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10/04/24

## LAPG Member Update

Issue 13 of 2024

Welcome to the latest edition of the LAPG Member Update.

A reminder that **Legal Aid Lawyer of the Year awards nominations** close on Monday 22nd April 23:59 – i.e. one minute to midnight. See below for more information. The ceremony will be held in central London on 5th July 2024.

### Civil Legal Aid News

- 2024 Standard Civil Contract amendment notice from 9 April 2024 on verification requirements
- Review of Civil Legal Aid: Comparative analysis of legal aid systems report
- Additional Procurement Process for the 2024 Standard Civil Contract
- High-Cost Family (HCF) virtual clinic
- Immigration providers south west support directory
- Civil processing dates
- Civil legal aid application forms: High Profile Cases Standard Operating Procedure updated
- Civil legal aid: means testing – Updated Key Card no. 60 and Means Assessment Guidance

### Criminal Legal Aid News

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- CRM4s (application for prior authority)
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- Renew your LAPG membership to continue to benefit from our support
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## Civil Legal Aid News

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### 2024 Standard Civil Contract amendment notice from 9 April 2024 on verification requirements

This amendment applies to any provider who is going through the verification process, and whose SQM certificate is due to expire before the contract start date and have a re-audit booked. We raised an issue about SQM reaccreditation with the LAA on behalf of a member firm this week. The LAA said they were aware and have now published a contract amendment notice clarifying the wording required to be provided by the auditors. This follows complaints from some providers that the LAA's chosen auditors, Recognising Excellence, had been refusing to provide the necessary confirmation required by the tender provisions that 'the certificate will remain in force until the re-audit is complete'. This had meant that affected firms were not being considered by the LAA as having complied with the verification process. The LAA has now amended the required wording in the verification document.

[You can find the amendment notice here.](#) It appears that any firms affected do not need to do anything and the LAA will be in touch with you.



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[Please let us know](#) if you still have concerns about this issue.

### **Review of civil legal aid: Comparative analysis of legal aid systems report**

The HM Government Open Innovation Team (OIT) has produced a report that examines policy approaches to civil legal aid delivery taken in other legal aid systems as part of the Comparative Analysis work stream of RoCLA.

They say that the purpose of this research is to provide policy learning and practical insights on civil legal aid in six other systems. The comparators are Australia, Canada, Finland, the Netherlands and the USA, and within the United Kingdom, Scotland.

Policies and initiatives in these comparators have been assessed against their potential to meet the objectives of RoCLA and inform the next stage of policy development.

The main themes explored in this report are broadly:

- **Ensuring the sustainability of the provider base.**
- **Enabling prevention and early intervention on civil issues.**
- **Supporting innovation in civil legal aid service delivery.**

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

A reminder that this report is the result of one of a number of RoCLA work strands which, according to the current timetable, will culminate with the publication of a Green Paper on the future of civil legal aid in July 2024.

### **Additional Procurement Process for the 2024 Standard Civil Contract**

Another reminder that the LAA has announced a further procurement process for the 2024 Standard Civil Contract.

[You can read about it here](#)

This additional tender opened on Monday 18 March 2024 and has a **closing deadline of 5pm on Monday 22 April 2024.**

[The tender documentation can be found here](#)

## [High-Cost Family \(HCF\) virtual clinic](#)

The LAA has asked us to publicise this webinar. They say there are a few places left on the HCF Clinic on Wednesday 24 April. This offers the opportunity to book a virtual face-to-face, 20-minute appointment with experienced LAA case managers. Providers can discuss ongoing case specific issues. Registrations are limited and the deadline is Wednesday 17 April.

[Register here >>](#)

## [Immigration providers south west support directory](#)

[This directory](#) was last updated on 3 April 2024.

## [Civil processing dates](#)

[Use this link](#) to check timescales for the LAA to process your work such as civil applications and bills.

## [Civil legal aid application forms: High Profile Cases Standard Operating Procedure updated](#)

The LAA has updated the [Standard Operating Procedure for High Profile Cases](#), which exists to provide an internal LAA monitoring and reporting framework for a range of cases that meet the definition set out in section 2 of the SOP. The existence of the SOP has generated concerns for practitioners over the years. If you have any concerns about the LAA's latest amendments or any other issues in relation to High Profile Cases please do get in touch.

## [Civil legal aid: means testing – Updated Key Card no. 60 and Means Assessment Guidance](#)

The LAA has published an updated Key Card (April 2024 no 60) and Means Assessment Guidance to reflect changes to dependants allowances, state benefits and tax rates.

[You can find the information here](#)

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## Criminal Legal Aid News

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## Crime Lower Consultation - Proposed Pay Increase for Police Station and Youth Court work - but nothing for prison lawyers



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This consultation has now closed. [You can read our response here.](#) We want to thank the members of our Advisory Committee who contributed to this response.

The consultation proposes to increase Crime Lower fees for Police Station and Youth Court work but once again the government has declined to propose a fee increase for prison law work, despite a dramatic drop in provider numbers carrying out prison law work.

[The announcement on 29 January is here](#)

[The consultation is here](#)

### CRM4s (application for prior authority)

The LAA wants to remind providers that the timescale to process a CRM4 is five working days. They ask that you submit your application in a timely manner and to include the expert's quote. Remember that prior authority is not mandatory. If you require urgent expert funding and do not have time to apply, you will need to justify your costs on taxation.

### Pre-recorded evidence webinar for advocates

HMCTS is developing technology for pre-recorded evidence (PRE) to support the delivery of Section 28 of the Youth Justice and Criminal Evidence Act 1999. There will be an interactive webinar for advocates on Thursday 11 April at 4:30pm to learn more about the new technology and how to access recordings. There will be a demonstration of PRE, the new functionality and its benefits and a Q&A session.

[Register here >>](#)

### Crime processing dates

[Use this link](#) to check timescales for the LAA to process your work such as prior authority applications and graduated fee claims.

### CRM12 application deadline set for 10 July 2024

The LAA has published updated information about the CRM12 application deadline for adding duty

solicitors to the rotas commencing 1 October 2024. The submission deadline is 23:59 Wednesday 10 July 2024.

[See the full update here](#)

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## Cross-Cutting News & Events

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### Cloud Video Platform update

From Friday 5 April, people joining a remote hearing on Cloud Video Platform (CVP) as an observer will be able to join the hearing with their camera and audio switched off. This will allow observers to join the hearing without the risk of interrupting hearings. Hearing observers should choose the observer only option when joining their session. The way people request to observe a hearing will not change.

[Read guidance on joining a hearing on CVP >>](#)

### Legal aid statistics quarterly: October to December 2023

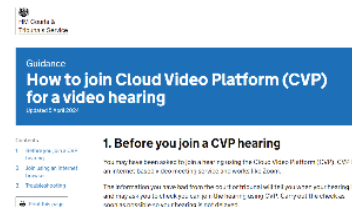
The MOJ has published the quarterly legal aid statistics, which covers activity in the legal aid system for England and Wales, including criminal and civil legal aid, family mediation, providers of legal aid, client characteristics and Central Funds payments.

[You can read the statistics here](#)

Here is a summary from the statisticians for those who don't have time to read the full report:

*This publication shows that expenditure across civil legal aid has increased year on year and has also increased more over the recent quarters. Criminal legal aid expenditure in the most recent quarter is compared to a period covering the impact of industrial action last year in the Crown Court, which in turn reduced workload completed and the associated expenditure, which means that some of the large increases are not indicative of underlying trends in the system.*

*In the last few quarters, we have seen increases in police station claims and a corresponding increase in*



representation orders at the magistrates' court. Expenditure in the police station increased in the quarter again, as expected, due to higher fees for police station advice that were introduced at the end of 2022. Crown Court workload completions are showing a return to more serious types of claim with trials increasing showing impacts of increased resourcing in the criminal courts.

Overall civil expenditure is increasing which is driven by increases in family law expenditure with the number of claims being paid outside of the fixed fee scheme increasing due to more time being taken during the court process. Other non-family workload has not recovered to the same extent, and this is driven by a slow recovery of housing work although again in the last quarter this has increased. Overall civil legal aid workload still remains below pre-pandemic levels although trends are increasing in domestic violence, immigration and mental health.

For detailed analysis of the quarterly statistics, you can sign up for the APPG on Access to Justice's quarterly statistics (and monthly new bulletins) [by contacting APPG supremo Ro Jana](#).

### Legal aid activity in Northern Ireland, period ending 31st March 2023

For the first time, annual legal aid statistics have been published for Northern Ireland covering applications granted and authorised expenditure for criminal and civil cases, alongside applicant and supplier characteristics.

[You can read the report here](#)

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## Sector News & Events

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### Public Law Project anti-discrimination conference – 19 April 2024

Join PLP on April 19 for their anti-discrimination conference, coproduced by community activists using the law to fight discrimination and uphold their rights.

FINAL DEADLINE FOR IN-PERSON BOOKINGS  
MIDDAY TUESDAY 16th APRIL (please book earlier if you can!).



An event for:

- Community activists and campaigners fighting discrimination by public bodies and Government
- Lawyers and advisers
- Policy people and researchers

Tickets and accessibility:

- Tickets for the [in person event are here](#), for the [online version click here](#).
- Free tickets for activists and very low cost tickets for smaller organisations
- Speech To Text Reporting (STTR) will be available online and at the in-person event via a screen.

A quiet room and qualified counsellor / trauma therapist are available throughout the day.

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## LAPG News & Events

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### [2024 LALY awards nominations - Closing date 22 April 2024](#)

We are now less than two weeks from the nomination deadline for the 2024 Legal Aid Lawyer of the Year awards. The nomination window closes a smidge before midnight on 22 April 2024 so please speak to colleagues about gathering the supporting information required to demonstrate the brilliance and commitment of your nominee individual, team or organisation.

Full details of this year's categories, guidance for nominations and how to submit your nomination can be found on [our sparkly new LALY webpages](#) (with a special thanks to our wonderful Ops lead Anna Neira Quesada). Please also follow @LALYawards on X/Twitter for all the latest news.

[General admission tickets are on sale](#) for this year's ceremony in central London on Friday, 5<sup>th</sup> of July. As always, we've kept the prices low (tickets include a meal and a drinks reception, along with the inspirational ceremony) to make the LALYs as accessible as possible. Discounted tickets are available for members of Young Legal Aid Lawyers





and the Justice First Fellowship.

## **Renew your LAPG membership to continue to benefit from our support**

LAPG membership runs from 1 January to 31 December each year. Thank you to the many member organisations and individuals who have already renewed their membership for 2024.

If you are yet to renew your membership, please get in touch with us as the Early Bird rate expired on 29 February. However our membership fees are still incredibly competitive as we have maintained low fee levels despite rising costs because we know how difficult it is for legal aid providers to cover additional costs for support services.

For those who have not renewed, we have now started to restrict access to:

- Member Updates
- The Member section of our website
- The discount scheme for LAPG training courses and events
- Support with legal aid and practice management issues through our Member Query service

Renewing really couldn't be simpler – you can complete the renewal form online, submit your list of contacts for Member Updates and make payment either through our website or by BACS.

**[Visit the Membership page of our website for more details](#)**

Not sure whether your organisation has renewed or have any questions about membership, please **[get in contact with our Operations Officer, Anna.](#)**

## **LAPG training courses**

### ***Supervision Courses***

Book your place on any of 2024 Supervision Courses below:

**[23 APRIL 2024](#)**

**[2 MAY 2024](#)**

**[8 AUGUST 2024](#)**

**[12 NOVEMBER 2024](#)**

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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I hope you all managed to get away over the Easter break.

Take care one and all,

Chris Minnoch, CEO [@ChrisLAPG](#)

Follow LAPG on Twitter [@WeAreLAPG](#)  
[#WeAreLegalAid](#)  
10/04/24



[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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