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27/02/25

## LAPG Member Update

Issue 6 of 2025

Welcome to the latest LAPG Member Update.

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## Civil Legal Aid News

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### Civil legal aid fees consultation – please inform LAPG’s response

As reported in Member Update 3 of 2025, the Ministry of Justice has [launched a consultation](#) on proposals to increase fees for Housing & Debt and Immigration & Asylum work. The consultation also seeks views from all practitioners about the LAA’s current contractual approach to remote working and office requirements.

**The consultation closes on 21 March 2025** so we are busy formulating our response and have been in discussions with members, rep bodies like The Law Society and membership bodies such as Law Centres Network, HLPAs and ILPA. We will soon be launching a short survey for practitioners to feed in their views, which will be shared between LAPG, LCN, HLPAs and ILPA so that you can directly inform our responses.

We are also working closely with a small number of member organisations to model the potential impact of the fee increases, consider what steps providers are likely to take as a result of any potential increase in income, and discuss whether the proposals are likely to enable the MOJ to fulfil its stated objectives (see [pages 13-14 of the consultation document](#) for more on what the MOJ is trying to achieve through these proposals).

We strongly believe that all legal aid providers should engage with this consultation, not just those with a housing or immigration contract or who might be considering applying for one of these contracts in the future. Not only does the consultation seek views on important issues such as permanent office presence and the ability to accept remote signatures from clients, but it also provides us

scrutiny and robust testing against the realities of practice across all areas of legal aid, in all locations, and by all of the diverse types of organisations that deliver the service.

Given the MOJ's 'principles that inform decision making on civil legal aid fees' (i.e. what the MOJ wants to achieve by increasing legal aid fees), as set out at [pages 13-14 of the consultation document](#), we are suggesting to members that you do the following to ensure that consultation responses engage with the key issues:

1. Apply the proposed new fees to your existing cases and work out how much additional income you would receive each year. This is probably best done by using a sample of 'typical cases' and then extrapolating this against your caseload over a specific period. This can be done whether you do housing, immigration or any other area of civil legal aid as the MOJ has explained the method they used to come up with the new fee levels (See Annex A from page 34) and that method can be applied to other areas of civil legal aid; then
  
2. Consider what, if anything, you might do with any additional income and whether the MOJ is therefore likely to achieve their objectives. You might want to ask yourselves whether you will take any of the following steps with additional income:
  - Will you look to recruit new staff? If so, what sort of staff will you look to recruit? i.e. paralegals/trainees, more experienced fee earners, supervisors etc.? How realistic is it that you will be able to recruit the staff you need?
  - Will you make any changes to your ratio of legal aid work vs non-legal aid work?
  - Will this enable you to offer higher salaries or other incentives to your team as a result of this change?
  - Will this change your ability to retain your staff and/or offer meaningful career pathways?
  - Will you change the volume of legal aid cases that you take on? If so, how does this relate to the number of eligible clients you have to turn away due to lack of capacity?
  - Will this change your approach to the types of legal aid cases that you take on? For example will you be able to take on types of cases that you currently cannot take on, or will you take on more Controlled vs Licenced work?
  - Will you be able to carry out more 'early intervention' as the consultation anticipates?
  - Will this allow you invest in your facilities or infrastructure? i.e. I.T. systems, back office staff, office, home working facilities etc.

- Will the suggestions in the consultation to reduce the contractual requirements for permanent office presence change your business model?
- Will the suggestions in the consultation to reduce the contractual limits on remote applications change your business model?

We understand from our own experience that many practitioners feel both weary and wary following many years of consultations and 'engagement' with the MOJ which has seldom led to positive change. But we do encourage as many of you as possible to respond to this consultation, or to send us your thoughts to incorporate into our response. The MOJ has made it clear that this is just the beginning of a journey of reforming civil legal aid (the fee schemes, contracts and administrative systems). We strongly believe that information and analysis that we receive directly from you, our members, will be the most effective way of influencing the MOJ's future direction of travel.

Whichever area(s) of civil legal aid you undertake, please do consider responding and please do contact us by emailing our [Director of Legal Aid Policy, Kate Pasfield](#) if you would like to discuss these proposals further.

### [Opportunity to tender for HLPAS contract work](#)

[On 21 February 2025 the LAA commenced a tender process](#) for a range of HLPAS schemes, with services expected to begin (resume?) as follows:

Services from 1 June 2025:

- Kidderminster, Redditch, Worcester
- Slough
- Uxbridge
- Winchester

Services from 1 September 2025:

- Barnsley
- Bury St Edmunds
- Grimsby
- Guildford
- Lancaster
- Wigan
- Wolverhampton

[For further information please see this dedicated HLPAS 2025 page.](#)

## Special Children Act (SCA) case outcomes reporting changes

The LAA has made changes to automatically lodge outcomes on linked cases where the lead matter is reported. This removes the requirement for solicitors to lodge the case outcome on any associated case with a zero cost limit. This change was introduced on **24 February 2025**.

[Further information can be obtained here.](#)

## CIV MEANS 7: financial assessment for family mediation

On 25 February [the LAA published a new version of this form](#) as Universal Credit was missing from the Income Section.

## LAA event: Help [Them] Say Yes

### **#HUSY: High-Cost Family (HCF) virtual clinic: Wednesday 19 March 2025**

The HCF Clinic on 19 March 2025, part of the #HelpUsSayYes campaign, offers the opportunity to book a virtual face-to-face, 20-minute appointment with experienced case managers. Providers can discuss ongoing case specific issues. Registrations are limited and the deadline is Wednesday 12 March.

**To register for an appointment:**

[Register for: #HUSY High-Cost Family \(HCF\) virtual clinic: Wednesday 19 March 2025](#)

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## **Criminal Legal Aid News**

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### Court appointee: Magistrates' Court and Crown Court claims

The LAA [published a new Court appointee claim form](#) for claims with a date of appointment on or after 1 January 2025.

### Duty Solicitor Scheme boundary consultations

On 19 February [this dedicated LAA webpage](#) was updated to include a consultation on the merger of the Colchester & Clacton and Chelmsford & Harlow Police Station Schemes.

## Cross-Cutting Legal Aid News

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For up-to date information on LAA tender activity, including the latest on open tenders such as for HLPAS schemes and the Specialist Telephone Advice contracts, [see this LAA webpage](#).

### [LAA payments to providers](#)

You can check dates for processing (crime and civil) and planned BACS payments, get financial statements, switch to variable monthly payments [by visiting this LAA webpage](#) (last updated 17 February 2025).

### [LAA: Welsh Language Scheme annual report](#)

The LAA published a report on 25 February on the operation of the Welsh Language Scheme between [April 2022 and March 2024](#). The report is submitted to the Welsh Language Commissioner and provides an annual assessment against commitments from the LAA to the Welsh Language Scheme.

### [Directory of Providers](#)

The LAA [Directory of Providers was updated on 24 February 2025](#). It is worth checking this Directory regularly to ensure it contains accurate information about your organisation. I spoke with a provider last week and we discovered that the Directory did not accurately list the contracts they had at each office. The Directory sits behind the [Find a Legal Adviser or Family Mediator](#) website so is used by members of the public and referral agencies when they are trying to locate a legal aid lawyer.

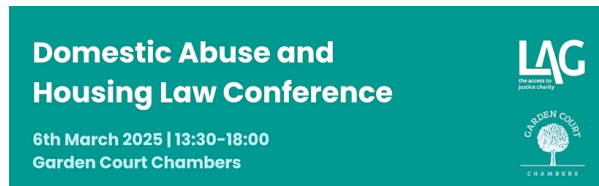
A reminder that the Directory contains a comprehensive list of providers, broken down by:

- A summary of all providers
- 2024 Civil authorisations (including Matter Start allocations per contract category)
- Providers undertaking modern slavery work
- HLPAS providers (including Stage 1 and 2 Act of Assistance allocations)
- 2024 Civil Contract part-time and outreach presence
- 2024 Mediation outreach presence
- 2022 Crime Contract providers
- 2022 Crime Contract Duty Solicitor Schemes

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## Sector News and Events

## The Legal Action Group Domestic Abuse and Housing Law Conference 2025 - 6 March 2025



LAG and Garden Court Chambers invite you to a unique afternoon conference, which will bring together leading experts in housing law with pioneering domestic abuse lawyers and campaigners. Confirmed speakers include housing silk Liz Davies KC, and Clare Wade KC, who acted in the ground-breaking *Sally Challen* appeal.

This event will include front-line professionals supporting victims of domestic abuse and their families, and will explore key issues involved in protecting the housing rights of domestic abuse victims. It will be an opportunity to share experiences, and engage in discussions aimed at improving the support available to victims facing domestic abuse and their housing-related challenges.

### Topics include:

- Legal analysis and update
- Spotlight on migrant rights
- Voices from the frontline
- Update on the new Domestic Abuse Protection Notices pilot

[You can find more information and how to book here.](#)

### PLP Advanced JR training – 28-30 April 2025



This series of six 90-minute webinars, presented over three days on Zoom, is designed for those who know how to do judicial review and want to up-skill. This course will provide insight and outlook across cutting-edge and key areas of



## Who this training is for

- Lawyers involved in all aspects of judicial review and public law, including:
- Solicitors and barristers
- Academics and researchers in public law
- Policy people in Government or NGOs concerned with public law
- Law students

[For more information and to book, see here.](#)

## PAMELA launch event – 18 March 2025 – postponed

We sorry to report that we have had to postpone this important event due to a clash with another key sector event. We'll be back in touch soon with an update on our plans. In the meantime, do visit our website for more information about the PAMELA initiative and please do get in touch if you would like to be involved or learn more.

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## LAPG News and Events

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### LALY25 nominations are open!



A reminder that nominations are now open for the 2025 Legal Aid Lawyer of the Year awards. **Nominations close on 22 April 2025**, so now is the time to speak to colleagues and friends across the sector about putting together a submission for your legal aid hero.

For everything you need to know about the 2025 LALYs, including this year's categories, sponsors, details of the ceremony on 4 July 2025 and guidance for making a nomination, [visit our dedicated webpage](#).

### LAPG Membership – Thank you for renewing for 2025

Thank you to all those who have renewed your membership for 2025. The team at LAPG gets a real boost every time an organisation renews as we really do believe that we can only do what we do if we have you behind us. You are not only providing us with the resources we need through your membership subscriptions, you are our eyes and ears at the legal aid coalface and our collective brains trust when it comes to pushing for improvements to the legal aid scheme.

## **New Online Course: Introduction to Mental Health, Mental Capacity & Community Care Legal Aid**

We have launched the next course in our legal aid training series aimed at Mental Health, Mental Capacity/Court of Protection and Community Care Practitioners! This course is perfect for trainees, paralegals, junior lawyers as well as those that wish to refresh their knowledge in these areas. Paired with our Introduction to Civil Legal Aid Course, you can provide your new and junior staff with comprehensive training on the Civil Legal Aid Scheme as well as category specific information in an easy and accessible way.

The course covers:

### **Mental Health**

- Non-Mental Health Tribunal Work
- Non-Means Tested Non-Mental Health Tribunal Work
- Non-Means Tested Mental Health Tribunal Work
- Help at Court for Victims and Licensed Work for Representation before the Upper Tribunal/High Court
- Applying Guidance
- Costs

### **Mental Capacity/Court of Protection**

- Cases Under the Mental Capacity Act 2005
- Cases Under the Inherent Jurisdiction of the High Court
- Full Representation Certificates -COP Cases
- The Legal Aid Application
- Financial Eligibility (Section 21 MCA 2005 Cases, Young People, Trapped Capital)
- Other Considerations - Court Orders

### **Community Care**

- What is Community Care Law?
- Legal Help
- Full Representation
- Investigative Representation
- The Legal Aid Application
- Other Considerations
- Payment for Community Care Work

### **Contributors**

mental health law. Alison has vast experience in representing patients subject to all sections of the Mental Health Act and is an experienced Advocate before the First Tier Tribunal (mental health), having sustained her Law Society accreditation throughout. She has a particular specialism in representing forensic patients including those detained in high secure care at Rampton Hospital. She has been involved in a number of judicial review applications throughout her career. She has also dealt with appeals including to the Upper Tribunal.

**Rosie Campbell** is an Associate Solicitor at Rook Irwin Sweeney. She qualified as solicitor in 2018 and specialises in public law and human rights, community care, and mental capacity law. She is committed to access to justice and has a particular interest in cases concerning the rights of disabled children and adults. Rosie has a wealth of experience in health and welfare cases in the Court of Protection. She regularly acts on behalf of adults who lack mental capacity, instructed by the Official Solicitor, as well as family members. She acts in complex cases including in relation to the withdrawal of life-sustaining medical treatment for both adults and children, best interests disputes, deprivation of liberty, and welfare deputyship applications.

## Subscribe

This course is hosted on our learning platform Thinkific, delegates have access to the course for 12 months from the date of booking so they can continue to reference the material as they work through cases or across different categories of legal aid.

[You can book this course at the LAPG Member rate of £200 here.](#)

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. If you have any issues, questions, or require an invoice please email [Andrea Shumaker](#).

\*Must be a current host organisation. Current host organisations are eligible for the discount during the calendar year their fellow is placed with them.

## [Introduction to Managing Family and Civil Legal Aid Contracts Toolkit](#)

This new Toolkit draws together key information to enable practices to understand their legal aid contract. 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.

This annual subscription will keep you up to date and regularly informed of all key changes.

LAPG Members - **£100** per annum

Non-members of LAPG - **£400** per annum

Included in your purchase is the Toolkit itself as well as access to a Community Board.

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.

Hosted on our learning platform, Thinkific, the Toolkit is an intuitive and easily navigable resource.

## **Contributors**

Vicky Ling has spent her career in the advice and legal sector and has worked with a wide range of solicitors' firms and not for profit legal practices. She is a Chartered Quality Professional and provides expert consultancy support in relation to practice management and legal aid service delivery issues and has written extensively on these topics. She edits the LAG Legal Aid Handbook.

Matthew Howgate is an Organisation Development Consultant and Director of the LAPG Management & Leadership Hub. He started his career as a legal aid solicitor and has spent the last 15 years working as a consultant across the legal aid and advice sectors.

## **Training courses**

### ***Supervision Courses***

13<sup>th</sup> March, 15<sup>th</sup> May, 10<sup>th</sup> July, 18<sup>th</sup> September and 25<sup>th</sup> November. You can book your place on any of the remaining 2025 training dates below:

[13<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2025](#)

[15<sup>TH</sup> MAY 2025](#)

[10<sup>TH</sup> JULY 2025](#)

[18<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2025](#)

[25<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2025](#)

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

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, JFFfree, 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.

A big thank you once again from me for renewing your membership for 2025. We're really proud to represent you. Please do get in touch if you want to discuss or get involved in any of our policy work or events, or if you would like us to support the work you are doing to promote access to justice.

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!



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