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19/07/24

LAPG Member Update

Issue 21 of 2024

Welcome to the 21st LAPG Member update of the year. Yes, 21, which means our Updates are now legally allowed to drink beer in the USA. Result!

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Cross-Cutting News & Events

Online Dispute Resolution research

Would you like to take part in a research project focused on Online Dispute Resolution (ODR) which The Law Society is currently working on with the Solicitors' Regulation Authority (SRA) and the Access to Justice Foundation?



The Regulators' Pioneer Fund is a multi-year project to create a UK regulatory environment that encourages business innovation and growth, particularly through new technology.

For this year's project, The Law Society is collaborating with the SRA and Access to Justice Foundation on research exploring the risks and opportunities of Online Dispute Resolution. To help inform this work, the research team would like to interview lawyers who work in Housing, Family, Social Welfare, or Employment law over the coming month (July) about their knowledge of and experience using ODR platforms. Please note they have sufficient numbers already signed up for the Family area.

The interviews will take place online and should last approximately 60-90 minutes. Prior to the interviews taking place, someone from the research team will get in touch via telephone with participants to run through the agenda and the process of the interview.

These sessions will be facilitated by an external research agency with a member of Law Society staff on hand to assist.

This is an important opportunity for the Society to use the first-hand experience and insights of legal aid providers to influence the future direction of travel of ODR, in particular the role solicitor's play in protecting clients' interests and ensuring genuine access to justice.

If you would like to take part, [please do let us know](#) and we will put you in touch with The Law Society's Research team.

Civil Legal Aid News

Further Housing, WB and HLPAS tender opened 11 July 2024

The LAA has launched a further opportunity to tender for the 2024 Standard Civil Contract on 11 July 2024, for Housing, Debt and Welfare Benefits and limited HLPAS areas.

Organisations do not need to submit a response to this procurement process where they:

- have been notified of a successful outcome of their 2024 Standard Civil Contract Tender in Housing and Debt and Welfare Benefits through the eTendering message board; and
- are not seeking to deliver Contract Work in Housing and Debt and Welfare Benefits from additional offices/Procurement Areas; and/or
- do not wish to deliver HLPAS in Barnstaple, Torquay, Newton Abbot, or Boston, Lincoln.

This procurement exercise will be open to bids in the Housing and Debt and Welfare Benefits Categories of Law only.

It includes an opportunity to also tender to deliver the Housing Loss Prevention Advice Service (HLPAS) in Barnstaple, Torquay, Newton Abbot, and Boston, Lincoln only.

The deadline is 17:00 on 25 July 2024.

Immigration & Asylum – publication of Key Card guidance

The LAA has published a set of 8 ‘Key cards’ relating to the Immigration & Asylum category. These are bite size summaries of existing contract requirements and guidance, focused on specific issues and themes. They reinforce key messages and are designed to inform providers and help them prevent errors and misreporting.

A new section has been created on the Legal Aid Learning website, for Immigration, and a new ‘tile’ for the Key Cards.

This can be found below the CWA section, on the



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landing page:

[Ministry of Justice: Civil landing page](#)

The direct link to the Key Cards is:

[Course: Immigration and Asylum \(justice.gov.uk\)](#)

Contract Managers have been asked to share the above links and details with their providers and ensure that they and their colleagues are familiar with them.

The LAA say that there may be providers that have historically encountered issues in some of the areas covered by the Key Cards, and Contract Managers may want to draw their attention to specific ones. The guidance is not necessarily new, but rather an attempt to reinforce key requirements/messages and bring these together in one place.

The Key Card topics include:

1. Online Appeals
2. NABA changes
3. Streamlined Asylum Process
4. CLR and LH changes from 1 April 2023
5. Interpreters
6. VAT
7. S4 & s95 evidence
8. Early billing

The LAA has previously referenced their intention to arrange some bite size training sessions for providers, on discrete topics. They are looking to arrange the first of these in the autumn and the proposed topics are:

- Basics of immigration claiming
- 2023 Contract changes follow up – CLR fees, matter start changes and impact on reporting.

These are informed by some areas of misreporting that the LAA has identified over the last 12 months and with a view to supporting any providers who obtain Contracts under the 2024 Contract tender and may be unfamiliar with how to report matters under the legal aid contract.

The LAA continues to welcome any suggestions from providers via Rep Bodies, for any future topics or areas that providers may welcome such training on.

Criminal Legal Aid News

2025 Standard Crime Contract Consultation

Just a reminder that the LAA has 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, 29 July 2024. The current 2022 Standard Crime Contract ends on 30 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 October 2025.

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.

Claiming time to complete CRM5 form

The LAA has sent out a response to a question raised at the last Crime Contract Consultative Group Meeting on 11 June 2024. The question relates to claiming time to complete the application for an increase of an Upper Limit (CRM5 form). This has been raised following a recent refusal to allow time for this. Whilst current guidance is silent on this point, the LAA approach for some years now has been to allow reasonable time for a Provider to be able to draft and submit an application. The LAA has noted that:



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In line with the guidance in CBAM re CRM4 apps, we would consider 1-2 units would be reasonable in most straightforward applications, with more complex applications requiring more time and requiring supporting evidence.

The LAA say they have reminded their relevant teams of this and will update CBAM on this point as part of the next update.

Duty solicitors: rotas, information and guidance

On 17 July 2024 the LAA published the October 24 [Duty Solicitor Scheme Members List](#).

Crime processing dates

[Check timescales](#) for the Legal Aid Agency (LAA) to process your work (eg prior authority application, graduated fee claims).

LAPG News & Events

Annual Dinner & Conference – 7 & 8 November 2024

We're in the final stages of planning this year's conference, which is being hosted in London by Herbert Smith Freehills on Friday, 8 November. We'll be taking bookings soon so look out for further details in the coming weeks. With a new government in place, and new Ministerial team at the MOJ, the conference will be an opportunity for practitioners to influence the future direction of legal aid policy. Along with an opportunity to interact with policy-makers, there will be the usual mixture of workshops and plenaries focussing on legal specialisms, legal aid contracts, billing and income maximisation, junior lawyers, and organisational management.

We're also delighted to announce that we will be reinstating our annual dinner on the eve of the conference. We've spent the last few months exhaustively testing various eateries and have settled on a really lovely central London location. Further details to be released soon.

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 Annual Conference - 16 Oct 2024](#)

PLP's annual conference is back for a day of cutting-edge analysis, insight and outlook presented in partnership with [Blackstone Chambers](#) and [Herbert Smith Freehills](#).

This event is in-person only (no online session or recording)



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Date: Wednesday 16th October

Place: [Herbert Smith Freehills \(Exchange House, Primrose Street, London, EC2A 2HS\)](#)

[For further information and booking.](#)

Garden Court hybrid event – strategic climate litigation – 11 Sep 2024

Hot Tips on Litigating to Cool the Planet and Freeze the Assault on Nature: Building Impactful Strategic Litigation from Conception to Close

Wednesday 11 September, 6.00 - 7.30pm
(followed by networking)

[In-Person & Online Tickets Available](#)

Well that was a relatively sedate Update compared to recent efforts about huge consultations, the LALYs, the general election, the Review of Civil Legal Aid and the myriad other legal aid issues that have arisen already this year. I'd characterise this Update as more of a phizwizard, but not quite a golden phizwizard or winksquibbler, and definitely not a trogglehumper, which is a relief.

Take care and have a lovely weekend when you get there one and all,

Chris Minnoch, CEO [@ChrisLAPG](#)

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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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