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10/07/24

LAPG Member Update

Issue 20 of 2024

Congratulations to the winners of this year's Legal Aid Lawyer of the Year awards!

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Winners Announced of the 2024 Legal Aid Lawyer of the Year Awards

We're absolutely delighted to announce the winners of the 22nd Legal Aid Lawyer of the Year awards. Trophies were given out on Friday the 5th of July at our inspiring and uplifting ceremony in central London. 500 legal aid lawyers, support staff and friends and family from across the sector joined us as we celebrated the finalists and winners across our 12 categories. We also bestowed a Special Award on Dame Karen Buck for her unstinting support for legal aid and access to justice throughout her parliamentary career.



Our media partner, Legal Action Group, has published a really lovely account of the evening here:

<https://www.lag.org.uk/article/215706/a-night-of->

[unabashed-celebration-and-qualified-optimism](https://www.lag.org.uk/article/215706/a-night-of-unabashed-celebration-and-qualified-optimism)

The full list of winners, chosen from a pool of incredibly talented and dedicated nominees and finalists, is:

Legal Aid Newcomer – supported by Friends of LALY24

Ollie Persey - Garden Court Chambers

Legal Aid Support Staffer/Support Team – Sponsored by Accesspoint

Family Billing Team - AFG LAW

Housing Law – Sponsored by Leigh Day

Rose Pritchard - Community Law Partnership

Family Legal Aid incl. Children's Rights – Sponsored by Resolution

Jenny Newton - TV Edwards

Criminal Defence – Sponsored by One Pump Court

Amy Cox - Sonn Macmillan Walker Solicitors

Legal Aid Barrister – Sponsored by The Bar Council

Mani Singh Basi - 4PB

Legal Aid Firm/Not-for-Profit Agency – Supported by The Law Society

Public Interest Law Centre

Regional Legal Aid Firm/Not-for-Profit Agency – Supported by The Legal Education Foundation

TRP Solicitors

Social Welfare Law – Sponsored by Doughty Street

Esme Madill - Islington Law Centre

Disability Rights – Sponsored by Communicourt

Tam Gill - Gledhill Gill Solicitors

Public Law – Sponsored by DG Legal

Sophie Naftalin - Bhatt Murphy

Outstanding Achievement – Sponsored by Matrix Chambers

Toufique Hossain - Duncan Lewis

LAPG Board Special Award

Dame Karen Buck

[Read the official LALY press release here.](#)

Thank to everyone who made such a special event possible, from all those who took the time to make a nomination, to our



generous sponsors, to our judges, the members of Team LALY, and the colleagues and friends old and new who attended on the evening.

And the biggest thank you of all goes to you, the legal aid practitioners and support staff who strive every day to meet the needs of your clients and your communities. We see you, we have nothing but admiration for the work you are doing, and we are so proud to work alongside you. Right, we're off to start planning LALY25...

Cross-Cutting News & Events

New Ministerial Team taking shape

Following last week's general election the new Ministerial Team has been taking shape in the Ministry of Justice. Shabana Mahmood MP has been appointed Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice. The MP for Birmingham Ladywood held the shadow LC role from 2023 so we're pleased to see some continuity at the head of the MoJ Team.



James Timpson OBE has been appointed Minister of State (Minister for Prisons) and will join the Lords to fulfil this role. The appointment has been met with widespread praise given his long track record of working with and helping to rehabilitate offenders and as the former chair of the Prison Reform Trust.

Heidi Alexander MP has been appointed as a Minister of State, working alongside Alex Davies-Jones MP and Lord Ponsonby of Shulbrede as Parliamentary Under-Secretaries of State. We're still waiting for details of each Minister's portfolio.

Criminal Legal Aid News

2025 Standard Crime Contract Consultation

As reported in our last update, the LAA has now launched an official contract consultation process on the substance of the 2025 Standard Crime Contract. This follows [publication in May of the Headlines Intentions document](#) 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 29th of July 2024. The current 2022 Standard Crime Contract ends on 30th 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 1st of October 2025.

The LAA only consults with the relevant consultee bodies (LAPG, The Law Society and The Bar Council) about the terms of the crime contract. We are therefore only able to consult with the small number of crime practitioners on our Advisory Committee as we are not permitted to share the consultation documents more widely. However, we have agreed a new arrangement with LCCSA and CLSA to co-opt a member of their committees onto our Advisory Committee which will enable those organisations to also have sight of the full consultation and feed in with their views. This will ensure that a much wider pool of experienced practitioners will have an opportunity to consider the LAA's proposals and help us construct our response.

We would like to hear from our members about what you think of the proposed changes in the Headline Intentions document. Also, what do you want to see amended that is not being proposed? What would help you in your practice? What would make you stay in this line of work? What will help junior and senior colleagues, staff retention and the ability of organisations to provide the support that's needed for their staff teams?

If members have any thoughts, [please contact our Director of Legal Aid Policy, Kate Pasfield](#), so we can feed these through to the consultation process.

Digital developments in applying for criminal legal aid

The LAA is developing new digital in-house services to replace the current CRM forms when the eForms contract ends in September 2024. Providers will no longer be able to submit eForms on Equiniti from Tuesday 6 August 2024.

[For further information, read the LAA news story here.](#)

Reporting issues with prison visits

Members of the Association of Prison Lawyers have been doing some work in relation to legal visits and video link facilities in prisons. They met with MOJ officials earlier this month to draw their attention to the poor coverage of visit facilities in several establishments. This followed a meeting with the Minister for prisons and parole and the

circulation of a report detailing the problems. APL reported that the officials were very engaged and confirmed that, based on the report, they have been investigating the 16 prisons identified that offer no video links. They also confirmed that following the concerns raised in the meeting with the Minister about lack of face-to-face visits in Whitemoor, face-to-face visits will now resume. They agreed to continue to engage with APL and will attend quarterly meetings.

As well as issues relating to long delays and poor offers of visits, they want to hear about prisons where there the video equipment is broken or impacts on effective participation.

[Please use this link to report issues](#) which will be monitored and fed back by APL.

[Apply for Criminal Legal Aid updates](#)

Latest news story from the LAA, published 8 July 2024, on making applications through the Apply for Criminal Legal Aid service.

[Read the full story here.](#)

Civil Legal Aid News

2024 Standard Civil contract verification

For those civil and family providers wondering when the LAA is going to send out confirmation of verification and the civil contract schedules, we have been told that a message is sent to providers direct when they pass verification and that contract schedules are being uploaded from mid-July onwards. The contracts commence on 1 September 2024.

High-Cost Family (HCF) virtual clinic with the LAA

Message from the LAA: the HCF Clinic on 17 July 2024, part of the #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 Friday 12 July.



Legal Aid
Agency

To register for an appointment:
<https://www.eventbrite.com/cc/husy-clinic-high-cost-family-17-july-2024-3325009>

Once you have registered for a virtual face to face clinic, you will receive an email from the LAAHelpUsSayYes team:

LAAHelpUsSayYes@justice.gov.uk.

You will be invited to follow a link to provide additional information prior to the clinic, by a set date (you will be given 5 days to complete). Please ensure you complete this form. If the LAA does not receive the completed form by the date stated, they will be *unable* to accommodate the appointment

Help Us Say Yes Webinar: HCF & civil finance: Counsel: Change of date

A joint LAA webinar from the high-cost family and civil billing teams on everything Counsel is now open for bookings after being postponed to 10 September. This was originally due to take place on Thursday 11 July 2024, 4-5pm. As well as a run-down on the common issues for the Events and Non-Events models for one and two Counsel, the team will include common high-cost billing issues. (See below message from the LAA about a change of date).

[Click here to register](#)

If you had already registered for the July session, you do not have to re-register. Joining instructions will be sent nearer the time.

Legal aid statistics - Help guides and Data visualisation tools

A quick note for all those legal aid statistics aficionados out there about the various tools available to analyse the available data from the LAA and other elements of the MoJ. Along with the [official statistics](#), released each quarter, the government also provides a set of '[visualisation tools](#)' which allows you to produce whizzy graphs and use dashboards to display and understand the numbers. It's worth a look for anyone wanting to understand the data (or the limitations of the data) and use it for campaigning purposes.

LAA will no longer accept POA submitted via e-Forms

As part of the withdrawal of eForms functionality, the LAA has said that from Friday 2 August 2024, you will no longer be able to submit your claims for Payments on Account (POA) on legacy, paper-based certificates through eForms.

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

Statutory Charge Manual updated

The LAA webpage '[Legal Aid Guidance](#)' has been updated with a link to a new version of the [Statutory Charge Manual](#).

The summary of changes in the updated manual are as follows:

- Amendment to the wording of paragraph 2.2.3, and 2.3.1 Basic elements of the statutory charge, and to section 2.4.
- Revisions to the following paragraphs to remove references to old/internal Legal Aid Agency processes: section 1.1 (introduction); paragraph 3.10.13; paragraph 10.1.12 (disputes with clients after reporting) and 10.2.5 (redemption of the charge).
- Updates to guidance in sections 4.1, 6.4.3, 7.1.3, 9.3.5, 9.6 and 10.1: to reflect online processes and team name changes.
- Restructuring (sic) and updating guidance within Section 3 for greater clarity.
- General updates to guidance all sections, for greater clarity and to update terminology as appropriate.

LAPG News & Events

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.

We've already received some fantastic applications to join the Committee – thank you to



those who have put themselves forward. We still have some places available, so anyone else interested in joining us, please read on.

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.

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:

8TH AUGUST 2024

3RD OCTOBER 2024*

12TH 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](#). 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.

Sector News & Events

[PLP event on challenging DWP recovery processes - 17 July 2024](#)

[Book Your Place Here](#)

Challenging the recovery of benefit overpayments and hardship payments
17 July 2024, 10:30-12:00

This webinar will be live and recorded and PLP will share the recording with attendees afterwards.

This session will explain the DWP's current policy on waiving recovery of benefit overpayments, the impact that overpayment recovery has on claimant benefit awards and the steps that individuals can take to challenge this recovery, including a discussion on preparing effective waiver requests and the availability of judicial review as a remedy if a waiver request is refused.



We'll also look at PLP's research on the impact and use of deductions by the DWP, as well as the government's amendment on the remuneration regulations for payment of Welfare Benefits Legal Help work as of 1 April 2023.

Speakers:

- Chair: Caroline Selman, Public Law Project
- Niamh Grahame, Public Law Project
- Emma Vincent Miller, Osbornes Law
- William Ford, Osbornes Law
- Jagna Olejniczak, Citizens Advice

Garden Court Chambers' events

Our good friends over at GC have a couple of interesting upcoming events in the diary:

[Disability discrimination claims and schools: case law update – Friday 12th of July](#)

[Welfare benefits and housing – Wednesday 17th of July](#)

Access Social Care webinar – 17 July 2024

Legal Aid Investigative Representation Applications (Community Care) - Webinar 2: Practical Use of Regulations and Guidance, Tips and Tricks

Free online seminar Wednesday 17 July 1pm-2.15pm

[Book your place here](#)

In April the charity Access Social Care ran a well-attended and well-received webinar looking at the regulations and guidance relevant to applying for Investigative Representation funding from the LAA. Their aim is to support practitioners who, as their research funded by the Legal Education Foundation has shown, experience difficulties and frustrations securing this higher level of Legal Aid funding, opting instead to continue their casework using lower paid, and financially unsustainable, Legal Help.

Like the April event, this second seminar is also free to attend and ASC is grateful to The Legal Education Foundation for funding a project that is working to support Community Care lawyers.

This second online seminar is a standalone event in

its own right. You do not need to have been at the first webinar - however, equally, it is not a repeat of that session. There is fresh material and new information for people who wish to join for a second time.

In line with feedback from the first seminar, this time delegates will have an opportunity to look more closely at the practical application of the regs & guidance, using case-based scenarios to consider the appropriate wording, placing of facts and supporting arguments, and the relevant factors to include in an application for Investigative Rep.

The seminar will also look at the wider benefits of obtaining Investigative Rep funding for your case and your practice, and at what other support you might find useful in order to address problems securing Legal Aid funding.

The online seminar will take place on Wednesday 17th July from 1pm – 2.15 pm. You are welcome to eat/bring your lunch!

Karen Ashton, consultant to Access Social Care will chair the event, with Louise Eardley, Associate Solicitor at Gold Jennings and Tim Baldwin, barrister at Garden Court Chambers presenting. Delegates will be welcome to raise any questions with the panel.

If interested, please click the link above which will take you to the registration page. Please do share this link with colleagues and contacts who may be interested.

Phew! What a kerazy few days. Labour pull off a landslide and then have the temerity to actually come across as competent in office (early days, I know, but what a sea-change). The LALY ceremony was quite simply brilliant as we celebrated some incredible lawyers and support staff. England made it through to tonight's Euro semi (and there were some notable sporting successes for New Zealand too, but I won't go into that). The Rwanda scheme dead in the water and no-one in power running around, frothing at the mouth and threatening to leave the ECHR. And now some interesting and encouraging appointments to the MoJ Ministerial Team.

All in all, a decent few days for justice with both a large and a small J. And, touch wood, football.

A date too for your diaries as we finalise our plans for the **2024 LAPG Conference: 8 November, Herbert Smith Freehills in London**. We're also reinstating our traditional pre-conference dinner on 7 November, so pencil that

in and come and join us for drinks, dinner and that all-important sense of being part of the extraordinary legal aid community.

Take care one and all,

Chris Minnoch, CEO [@ChrisLAPG](#)

Follow LAPG on Twitter [@WeAreLAPG](#)

[#WeAreLegalAid](#)

10/07/24



[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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