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31/07/24

## LAPG Member Update

Issue 22 of 2024

Welcome to the latest LAPG Member Update. Straw poll: Who thinks reading our Updates should count as billable time? So do we!

### Civil Legal Aid News

- 2024 Contract verification
- New Immigration & Asylum Specification from 1 August 2024 and amendment to 2024 Specification
- Civil processing dates

### Criminal Legal Aid News

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- Duty solicitor scheme boundary consultations
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- LAA publishes its 2023-24 Annual Report and Accounts

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### Sector News and Events

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

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## Civil Legal Aid News

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### 2024 Contract verification

A number of providers have contacted us expressing unease that they are yet to receive confirmation from the LAA that they have completed the verification process for the 2024 Standard Civil Contract. We raised this with the LAA last week and were told:

*'As Applicants pass verification, we confirm that directly to them via the eTendering system. If they haven't submitted compliant verification information, they are given a full explanation of what is either missing or non-compliant. The only circumstances where we won't have done that is where they've submitted no verification information at all, however, they would have received the general messages reminding Applicants of the deadlines for verification.*

*Every message we receive is acknowledged and then receives a bespoke response. We are now processing messages received during the back end of last week. There are some complex messages (about 10) where we require decisions from our governance panel. Those should be resolved this week and they will then receive substantive responses.*

*What I can see is that many messages have not been read by Applicants, so I would encourage anyone who is unclear of their position to review our last message to ensure they've understood what action may be required by them.*

*On another note, contracts are now being uploaded into CWA ready for acceptance so individuals who have set themselves up as designated signatories should be receiving emails confirming the contracts are ready for them to review.'*

If members are still unclear whether they have completed verification, or unsure of what action to take following a message from the LAA, please get in touch.

One other cautionary note from a member firm, which chased the LAA about verification to be told that messages had been sent to another Bravo



account with a slightly different organisational name. The firm is certain no such account exists. They also noted that they did not receive email notifications that messages were being posted in Bravo so we would advise all members to check Bravo regularly for any messages from the LAA.

### **New immigration Specification from 1 August 2024 and amendment to 2024 Specification**

Following a consultation in March and April this year the LAA has published an amendment to the 2018 Immigration and Asylum Specification.

The changes are designed to:

- Create a new definition of Lot 1, 2 and 3 Providers.
- Increase the number of applications providers can receive from clients remotely (to 75%)
- Provide greater flexibility to self-grant immigration matter starts

For ease we have provided [a copy of the final Table of Amendments to the 2018 Contract here](#).

You can [download the revised Immigration & Asylum Specification here](#).

The changes have also been replicated in the 2024 Standard Civil Contract Specification via this amendment notice:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/additional-procurement-civil-2024-contract-procurement-process>

### **Civil processing dates**

[Check timescales](#) for the Legal Aid Agency (LAA) to process your work (for example, civil applications and bills).

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## **Criminal Legal Aid News**

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## 2025 Standard Crime Contract Consultation closes

The consultation on the shape of the 2025 Standard Crime Contract closed on Monday and LAPG has submitted a response, along with The Law Society and some commentary from The Bar Council. Unfortunately we cannot share our response until the LAA has concluded the consultation process. The LAA plans to consider responses and publish the final contract documents before what is likely to be an autumn tender round.

We have raised some issues about the proposed 2025 Contract and asked for further discussions between the LAA and consultee bodies before the documents are finalised and published. We'll keep you posted on developments.

## Duty solicitor scheme boundary consultations

22 July 2024 saw the publication of a consultation on changes to the membership of the Kidderminster and Redditch & Bromsgrove Police Station Duty Schemes.

## The consultation closes on 12 August 2024

## Crime processing dates

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



Legal Aid Agency

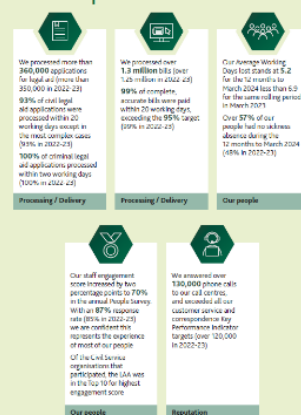
## Cross-Cutting News & Events

## DAPO and DAPN consultation paused

The LAA confirmed yesterday, by emailed to provider bodies, that the consultation on amending the Crime and Civil Contracts to implement the legal aid aspects of Domestic Abuse Protection Notices (DAPN) and Orders (DAPO) has been paused.

Keen readers will recall that Part 3 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 (the DA Act) introduced the new civil DAPN to provide immediate

### Headline performance for 2023-24



protection following a domestic abuse incident, and a new civil DAPO to provide flexible, longer-term protection for victims. The government had intended to run a pilot from May 2024 of the new DAPOs and DAPNs in Greater Manchester and the London boroughs of Croydon, Sutton, and Bromley.

The LAA has not explained why the consultation has been paused, so we presume it is because of the change in government and some sort of Ministerial (re)think. (Ed, oh hang on that's me: or it could be because the consultee bodies told the government that their plans were unnecessarily complicated, convoluted, underfunded, failed to address the lack of cohesion between civil and criminal legal aid and put yet more burden on overburdened practitioners. One can live in hope.)

### **LAA publishes its 2023-24 Annual Report and Accounts**

The LAA has published its annual report card for the year to 31 March 2024. There are many areas where it is EXS (Working at the Expected Standard). If you have any feedback on the Report and areas where you consider the LAA to be WTS (Working Towards the Expected Standard) please let us know.

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## **LAPG News & Events**

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### **Annual Dinner & Conference – 7 & 8 November 2024**

As noted in the last Update, 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're planning on publishing the conference schedule by the end of this week so we'll be taking bookings 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 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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### [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)

**Date:** Wednesday 16th October

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



Public  
Law  
Project

[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**

**Fitness to Plead Study – Solicitors Needed for Research**

We have been contacted by Tania Goddard, a PhD student at the University of Salford, who is exploring the doctrine of fitness to plead and whether people with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) are able to be fit to plead. Tania is recruiting solicitors to interview over Teams to discuss their experience of fitness to plead in court and whether they have any experience of FASD either personally or professionally. Tania has asked us to share the following information about the study:

**Are you:** A Solicitor or Barrister with experience of working in the Criminal Justice System and dealing with fitness to plead issues?

**Do you:** Want to help researchers highlight the issues fitness to plead raises in relation to vulnerable defendants, including individuals with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD)?

**Have your say:** What are your training needs and how do you want those training needs to be met?

**We need:** Your views on the fitness to plead process, your knowledge of vulnerable defendants needs, and the training you consider necessary.

**What is involved:** An online semi structured interview taking up to an hour of your time.

**Please contact:** Tania Goddard  
[t.l.h.goddard@salford.ac.uk](mailto:t.l.h.goddard@salford.ac.uk)

**Research Team:**

Tania Goddard [t.l.h.goddard@salford.ac.uk](mailto:t.l.h.goddard@salford.ac.uk)  
Professor Clare Allely, Professor in Forensic Psychology



In case you missed it (and all the fanfare from the MOJ), this week saw the 75th anniversary of the foundation of the legal aid scheme. MOJ officials are probably still nursing their post-celebration hangovers, tip-toeing through the corridors of Petty France lest they irk a particularly tender-headed senior civil servant.

[We posted our reflections on the 75th anniversary here](#), if you fancy a read.

Take care one and all,

Chris Minnoch, CEO [@ChrisLAPG](#)

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31/07/24



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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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