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27/10/23

LAPG Member Update

Issue 29 of 2023

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- The Law Society report from the 21st Century Justice Project



2023 Conference

9TH NOVEMBER AT UCL (BENTHAM HOUSE) LONDON

The LAPG Annual Conference will be held in person on 9th November at University College London – details on [LAPG's website](#).

[Get your tickets here](#)

Civil Legal Aid News

Immigration & Asylum advice in the South West Region

The LAA has this week written to all Immigration & Asylum legal aid providers offering the opportunity to be part of a list of providers who can take on cases from the South West of England where clients have been unable to instruct a provider in that procurement area. The message that went out is below:

Dear Legal aid provider,

We are writing to offer you the opportunity to be part of a list of providers who will be signposted to individuals in South West England who have been unable to instruct a provider in the Immigration Procurement Area, South West.

Should you wish to be included on the South West list you should have the willingness and ability to take on new clients remotely and be available to do the full range of contract work as described in the contract. You will also need to ensure that you can continue to take instructions from clients in your contracted Immigration Procurement Area.

Providers who consider that they satisfy these requirements should complete the questionnaire



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which can be found here - <https://forms.office.com/e/dimMhZR97r> and confirm that they would like to be on list by 5pm on Friday 3 November 2023.

Upon receipt of this confirmation, you will be added to the South West list. This list will be shared with the South West Asylum Forum, other referral organisations in the South West and providers in the South West. It will also be shared with the Civil Legal Advice (CLA) telephone line and be on the LAA website. South West referral organisations and providers will then be able to direct individuals who have been unable to instruct a face-to-face provider in the South West to the CLA, or the website, or provide them with the list. Individuals will then contact providers on the list directly should they wish to.

This list will be updated on a fortnightly basis.

If you have any questions please contact your contract manager.

Kind regards,

LAA Communications Department

So what is behind this move by the LAA? It appears to be an effort to address the capacity issues in the South West highlighted by the legal proceedings being brought by the Public Law Project against the Lord Chancellor, arguing that he is in breach of his constitutional duty to make legal aid available for immigration and asylum issues. [You can read about the litigation on PLP's website here.](#)

PLP has cited research that shows the dire situation with access to legal aid for immigration and asylum in the South West region, with capacity for under 300 people per year. That is against a backdrop of 6 providers having recently either stopped trading or stopped providing legal aid, and 4,827 asylum seekers having been dispersed to accommodation of June 2023, including unaccompanied children.

PLP currently has a call for case study examples of people who have suffered problems due to being unable to find advice. If you do have any examples, please get in touch with PLP. [You can read about how to provide your examples and the important work that PLP are doing here.](#)

The LAA has been asked by ILPA to provide further information on how this scheme is supposed to

work in practice and we can share the LAA's response in due course. In the meantime, if you have any thoughts you want to share on this, please get in touch policy@lapg.co.uk.

LAA High Cost Family PET Shadowing Request

The LAA's High Cost Family team is seeking shadowing opportunities with legal aid providers to support with the LAA's internal development, as well as aiding an understanding of the challenges faced by practitioners, cost lawyers, counsel and clerks and looking to see how they could provide additional support.

This would be two-way relationship with an offer to visit the HCF team in Jarrow. If you are interested in getting involved, please contact Louise Cowell of the LAA, High Cost Family Operations Manager & Site Lead: Louise.Cowell1@Justice.gov.uk

LAA High cost billing webinar

Hints and tips for successfully submitting claims for high cost case work are available through this LAA webinar on Thursday 23 November, 4pm to 5.15pm. The focus will be on common issues and how to get your claims paid first time.

Questions will be answered on the topics covered although LAA experts will not be able to deal with case specific enquiries.

[Register for webinar >>](#)

Online training now available for civil work submissions

Online training modules are now available for providers working in the Client and Cost Management System (CCMS). Dates are available through to the end of October.

Training is wide-ranging and covers areas such as emergency applications, means and merits assessments, high cost cases, amending applications and billing.

[Sign up for a module >>](#)

[HMCTS guidance on preventing court delays by ensuring agents can access case files](#)

Defence practitioners are being urged by HM Courts and Tribunals Service (HMCTS) to help reduce court delays (!) when agents act for them in court. This often means ensuring agents can obtain case materials via the Common Platform when representing clients in the courtroom. Guidance on 'granting case access' is available from HMCTS on GOV.UK.

[HMCTS guidance >>](#)



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LAPG News & Events

[LAPG Annual Conference 9 November - in person at University College London](#)



The Conference is taking shape nicely. We have had a very short run-in and we know that members will be very busy as always but it would be great to see you there. We are constantly adding speakers and details on the website. The Lord Chancellor and the Shadow Lord Chancellor have confirmed that they will attend. And we are absolutely delighted that our keynote speaker this year is Raju Bhatt, founding partner of Bhatt Murphy. If you were present at the LALYs when Raju was awarded the Outstanding Achievement award you will know what an inspirational and warm speaker he is. There is something for everyone. There are three plenaries looking at the bigger picture, three sets of workshops with a choice of four workshops at each time and a drinks reception at the end of the day. And lots of coffee and nibbles throughout the day.

And the cost? The Early Bird offer ends today so please book now for the reduced rate.

- **LAPG Members (Early Bird - until 27th October) - £70 + VAT = £84**
- **LAPG Members - £99 + VAT = £118.80**
- **Non-Members of LAPG (Early Bird - until 27th October) - £99 + VAT = £118.80**

- Non-Members of LAPG - £140 + VAT = £168
- YLAL/ JFFs/ SWSQF Members (Early Bird - until 27th October) - £20 + VAT = £24
- YLAL/ JFFs/ SWSQF Members - £30 + VAT = £36

See [here](#) for more information and how to book.

Thank you to UCL, Accesspoint and John M Hayes for their support which has enabled us to keep the prices so low.

APPG on Access to Justice News & Events

What next for justice? Report from Parliamentary Event 22 October 2023

On Monday 23 October, the APPG on Access to Justice hosted our first justice event of the new session with the Lord Chancellor, Alex Chalk KC MP, Attorney General Victoria Prentis KC MP and Chair of the Justice Select Committee Sir Bob Neill MP. The evening was chaired by Laura Farris MP Co-Chair of the APPG. This event was run in lieu of a Party conference event with the intention of providing the Government with the opportunity to set out its stall for Justice, but hosting it in Westminster opened it up to members of our sector who, it is fair to say, were unlikely to join the party faithful and make it to Manchester.

We hope to host similar events with the Labour party and Liberal Democrats in the coming months.

The evening kicked off with the Lord Chancellor setting out his priorities ahead of the next election. These were strengthening the justice system, upholding the rule of law, fortifying the court estate, ensuring access to justice. Mr Chalk set out his fundamental belief that individuals need to be able to seek redress for their grievances, touching on his ELSA initiative from his time as Minister for Legal Aid (Early Legal Support and Advice) and the Government's steps in combating violence against women. He also mentioned the £220m set aside by Treasury to repair the courts system and strides that have been taken around Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG), referring specifically to FLOWS (Finding Legal Options for Women



Survivors) which afforded survivors of domestic abuse the ability to reach advice and support using technology. He emphasised the enormous strides that have been made in this area. The number of people prosecuted for violence and rape is higher than 2010, more are being sentenced, sentences are longer than 2010. He added that the system isn't perfect- but it's vastly better.

We took questions from the floor for each speaker and there were three that particularly encapsulated the mood of the sector. Jenny Beck KC (Hon) from Beck Fitzgerald (and Co-Chair of LAPG) stated that while progress has been made that there are still two women being killed every week. FLOWS and similar technological solutions are valuable but need lawyers prepared to take on the work, and we still face an ever-increasing dearth of lawyers coming into legal aid and family law.

Roger Ralph, a Chartered Legal Executive, took a moment to describe the condition of the courts he's working in. Buckets on the floor to catch leaks and just one remand court in the whole of Hertfordshire so there's very little time to speak to the prosecutor prior to the hearing. He advocated passionately for investing in the court estate to increase capacity.

Matthew Davies of Wilsons Solicitors, a multi practice legal aid firm, touched on the areas of law that the firm has been forced to drop as a result of the fees - the work simply isn't financially viable. He asked the Lord Chancellor why civil legal aid providers have had no increase in rates for more than two decades. Practitioners don't want to strike or to leave these areas of work but the work simply isn't sustainable.

The Lord Chancellor responded, talking about the easy target that legal aid has represented for successive governments. Alluding to the lack of juniors coming into the profession he agreed that we need more lawyers and cited the Independent Criminal Review of Criminal Legal Aid (CLAR), accelerated reforms and fee increases made in association with it. Mr Chalk agreed that legal aid does need to be made a more attractive career to attract juniors into the profession promising that the forthcoming Review of Civil Legal Aid (RoCLA) will do for civil what CLAR did for crime. 'We have to reverse a trend where public-spirited lawyers who are upholding access to justice are turning away from the profession'.

Sector News & Events

PLP Event: Challenging Unfairness in the Immigration System - course 21-24 November 2023



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The immigration system is now more complex and punitive than ever. This event is for those seeking to challenge discrimination and unfairness in immigration, using strategic legal, research and policy work.

PLP is presenting this series of seminars in partnership with Immigration Law Practitioners' Association (ILPA), the Strategic Legal Advice Committee (SLAC), and the Strategic Legal Fund (SLF).

The 6 seminars are presented online 1 or 1.5 hour sessions (9.5 hours in total) split over 4 days.

All sessions are recorded so attendees can access after the event.

[Full details here](#)

Civil Justice Council's 12th National Forum - Friday 17 November 2023



The Civil Justice Council's 12th National Forum on access to justice in a cost of living crisis will take place at Friends House, Euston and online on Friday 17 November 2023.

Further details and how to register [can be found on here](#).

The Law Society report from the 21st Century Justice Project

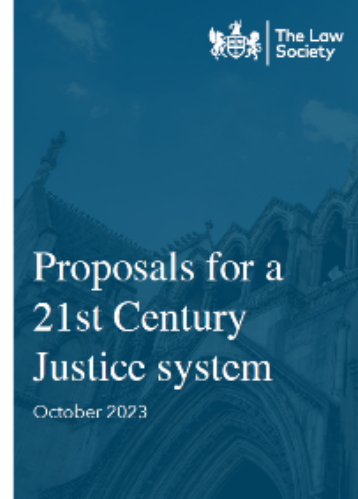
In March 2023, The Law Society kicked off a three-year project to look at the problems facing justice in England and Wales and explore practical changes to make sure the system works effectively, now and in the future.

In year one, they say they have focused on four key areas:

- improving the alternative / non-court dispute resolution landscape
- making legal services more affordable
- civil legal aid reforms
- making online justice portals work better for end-users

They would like to hear your thoughts on their proposals to improve access to justice.

You can read all about the project and their proposals for a [21st Century Justice System here](#).



We're really looking forward to the Conference on the 9th of November. An opportunity to learn and explore topics close to the hearts of practitioners and students, but also a chance to build on that all-too-important sense of community in the legal aid sector. We hope to see you there.

Take care one and all,

Chris Minnoch, CEO [@ChrisLAPG](#)

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[#WeAreLegalAid](#)
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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!

LEGAL AID LAWYER OF THE YEAR AWARDS



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