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20/06/24

## LAPG Member Update

Issue 19 of 2024

Welcome to the latest edition of the LAPG Member Update. This week we look at **party manifestos**, the next **Crime Contract**, our **AGM** (online on 26 June), this year's **LALY awards** ceremony in London on 5 July and a wide range of other interesting bits and bobs, including **hints and tips** on getting legal aid applications and bills right first time.

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## Cross-Cutting News & Events

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### Party Manifestos - what do they say about justice?

Now that the party manifestos have landed we have an idea about what the main parties are saying about the justice system. News flash - it ain't much.

Many thanks to Ro Jana and her team of parliamentary affairs elves for putting together [this overview of justice and justice-related manifesto policies and proposals](#). Few will be surprised that the manifestos of Labour, the Conservatives, Lib Dems, Reform and Greens say very little about the justice system outside of crime and punishment, with legal aid mentions in the single figures across the five documents. The Lib Dems probably have the best offering, but our politically-astute colleagues have pointed out that that may well be because they don't expect to be in power, so can offer a lot more knowing their proposals will not be bothering Treasury officials anytime soon.

Our parliamentary influencing team has included a range of 'justice-adjacent' policy areas in the manifesto comparison table. This is because over the last couple of years we have broadened our influencing strategy to include policy areas and departments beyond the Ministry of Justice's responsibility for legal aid. The efficacy of public policy in relation to reducing homelessness, protecting survivors of domestic abuse and ensuring children with special educational needs receive appropriate support in school (for example) all depend in part of people being able to access specialist advice and representation. We

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Labour Party Manifesto 2024

are therefore working with a wide range of partners to convince policymakers across government of the benefit of investing in advice services and the legal aid system.

So come the 5<sup>th</sup> of July we will know who is heading to Downing Street but, based on the manifestos, we are not likely to have a clear idea of the direction of justice policy. We will be advocating for the Ministry of Justice to complete the Civil Legal Aid Review, which was put on hold when the election was called just before the publication of the final reports and Green Paper on the future of civil legal aid. After a year of advocacy from LAPG and many other groups the Ministry eventually came round to publicly accepting that fees and scope are the critical issues for Ministers to address, and we don't want that momentum to be lost. Following on from our engagement with the justice teams of the main parties over the last couple of years, we've carried out a detailed analysis of prospective parliamentary candidates and we're watching polling closely so that we'll be ready to act as soon as the election dust has settled.

### [Duncan Lewis judicially reviews the Lord Chancellor over legal aid fees](#)

Duncan Lewis Solicitors has filed a claim in the High Court challenging the government's failure to raise legal aid rates for immigration and asylum work. They claim that the Lord Chancellor is failing to fulfil his statutory duty to secure legal aid for the vulnerable individuals eligible for legal aid but struggling to find a lawyer. Duncan Lewis point out that there has been a 48% real-terms cut in rates since they were last increased in 1996.

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

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## Criminal Legal Aid News

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### [Legal Aid Agency launches consultation on the next Standard Crime Contract](#)

The LAA has launched an official contract consultation process on changes to the 2025 Standard Crime Contract. This follows [publication in May of the Headlines Intentions document](#)



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detailing the LAA's plans to procure new contracts for 2025 and setting out some of the key anticipated changes.

The consultation process runs until Monday the 29<sup>th</sup> of July 2024. The current 2022 Standard Crime Contract ends on 30<sup>th</sup> of September 2025, so the LAA is consulting on a contract that is likely to be put out to tender this autumn and then commence on 1<sup>st</sup> of October 2025.

Members will recall that the LAA recently carried out a consultation process on one of the issues referred to in the Headline Intention document – the question of solicitor and CILEx qualification routes for duty solicitor accreditation. The LAA has confirmed that this issue remains unresolved following that consultation exercise. They are reflecting on the position following the recent consultation and any decision on the inclusion or otherwise in the contract will be one for new ministers.

If members have any comments on the issues covered by the Headline Intentions document [please contact our Director of Legal Aid Policy, Kate Pasfield](#), so we can feed these through to the consultation process.

### **Qualified Legal Representative: claiming guidance**

[Follow this guidance](#) when claiming for work undertaken under the Prohibition of Cross-Examination In Person Qualified Legal Representative (QLR) Scheme.

### **Police Station Representative and Supervising Solicitor data cleanse**

A note has been sent to providers and supervising solicitors, explaining a data cleanse of police station representatives' (PSRs) details will be taking place from Monday 17 June to Monday 15 July. The cleanse aims to ensure that all contact details for PSRs are correct. A form was sent out to all supervising solicitors held on DSCC systems on Monday 17 June. Supervising solicitors should ensure the form is fully completed and returned, so PSRs can continue to undertake contract work.

### **PSR Register and Arrangements**

### **Crime processing dates**

Check timescales for the Legal Aid Agency (LAA) to process your work (e.g. prior authority application, graduated fee claims).

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/crime-processing-dates>

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## Civil Legal Aid News

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### LAA Case Management Operations Report – hints and tips from the LAA

At the last Civil Contract Consultative Group meeting on the 12<sup>th</sup> of June, discussions were limited to operational issues due to being in a period of pre-election heightened sensitivity. However we were provided with an updated [Case Management Operations Report](#). The report comes in the form of a slides pack and provides stats on the LAA's operational performance over the previous quarter. The pack also provides hints and tips from LAA caseworkers on how to ensure applications and claims for payment are accepted first time. At 94 pages you might not want to read the entire pack, so we have set about below some of the useful guidance, hints and tips from the LAA:

- Page 10 – hints and tips in relations to merits
- Page 25 – hints and tips in relation to means
- Page 80 – an overview of how and when to use the Online Support Service
- Page 82 – top tips on issues such as billing, claiming, using CCMS and escape fee claim submissions

### Domestic Abuse gateway evidence

In previous updates, we have discussed the issue of the LAA rejecting domestic abuse gateway evidence provided by medical specialists and support services on private law children applications. A number of family practitioners had reported that evidence that was previously accepted by the LAA was now being rejected. The LAA promised to carry out a review of some of these cases and provided their analysis **on pages 17-21 of Operations Pack referred to above.**

The LAA has also highlighted the exact wording



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that needs to be used in gateway evidence letters, which you can find below along with template letters.

[You can find a template letter here](#) to get evidence from an organisation providing domestic abuse support services.

[You can find a template letter here](#) to give to use for health professionals.

[Immigration providers south west support directory](#)

Latest version of the Directory [can be found here](#).

### Civil processing dates

Check timescales for LAA to process your work (for example, civil applications and bills).

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/civil-processing-dates>

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## LAPG News & Events

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### LAPG AGM - Invitation to all Members - Wednesday, 26 June 2024 (online)

All LAPG members are cordially invited to join us for this year's Annual General Meeting. This is our opportunity to report on our work over the last year, seek your views on our plans for 2024-25, and formally elect or reappoint our Board members.



### **Agenda**

1. Minutes of and matters arising from the Annual General Meeting 14.07.23
2. Co-Chairs report
3. Treasurer's report and Presentation of the 2023 Audited Accounts
4. CEO's Report
5. Election of Board of Directors
6. AOB

The meeting will take place online on Wednesday, 26 June 2024, from 13.00-14.00. To join us on Zoom, use the following details:

If any members would like to apply to join our Board of Directors (responsible for governance of LAPG) [please get in touch](#) to discuss the role and application process. We are also seeking new members of LAPG's Advisory Committee (see below). As the Advisory Committee is not a formal part of LAPG's governance structure, appointment to the Committee does not take place at our AGM.

### **LAPG is seeking new members of our Advisory Committee**

We are looking for enthusiastic and committed individuals with relevant expertise and experience to join our Advisory Committee. The key priorities are to support the LAPG staff team with its policy, campaigning and representative work and to provide sector-specific knowledge and wisdom.

[Our voluntary Advisory Committee](#) of specialist lawyers and practice managers help answer member enquiries, attend meetings with the LAA and MoJ, speak at the LAPG conference, support our events including the LALYs, and assist us in responding to consultations. We also have a separate and distinct Board of Directors, LAPG's governance body (see above). In 2023, the Advisory Committee provided incredible support to help us respond to over 20 formal consultation and engagement exercises covering all areas of legal aid.

You will be joining a dedicated team of people who have expertise drawn from different legal disciplines within the Legal Aid sector who have a shared ambition of advancing the cause of access to justice and ensuring the future of the delivery of legal advice to those without means. Whilst there is lots to be done, the enthusiasm and support of working together with such a committed group lends itself well to real progress, excellent comradery and a lot of fun.

We work closely with other representative bodies to raise awareness about the importance of legal aid, the work of legal aid practitioners and the needs of clients. We work with the Legal Aid Agency and Ministry of Justice where possible, and attend a range of operational and policy meetings. We respond to consultations on justice issues and are one of three official contract consultee bodies for all civil and criminal legal aid

contracting issues.

We are looking for specialists across all categories of legal aid. We are particularly looking to increase our capacity to support practitioners and develop policy in the following areas:

- Private and public family law
- Criminal defence
- Housing, debt and welfare benefits
- Education and discrimination
- Legal aid costs and billing processes
- The development of digital dispute resolution systems and digital advice tools

If you are interested in joining our Committee, or would like an informal chat to discuss the role, [please contact our Director of Legal Aid Policy, Kate Pasfield](#), for further information and an application pack.

### [2024 Legal Aid Lawyer of the Year awards – tickets now on sale](#)



We're just two weeks away from one of the most uplifting and inspirational events in the legal aid calendar. [General](#)

[admission tickets are on sale](#) for this year's ceremony in central London on Friday, 5 July. And, if Gareth and the team win tonight, it won't clash with England's Euros quarterfinal match – result!

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.

[Read the press release here for full list of finalists](#)

For more information about the finalists, read our media partner, [LAG's piece about the shortlist](#).

### [LAPG training courses](#)

#### *Supervision Courses*

We have confirmed the dates for the remainder of our 2024 Supervision Courses. You can book your place on any of the training dates below:

[8<sup>TH</sup> AUGUST 2024](#)



3<sup>RD</sup> OCTOBER 2024\*

12<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2024

### **\*New Date**

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](mailto: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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## Sector News & Events

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### Free Hybrid Event - Garden Court Chambers - Higher Education in 2024: Law and Practice Update

Garden Court Chambers' Education Law and Employment & Discrimination Law Teams are pleased to host a seminar exploring topical legal issues for practitioners working in the field of higher education law.



Specific topics that will be addressed include:

- Belief discrimination and freedom of speech at universities
- Disability discrimination and negligence claims following Abrahart
- Navigating universities' internal procedures
- The Office of the Independent Adjudicator and judicial review

The seminar will be chaired by Nicola Braganza KC, a leading education law and employment & discrimination law silk.

For more information and to book your place, [see here](#).

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We're delighted that over 400 guests have already booked to attend the LALYs. It's going to be another incredible evening celebrating the achievements of legal

aid practitioners and support staff. There will also be a couple of surprises on the night...

Please do join us at our AGM in June. We would love to hear your feedback on our work over the last year and for you to feed into the development of our strategy. There will be much work to be done to convince whoever wins the election that the justice system needs to be a priority area of public policy and public spending. Your input into our strategy will be crucial to our ability to influence the incoming administration. And of course, if you want to be more involved in our policy work then why not consider joining our Advisory Committee (details set out above).

Take care one and all,

Chris Minnoch, CEO [@ChrisLAPG](#)

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[#WeAreLegalAid](#)  
20/06/24



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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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