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LAPG Member Update

Issue 23 of 2024

Dear Members,

Over the last few years we have faced challenges through chronic underfunding, COVID-19, the cost-of-living crisis and attacks by politicians, the right-wing media and others. Time and again, we have seen you all redoubling your efforts and carrying on to deliver the best service possible for your clients and those in need. This past week has seen violence and racism escalating on an unprecedented level with a number of immigration providers, in particular, have found themselves the potential target for violent protest. We are aware that many of our member firms, our colleagues and friends, are facing a very frightening time at present.

We stand with the other representative bodies in offering our support. Both [The Law Society](#) and [ILPA](#) have issued guidance as to precautions that can be taken to safeguard your offices and your teams and we are aware that The Law Society has been lobbying the government on behalf of the profession. We hope that some action is taken by the authorities.

Even if you are not personally encountering threats, we hope that you may consider if there is anything you could do to offer help to those who are. There is always the potential for businesses to reach out to each other in the coming days to offer practical support as much as anything else.

If you feel that there is a valid threat to those working in your offices then you may feel you can take some practical steps to work from home or another safer space.

Some areas which you may wish to consider include:

Protecting people

The priority for any business facing such a threat will undoubtedly be on

protecting their staff and clients. You may need to take more urgent steps to ensure people are in a safer environment such as working from home or another place. Any clients that were due to attend your offices may better be served remotely. You may wish to suggest that staff members who may be targeted remain off social media such as X or LinkedIn until the situation calms.

It may also be that other areas in which you would commonly attend as part of your practice including courts and tribunals could be targeted and so do fully assess the risk of personal attendance at any venue.

Protecting buildings

Physical steps to secure buildings such as window boarding and additional locks could be deployed if there is a means to do so. Depending on the potential risk to your offices and the limited time you may have to take action, it may not be entirely possible to mitigate against all loss and the key will be on trying to secure, protect or remove those aspects which are vital to the business and would be harder to replace.

You may have links with other firms in other safer areas or who are not especially facing a similar level of threat and we would hope that legal businesses offer lifelines to each other to support them through it – whether by storing assets, using conference rooms for urgent matters or similar.

Protecting data and assets

Aside from attempting to physically secure the building, which may or may not be effective, you may need to consider how best to protect any vital assets in the building. In particular, you need to determine the extent to which your confidential information (whether in paper form or cloud based) could be compromised and what steps might be needed not only to protect them but also that you have access to them during any period of unrest or inability to access your building(s). This will include casefiles and other documents or files that may contain personal data such as staff and accounting records.

IT and telecoms

In a similar way to how you may have dealt with the Covid lockdown, you may need temporary means to function remotely and you may need to consider if there are any steps you can take to help staff to continue to serve clients in the shorter term whilst you take stock about any longer term impact on your business.

Insurance

You should obtain copies of your policies and ensure they are accessible at all times. Depending on the policy, you may need to alert the insurer to possible qualifying events and potential claims. Take independent advice from your broker if needed to ensure that the steps you take now are in accordance with your insurance and would not jeopardise a future claim.

Message of support received today from the Legal Aid Agency

We received this message this morning from the LAA to pass on to our members:

You may have seen [*the Justice Secretary's comments yesterday*](#) about threats to firms

providing immigration advice. We are appalled by the violence and disorder. We share with you and the providers a belief in the justice system and the important balance that a strong legal sector brings.

Where we are aware of specific or potential impacts on legal aid providers we are reaching out directly to ensure they have our support. We are also working closely, as you would expect, with partners across the justice system.

Providers will rightly want to prioritise the safety and security of their staff and clients at this time. Firms have our support to take the action they feel necessary, such as reducing staffing in offices or temporarily closing their offices.

To avoid drawing unnecessary further attention to legal aid providers we are not putting this message out on public platforms. We would appreciate you sharing this appropriately with your membership.

Contract Managers will be on hand to discuss concerns, handle questions or generally provide what support they can.

Further support

Do not hesitate in contacting the Police and/or other agencies should you feel there is an immediate threat to you or others. Reach out to other local businesses where you can as there will be many who would want to show support and solidarity.

Stay safe everybody. Please remember that for all those rioting and seeking to disrupt with their hate out there, there are many more seeking to help. It is an immense privilege to work in this sector and to represent the interests of practitioners such as yourself. We will weather this period as we have weathered others.

Yours in Solidarity,

Chris Minnoch, CEO [@ChrisLAPG](#)

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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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