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24/04/25

LAPG Member Update

Issue 13 of 2025

Welcome to another round-up of current legal aid and related content in one handy update. We try to provide a good cross-section of useful information on legal aid operational and policy issues, along with relevant news, events and resources. Please do get in touch if you want us to include more (or less) of anything or would like to discuss reaching out to other legal aid practitioners by including content about your own news and events.

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- SAVE THE DATE: LAPG Annual Conference – 20 October 2025 @ A&O Shearman
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Civil Legal Aid News

Means testing guidance update

Following the recent changes to dependants allowances, state benefits and tax rates for 2025/26, the LAA has amended their civil Means Assessment Guidance and published an updated civil means keycard (#61) [which you can find here](#).

Working with the LAA – provider guidance

The LAA has produced [a useful set of guidance](#) on working with them for new and existing civil legal aid providers. It covers various aspects of how to manage your legal aid contract including links to all LAA guidance in one handy document including: CWA, getting started for new providers (which might also be a useful refresh for existing providers), means testing, merits testing, exceptional and complex cases, exceptional case funding, high cost family, civil billing for providers and counsel, and other links to useful general guidance.

It is certainly worth [circulating this document](#) amongst legal aid colleagues (the document is not currently available on the LAA training website but will appear at

some point soon).

Signing up to the new Apply for Civil Legal Aid service

Another quick reminder to sign up to use the new Apply for Civil Legal Aid service to:

- Apply for Domestic Abuse (except for Domestic Abuse protection orders), Section 8 and Special Children Act proceedings
- Apply for passported and non-passported clients (in the above cases only)
- Submit new applications (you will need to manage live cases using CCMS) (in the above cases only)
- Make emergency applications if using delegated functions (above cases only)

The LAA is keen to get as many providers onto the new service as possible and it does appear to be user-friendly and save time. It is currently only available for the areas listed above, but will eventually be rolled out across all categories of civil legal aid.

If you would like to on-board for 'Apply for civil legal aid', email:

LAAapplyonboarding@justice.gov.uk

The LAA will then take you through the on-boarding process and get you started. They will ask you to provide the CCMS usernames and email addresses of all users you would like to on-board.

Civil fixer emails

And another reminder to our members to use the LAA fixer services: the Application Fixer, Civil Claim Fix, and High-Cost Family Fixer emails are all now available and really do save time. These services were developed by the LAA in response to complaints from providers that there was/is a 'culture of refusal' at the LAA when making decisions on whether to grant legal aid or pay for cases.

All three services aim to help the LAA to issue certificates or pay bills more quickly.

[You can find more information here](#)

Criminal Legal Aid News

Notifying the media about reporting restriction applications

HMCTS have asked us to share this update regarding notifying the media about reporting restriction applications.

Under Criminal Procedure Rule Part 6, legal professionals are responsible for notifying media representatives when applying for discretionary Reporting Restriction Orders.

HMCTS has put in place Media Distribution Lists at all Crown Courts, which contain the names of approved journalists and publications who have consented to their email addresses being shared with those applying for reporting restrictions.

When applying for a discretionary Reporting Restriction Order, please contact the admin office at the relevant Crown Court who will provide you with the local Media Distribution List. You should then send those media representatives your application in advance of hearings.

This will ensure that the media are given the opportunity to consider issues, take instructions and prepare representations, as part of upholding the principle of open justice.

Cross-Cutting Legal Aid News

Means Test Review changes

If, like us, you are wondering what has happened to the [MoJ's promised means test review changes](#), following the [outcome of the consultation published in May 2023](#), we can share the following update provided at a recent Civil Contract Consultative Group meeting in response to our request for a timetable for implementation.

'In light of the ongoing Spending Review, Ministers are currently considering their preferred approach to the rules and arrangements governing legal aid financial eligibility. We will update the sector on this as soon as we are able.'

We are now almost two years on from the promised changes which were planned in four stages:

1. Non-means tested areas of civil legal aid
2. Civil means test and contributory system
3. New criminal legal aid means test
4. Removal of Crown Court capital passporting for benefits recipients who are

Currently, only stage 1 has been implemented. We were previously told by the MoJ that they expect all four stages to be complete by Summer 2026, three years after the conclusion of the consultation.

The thresholds are due to be reviewed every three years, and it seems likely that by the time the first three-year deadline has arrived (May 2026), the thresholds will still not have been updated. We are assuming that there will not be a further updating of thresholds undertaken before the changes come in, so they will already be in need of review.

As to the why there has been so little progress, we are told that this is because of the complex nature of the changes and the sheer scale of digital change required across several different LAA systems. This demands a fully integrated approach with rigorous testing of the new systems before they can go live. All of this has to be achieved whilst maintaining the functionality of the existing schemes so that applications can continue to be assessed and processed without adversely affecting clients and providers.

More news on this as, when and if, it is received.

Sector News and Events

Reminder - inaugural PAMELA meeting – 12 June 2025, from 6.30pm

Just a reminder about the inaugural event for [PAMELA, the new Peri-Menopausal and Menopausal Legal Aid Support Network](#). Kindly



hosted by leading legal aid firm Hodge Jones & Allen, the event will bring people together from across the legal aid sector to share their experiences and hear from network founder Dr Laura Janes and writer and women's health expert Kate Muir.

The event will start with drinks, nibble and networking from 6.30pm.

From 7.00pm Dr Janes will introduce the network and women's health expert, documentary maker, and author [Kate Muir](#), who will discuss how perimenopause and menopause affects women at work, particularly in the legal aid sector. Kate will explain the symptoms, treatment and mental health effects of menopause - and how changing hormones affect our careers. Understanding menopausal changes in clients matters too, as well as signposting them to good advice.

The presentation and Q&A will be followed by drinks and networking.

[Register for your free place here](#)

Public Law Project upcoming events

Our friends at the Public Law Project have some really interesting events coming up:

Advanced Judicial Review 2025 – 28-30th April 2025

Know how to do judicial review and want to up-skill? This is the course for you, with insight and outlook across cutting-edge and key areas of practice in judicial review?

[You can find more information and book a place here](#)

Wales Webinar 2025/Gweminar Cymru 2025 – Tuesday 6th May

What is judicial review and how can charities in Wales use it?

[You can find more information and book a place here](#)

Public Law and Technology Conference - Monday 9th June 2025

Is the law keeping pace with technology to protect people's rights and uphold transparency and accountability standards? How can public, regulatory and human rights law help ensure technologies are deployed for the benefit of society?

[You can find more information and book a place here](#)

Online judicial review conference – 30th June – 3rd July 2025

A complete online course on how to do judicial review, run in short sessions on Zoom over 4 days.

[You can find more information and book a place here](#)

Garden Court Chambers COP seminar - 8 May 2025

Free Hybrid Seminar – Court of Protection and Complex Housing cases – Thursday 8th May 2025 -

This seminar will explore the use of the Court of Protection in addressing

complex issues of housing providing arising from hoarding, possession claims (including involving anti-social behaviour), welfare benefits and homelessness.

[You can find more information and book a place here](#)

LAG seminar - 21 May 2025

Beyond Borders: Advancing Justice for Migrants – 21st May 2025

Join us on 21st May 2025 for Legal Action Group's Beyond Borders: Advancing Justice for Migrants conference, sponsored by Doughty Street Chambers and Garden Court Chambers Community Care Law Team.

[You can find more information and book a place here](#)

LAPG News and Events

Nominations for the Legal Aid Lawyer of the Year awards 2025 have now closed



Thank you to everyone who submitted or supported a nomination for this year's LALY awards. We're absolutely delighted with the nominations received and so grateful to everyone for taking the time and effort to put them together – we know this is no small task when you all have so many plates to spin.

The judging panel meets on 13 May and a few days after that we will be announcing the finalists. Look out for news in these Updates, and follow the LALY awards on the LAPG LinkedIn account and our LALY social media channels: #LALY25 @LALYawards @lalyawards.bskysocial

A huge thank you to everyone who donated to support the Legal Aid Newcomer award category – you are all officially Friends of LALY25!

[Tickets are now on sale for the glittering ceremony in London on 4 July 2025](#) where we will announce the winners. Join us for an unabashed celebration of the power and impact of legal aid and of the expertise and commitment of legal aid practitioners.

SAVE THE DATE: LAPG Annual Conference – 20 October 2025 @ A&O Shearman

We're delighted to announce the date of this year's Annual Legal Aid Conference, which A&O Shearman has very kindly offered to host for us in their office near Liverpool St in London.

We'll be sending out further details as we develop the programme over the coming weeks and months. We'd love to hear from you about what you want from this year's conference. While we plan to cover a wide array of policy issues, along with content to help practitioners develop expertise and support their team and clients, we're also always interested to hear from members about what content they would like to see. [Please do get in touch with your ideas or proposals.](#)

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. Many of you will have seen that we used preliminary findings, provided by Dr Jo Wilding, from this project in [our civil fees consultation response](#). We know that the MOJ and LAA are very interested in the issues that our initial efforts have highlighted, such as the sheer amount of free work that they are getting out of practitioners and support and management staff.

We have a number of organisations engaged in the current data collection phase of the project, time recording using the research tool we have developed. However, to make a compelling case to government, backed up by robust data, we would like to recruit a larger pool of participants across the sector for this important piece of work.

We are reliably informed by participants in the pilot phase of the project that the time it takes to complete the time recording spreadsheet we have developed, is between 5-10 minutes per day so not onerous.

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 launched this project in response to providers voicing their concerns about the ever increasing burden of non-chargeable time involved in legal aid work.

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 duplication of tasks required by legal aid contracts and regulatory or quality assurance requirements.

Please get in touch with our Head of Learning and Development Andrea Shumaker (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.

LAPG Training & Resources

Here are the latest courses on offer to support you with your legal aid casework and with managing your legal aid contracts.

New Online Course: Introduction to Immigration & Asylum Legal Aid

We have launched the third instalment of our legal aid training series aimed at Immigration & Asylum Practitioners! This course is perfect for trainees, paralegals, junior lawyers as well as those that wish to refresh their knowledge in these areas. This course provides your new and junior staff with comprehensive training in an easy and accessible way, perfect for onboarding.

A big thank you to Matthew Davies from Wilson Solicitors and Jawaid Luqmani from Luqmani Thompson for writing this module!

Course content:

Immigration Overview

- What is in Scope
- How is Work Divided Between Different Legal Aid Types
- Cases with Previous Legal Aid Advisors
- Compliance and LAA Auditing

Controlled Work: Starting it Right

- The Basics
- Signing Up a Client for Legal Help or Controlled Legal Representation
- Means – The Financial Eligibility Test
- Merits – The Two Tests
- Running the Case Successfully Under Legal Aid

Running the Case Successfully Under Legal Aid

- Is it a Standard Fee Matter or an Hourly Rates Matter
- Standard Fees
- Time Recording and Attendance Notes
- Attending Home Office Interviews
- Getting Paid

Immigration Certificate Funding (Licensed Work)

- Immigration Certificate Funding (Licensed Work)
- CCMS Applications
- Merits Assessment
- Means Assessment
- Limitations on Funding Certificates
- Costs Risks
- High Costs Cases
- Inter Partes Costs
- Split Costs Orders

Contributors

Matthew Davies, Deputy Managing Partner, Wilson Solicitors LLP

Jawaid Luqmani, Joint Head of Immigration & Head of Public Law, Luqmani Thompson

Subscribe

This course is hosted on our learning platform Thinkific, delegates have access to the course for 12 months from the date of booking so they can continue to reference the material as they work through cases or across different categories of legal aid.

[You can book this course at the LAPG Member rate of £200 here.](#)

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. If you have any issues, questions, or require an invoice please email Andrea Shumaker.

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

New Online Course: Introduction to Mental Health, Mental Capacity & Community Care Legal Aid

We have launched the next course in our legal aid training series aimed at Mental

Health, Mental Capacity/Court of Protection and Community Care Practitioners! This course is perfect for trainees, paralegals, junior lawyers as well as those that wish to refresh their knowledge in these areas. Paired with our Introduction to Civil Legal Aid Course, you can provide your new and junior staff with comprehensive training on the Civil Legal Aid Scheme as well as category specific information in an easy and accessible way.

Course content:

Mental Health

- Non-Mental Health Tribunal Work
- Non-Means Tested Non-Mental Health Tribunal Work
- Non-Means Tested Mental Health Tribunal Work
- Help at Court for Victims and Licensed Work for Representation before the Upper Tribunal/High Court
- Applying Guidance
- Costs

Mental Capacity/Court of Protection

- Cases Under the Mental Capacity Act 2005
- Cases Under the Inherent Jurisdiction of the High Court
- Full Representation Certificates -COP Cases
- The Legal Aid Application
- Financial Eligibility (Section 21 MCA 2005 Cases, Young People, Trapped Capital)
- Other Considerations – Court Orders

Community Care

- What is Community Care Law?
- Legal Help
- Full Representation
- Investigative Representation
- The Legal Aid Application
- Other Considerations
- Payment for Community Care Work

Contributors

Alison Ward is a salaried director at MJC Law in Nottingham where she practices mental health law. Alison has vast experience in representing patients subject to all sections of the Mental Health Act and is an experienced Advocate before the First Tier Tribunal (mental health), having sustained her Law Society accreditation throughout. She has a particular specialism in representing forensic patients including those detained in high secure care at Rampton Hospital. She

has been involved in a number of judicial review applications throughout her career. She has also dealt with appeals including to the Upper Tribunal.

Rosie Campbell is an Associate Solicitor at Rook Irwin Sweeney. She qualified as solicitor in 2018 and specialises in public law and human rights, community care, and mental capacity law. She is committed to access to justice and has a particular interest in cases concerning the rights of disabled children and adults. Rosie has a wealth of experience in health and welfare cases in the Court of Protection. She regularly acts on behalf of adults who lack mental capacity, instructed by the Official Solicitor, as well as family members. She acts in complex cases including in relation to the withdrawal of life-sustaining medical treatment for both adults and children, best interests disputes, deprivation of liberty, and welfare deputyship applications.

Subscribe

This course is hosted on our learning platform Thinkific, delegates have access to the course for 12 months from the date of booking so they can continue to reference the material as they work through cases or across different categories of legal aid.

[You can book this course at the LAPG Member rate of £200 here.](#)

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

Introduction to Managing Family and Civil Legal Aid Contracts Toolkit

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.

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 – 7th October 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 – 14th October 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 15th May, 10th July, 18th September and 25th November. You can book your place on any of the remaining 2025 training dates below:

15TH MAY 2025

10TH JULY 2025

18TH SEPTEMBER 2025

25TH 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, JFFfree, 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.

So there we have it legal aiders, another round-up from the wonderful world of Legal Aid.

Take care one and all,

Chris Minnoch, CEO [@ChrisLAPG](#)

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#WeAreLegalAid

24/04/25

#WEARELEGALAID



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



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