Contract and the 2024 Civil Contract
- Contracts Overview
- Key Issues Under the Standard Civil Contract 2024
- Managing Casework
- Managing Billing
- Managing Quality & Compliance
- Sources of Support

The Community Board notifies subscribers of all official amendments/additions to the contract and supporting documents. Updates will be incorporated into the Toolkit, which will be kept under constant review. The Community Board is a peer network which enables subscribers to interact with others managing contracts.

Hosted on our learning platform, Thinkific, the Toolkit is an intuitive and easily navigable resource.

### **Contributors**

Vicky Ling has spent her career in the advice and legal sector and has worked with a wide range of solicitors' firms and not for profit legal practices.

She is a Chartered Quality Professional and provides expert consultancy support in relation to practice management and legal aid service delivery issues and has written extensively on these topics. She edits the LAG Legal Aid Handbook.

Matthew Howgate is an Organisation Development Consultant and Director of the LAPG Management & Leadership Hub. He started his career as a legal aid solicitor and has spent the last 15 years working as a consultant across the legal aid and advice sectors.

### **Training courses**

#### ***\*New Training: People Management - Building & Managing Your Team\****

Delivered by experienced organisational development consultants Vicky Ling and Matt Howgate, this two-day online course focuses on the key management skills needed to build, strengthen and manage teams while enhancing their performance. Each session runs online from 10am to 4pm with breaks and is accompanied by a full set of written materials. This session is perfectly pitched at new managers (and potential managers) but is a great reminder session for those who have been managing for some time.

#### ***Session 1: Building Your Team - 21<sup>st</sup> January 2025***

With reference to SRA, legal aid, Lexcel and SQM requirements, participants will understand how to deliver effective recruitment, induction and probation, training and development, delegation, creating healthy workplaces and how to manage people exiting the firm.

#### ***Session 2: Managing Your Team - 25<sup>th</sup> February 2025***

With reference to SRA, legal aid, Lexcel and SQM requirements, participants will understand how to deliver effective supervision; performance management, giving feedback, dealing with bullying and inappropriate behaviour, whistleblowing and handling grievances and disciplinary matters.

LAPG members receive a £80 discount on the course fee, bringing it down from £500 to £420. Please click [here](#) to book your place now! If you have any issues or require an invoice please email

[Andrea Shumaker](#). We offer three discount codes, JFF, for Justice First Fellows, JFFO, for Just First Fellowship Host Organisation employees, and multiple-tickets, to be used when subscribing more than one participant on the course.

\*Must be a current host organisation. Current host organisations are eligible for the discount during the calendar year their fellow is placed with them.

### ***Supervision Courses***

We have confirmed the dates for our 2025 Supervision Courses scheduled for 16<sup>th</sup> January, 13<sup>th</sup> March, 15<sup>th</sup> May, 10<sup>th</sup> July, 18<sup>th</sup> September and 25<sup>th</sup> November. You can book your place on any of the remaining 2025 training dates below:

[16<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 2025](#)

[13<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2025](#)

[15<sup>TH</sup> MAY 2025](#)

[10<sup>TH</sup> JULY 2025](#)

[18<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2025](#)

[25<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2025](#)

Designed for new LAA Supervisors or those wishing to refresh their supervisory skills, our course helps you meet a key component in securing and then effectively operating your legal aid contract and meeting the LAA's supervisor standards. We again welcome Matt Howgate and Vicky Ling as our tutors for this course. You will receive practical help filling out supervisor forms, learn how to conduct file reviews and how to keep up to date with LAA changes.

LAPG members receive a £40 discount on the course fee, bringing it down from £250 to £210 for the day. Book multiple delegates from your organisation and receive an additional 10% discount.

We have reformatted the course so that we are covering all of the same content across one day rather than two days. The content in this course is relevant for both crime and civil practitioners.

If you would like to know more about this course, or to reserve your place, contact [Andrea Shumaker](#).

### ***Online Introduction to Civil Legal Aid Course***

The Civil Legal Aid scheme is incredibly complex and the consequences of getting something wrong can be damaging to a client's case or financially damaging to the organisation doing the work – sometimes both. We have therefore developed the first module in a series which provides a general introduction to the civil legal aid scheme aimed at trainees, paralegals, junior lawyers and those that wish to refresh their knowledge having worked in the sector for some time.

We have moved this online module onto a new training platform, Thinkific! This new platform allows for growth and development of the course and a better overall experience for the user. The same information is covered and it is still entirely self-paced, you will still receive access to the course for 12 months.

We now offer this course in written and video versions! Once you are enrolled on the course you will have the option to read through the material yourself or watch a video! You can mix and match how you learn to complete the course in a way that best suits your learning style and time constraints. All the video and written content are available on the Thinkific platform and you will have full access to both versions.

If you would like to subscribe for just £99 please click [here](#). If you have any issues or require an invoice please email [Andrea Shumaker](#). We offer three discount codes, JFF, for Justice First Fellows, JFFO, for Just First Fellowship Host Organisation employees, and multiple-tickets, to be used when subscribing more than one participant on the course.

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It's great to be back. We're already thinking about the civil fees consultation in a week or so, the next stage of the Spending Review and what that might bring, the LALY25 launch in Feb, our 40th celebrations from March, the next round of APPG meetings and a host of new training courses we are working on for practitioners. It is going to be another busy year legal aiders!

Follow LAPG on Twitter [@WeAreLAPG](#)  
[#WeAreLegalAid](#)  
10/01/25

Take care one and all,

**Chris Minnoch, CEO [@ChrisLAPG](#)**



**Subscribe to our courses**

Would you like to contribute to our Member Updates and share news and information with other members? If so, just email us and we can discuss how you can best contribute.

Thank you for being brave enough to be part of the LAPG community!





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