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27/09/24

LAPG Member Update

Issue 29 of 2024

Welcome to the latest edition of the LAPG Member Update. As always, please get in touch with any thoughts on the issues raised below, and let us know if you have any news, events or reflections that you want to share with other Members.

Criminal Legal Aid News

- 2025 Standard Crime Contract tender launch

Civil Legal Aid News

- Outcome of Duncan Lewis judicial review on Immigration & Asylum fees
- The Law Society Frontier Economic implications report and Autumn Budget submission
- LAA #HelpUsSayYes webinar series
- Civil Application Fixer Service

Cross-Cutting Legal Aid News

- Law Society Financial Benchmarking Survey 2025

LAPG News and Events

- LAPG Annual Dinner and Conference – 7 & 8 November 2024
- Training Courses – New Toolkit launched to help you manage your legal aid contract

Criminal Legal Aid News

2025 Standard Crime Contract tender launch

A reminder that the LAA has launched the procurement process for delivery of criminal legal aid services from 1 October 2025. Full details of the procurement process and contract documentation can be found at:

[Crime Contract 2025 Tender - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/crime-contract-2025-tender)

If you have any questions about the contract or tender process, you can submit them via the LAA's e-tendering portal. The LAA will be publishing a 'Frequently Asked Questions' document w/c 7th October. The LAA also plans to publish further guidance including a welcome pack summarising key contract changes in time for the launch of the contract next year.

You can find detailed information about the tender including the key changes and deadlines in our previous member update.

Members continue to express their dismay that the LAA has commenced a tender process for new contracts without any clarity from the Ministry of Justice on the outcome of the consultation on crime lower work or resolution of The Law Society's judicial review. We understand that The Law Society has written directly to the LAA's Commissioning Team to express these concerns and formally request an extension of the tender deadline to enable these processes to be completed.

The London Criminal Courts Solicitors Association (LCCSA) had previously voiced its concerns in an open letter to the LAA, where they make the point that it is unfair and, indeed, irrational to expect firms to tender for contracts that do not offer the certainty of increased remuneration. [You can find the letter here.](#)

Please note a **new requirement in the 2025 Contract to attain Cyber Essentials** certification from the Service Commencement Date and throughout the term of the 2025 Crime Contract.

This is set out at Section 12 of the [2025 Standard Crime Contract Application Guide](#) (set out below) and Section 16.19 of the Standard Terms:

SECTION 12: CYBER ESSENTIALS



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12.1 All Applicants are required to hold Cyber Essentials certification, or an equivalent certification as may be agreed with us, by the relevant Service Commencement Date and to maintain this throughout the lifetime of the 2025 Crime Contract.

12.2 Cyber Essentials certification is awarded based on self-assessment and is verified by an independent certification body, under the Cyber Essentials Scheme. Details of the Cyber Essentials Scheme can be found at: <https://www.cyberessentials.ncsc.gov.uk/>

If you have any thoughts on the new contract, or these wider policy issues, [please contact us](#).

Civil Legal Aid News

Outcome of Duncan Lewis judicial review on Immigration & Asylum fees

Duncan Lewis Solicitors has today issued a press release to explain the outcome of their judicial review against the Lord Chancellor, challenging the failure to raise legal aid fees for controlled work in immigration and asylum cases.

[Read the full press release here](#)

The release notes that:

The Court approved a consent order on 25 September 2024 by which Duncan Lewis withdrew the Claim on the basis that the Lord Chancellor has recognised the urgency of the issues in the claim and has committed to announcing a decision by the end of November 2024 as to whether she will increase the fees for Controlled Immigration Work and if so, to what extent.

Duncan Lewis also withdrew the claim on the basis that the Lord Chancellor committed to commencing consultation on any proposed increase in fees within 8 weeks of her decision in November 2024, and to taking steps towards laying a statutory instrument and implementing any changes in fees with reasonable promptness.

Duncan Lewis has also provided a link to the [consent order approved by the Court here](#).

This is a very impressive result for Duncan Lewis



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and for the many individuals and organisations who supported this claim. It also signals a significant shift in approach by the current Ministerial team, which we hope will translate into a sensible decision in November and a rational set of proposals in the forthcoming consultation on fees. We'll be pushing the Lord Chancellor to consult on all legal aid fees, not just those that were the subject of this judicial review, as increases are needed across the board to stabilise the legal aid system and ensure that providers can deliver sustainable services.

The Law Society Frontier Economic implications report and Autumn Budget submission

The Law Society has published their final implications report from Frontier Economics. This reflects on the implications of the Frontier Economics findings in their research on the sustainability of civil legal aid which they published earlier in the year. It highlights the need for an immediate investment in the legal aid provider base to prevent further reductions in provision and a need to undertake more comprehensive reform to ensure the long-term sustainability of provision. It also highlights that with appropriate levels of funding, civil legal aid provision could relieve pressure on the court system and other public services.

In their submission to the Autumn Budget 2024, they call for an immediate 20% fee increase in civil legal aid while the Review of Civil Legal Aid takes place.

[**You can read the report here.**](#)

LAA #HelpUsSayYes webinar series

**Civil Certificated Means Assessment
Submissions: Tuesday 1 October @ 4pm**

A webinar from the Civil Certificated Means Team will focus on how to undertake a reasonable means assessment of your clients' circumstances for any new providers to legal Aid or a refresh for our existing providers. The webinar will include what documentation is required and common issues.

[**Register here**](#)

**Civil certificated family merits submissions:
Wednesday 2 October @ 4pm**

A webinar from the Civil Certificated Merits Team will focus on how to submit a merits assessment for any new providers to legal aid or a refresh for our existing providers. The webinar will include what documentation is required and common issues.

[Register here](#)

Civil Finance: Common queries raised: Thursday 3 October 2024 @ 4pm

A webinar from the Civil Finance Team will focus on the most common queries raised within civil billing. It will offer practical hints and tips to reduce the need to submit a query.

[Register here](#)

Civil certificated non-family merits submissions: Thursday 3 October @ 230pm

A webinar from the Civil Certificated Merits Team will focus on how to submit a merits assessment (non-family) for any new providers to legal Aid or a refresh for our existing providers. The webinar will include what documentation is required, common issues and submitting an amendment.

[Register here](#)

Civil Application Fixer Service

A reminder that the LAA's **Civil Application Fixer** covers applications in all areas of civil legal aid.

To use the service email: applicationfixer@justice.gov.uk

Examples of issues the service can be used for:

- An application incorrectly rejected or refused
- If you believe information provided has not been considered in the decision
- If the LAA has asked for documents or information which have previously been provided
- If the LAA has not granted the correct cost limitation

The LAA will only review the decision based on the information submitted on the original application:

- Any additional new information will require the appeal route
- The LAA aims to review submissions within 24 hours (Monday to Friday).
- If they agree there has been an LAA error, they will rectify this at the earliest opportunity

Cross-Cutting News & Events

Law Society Financial Benchmarking Survey 2025

Complete The Law Society's Financial Benchmarking Survey before Friday 27 September for a free personalised financial report for your firm. Written and produced by the legal team at Hazelwoods LLP, the survey is widely recognised as the annual financial health check for law firms.

Members report that this is a very useful business management tool and you get a bespoke report showing how you perform against other firms on some key indices. It is free to take part.

This year for the first time **they are asking a question about legal aid** - what proportion of your fees come from legal aid? It would be really helpful if legal aid practices who have not taken part before do so because we might get some useful data comparing differences between legal aid firms and non-legal aid firms.

The deadline is 27 February – **today** – although we think they will consider including late ones.

[Full details of how to take part here](#)



LAPG News & Events

LAPG Annual Dinner and Conference

We're getting very excited about welcoming friends and colleagues from across the country to



our forthcoming Annual Dinner and Conference on Thursday the 7th and Friday the 8th of November. Many thanks to those of you who have already booked.



We're delighted to announce that we are now taking bookings for our Annual Dinner at The Folly in central London. Handily located and with a delicious menu on offer, tickets are now available which include a three course meal, prosecco reception and table wine. Join us for an evening of food and fun, with an absolute embargo on discussing legal aid fees and the Legal Aid Agency's IT systems.

Standard tickets are just £45+VAT to cover our costs, with a limited number of discounted tickets also available to members of YLAL, the Justice First Fellowship and the Social Welfare Solicitors Qualification Scheme.

Even if you can't make the conference join us for dinner and drinks and a chance to catch-up with friends and colleagues.

Full details about the conference can be found on our website here: <https://lapg.co.uk/conference/>

We have an excellent range of workshops to suit practitioners from across the scheme and our plenaries and speeches will inform, challenge and inspire. We're in active discussions with the Ministry of Justice about future legal aid policy and will use the conference as a way of both updating delegates about future government plans and enabling the Ministry to interact with you to gather your views.

Heidi Alexander MP, Minister with responsibility for both criminal and civil legal aid, has confirmed that she will provide a video address at the start of the conference and we are also looking forward to hearing from **Lord Bach**, co-chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Access to Justice. Our second keynote will be delivered by **Conor Gearty**, founder member of Matrix Chambers and Professor of Human Rights Law at LSE Law School.

As always, we've kept ticket prices for the

conference as low as possible to ensure that the event is accessible to the widest possible audience or practitioners, policy specialists and future practitioners. Many thanks to Herbert Smith Freehills for helping us to make that possible, and to our conference and dinner sponsors, John M Hayes.

LAPG training courses

New Toolkit - Introduction to Managing Family and Civil Legal Aid Contracts

New to managing a legal aid contract? Legal aid contracts are complex and cumbersome. Managing your contract well can be the difference between success and failure.

We have developed a Toolkit that draws together key information to enable practices to understand their legal aid contract.

Managing a Civil Legal Aid Contract Toolkit Bundle

This toolkit seeks to draw together basic information to enable practices to gain an overview of how their legal aid contract works. LAPG Member Rate: £100/year Non-LAPG Member Rate: £400/year

£100.00 / year

Particularly useful for those new to delivering legal aid, it links to more detailed sources from the LAA, LAPG and others. Designed as a comprehensive resource for the people in your organisation responsible for day to day management of your legal aid contract.

The Toolkit has seven main headings:

- Some Key Changes Between the 2018 Civil Contract and the 2024 Civil Contract
- Contracts Overview
- Key Issues Under the Standard Civil Contract 2024
- Managing Casework
- Managing Billing
- Managing Quality & Compliance
- Sources of Support

The Community Board notifies subscribers of all official amendments/additions to the contract and supporting documents. Updates will be incorporated into the Toolkit, which will be kept under constant review. The Community Board is a peer network which enables subscribers to interact with others managing contracts.

Produced with contributions from well-regarded sector specialists Vicky Ling and Matthew Howgate and Hosted on our learning platform,

Thinkific, the Toolkit is an intuitive and easily navigable resource.

Subscriptions to this valuable resources are just £100 per annum for LAPG members.

[Subscribe here](#) or, if you have any questions, contact our Head of Learning and Development, [Andrea Shumaker here](#).

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:

3RD OCTOBER 2024

12TH NOVEMBER 2024

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.

Take care one and all,

Chris Minnoch, CEO [@ChrisLAPG](#)

Follow LAPG on Twitter [@WeAreLAPG](#)
[#WeAreLegalAid](#)
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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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