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23/02/24

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Issue 8 of 2024

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Civil Legal Aid News

Further tender opportunity for the 2024 Standard Civil Contract

Some welcome news this week that the LAA has decided to run a further tender round for the 2024 Standard Civil Contract. The tender opens on 18 March and closes at 5pm on 22 April 2024. This gives those who were unsuccessful in securing a contract through the September 2023 tender process another bite at the cherry. The tender process is also open to new providers.

Bids can be submitted in all procurement areas across all civil legal aid categories, including 7 HLPAS schemes.



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While the intention is that successful bidders will commence work on 1 September 2024 (the start date for the 2024 Standard Civil Contract) the LAA has noted that it cannot guarantee that start date through this process because of the need to complete verification.

[Read the LAA news story here](#)

Review of Civil Legal Aid - LAPG Call for Evidence response

We submitted our response to the RoCLA Call for Evidence on Wednesday. It's a bit of a doozy at 105 pages long so we're just in the process of putting together an executive summary of all the recommendations we have made to improve the legal aid scheme. You won't be surprised to hear that we mentioned fees over 300 times in our response. It is deeply depressing that we had to reference the 1994 and 1996 remuneration regulations when explaining the hideously adverse impact of fees that have only gone backwards over the last three decades.

We are incredibly grateful for the contributions we received from so many members. In the end over 100 organisations and individuals provided us with direct evidence, feedback on our drafts and/or copies of their responses. It is incredibly heartening that once again so many busy practitioners stepped up to support our policy work and demonstrate their unwavering commitment to access to justice.

[You can download our response here](#)

While the LAPG office breathed a collective sigh of relief once we hit send on our response, the work doesn't end there. The MoJ is now considering all the evidence submitted and we know that they received some excellent responses from Resolution, The Law Society, ILPA, Public Law Project, Law Centres Network and many other membership and representative bodies. We also know that a number of provider organisations directly submitted their own responses. And of course the call for evidence is just one element of RoCLA, with work streams looking at economic viability, user journeys, the available data and research and potential solutions from overseas jurisdictions. There can be no doubt that by the end of this process the MoJ will have collated the most comprehensive set of data and evidence about the current civil legal aid scheme in over a decade. What they do with it is the next big

question. And can they build a persuasive case to obtain additional funding from Treasury?

There are many big questions left to answer by the MoJ, but one of them will not be whether they have received sufficient input from legal aid practitioners to enable them to understand why the scheme is on its knees. So we await the 'next steps' report from the MoJ and, subject to the timing of the general election, a consultation on policy recommendations in the summer.

Frontier Economics interim report on the sustainability of civil legal aid

Many Members will know that The Law Society commissioned Frontier Economics to conduct an in-depth study about the financial realities facing civil legal aid providers. The initial stage has focused on housing providers and [**Frontier has published an interim report based on data and interviews with around 30 providers.**](#)

Frontier is continuing its work over the coming months and will be looking at other areas such as family legal aid, so please spread the word and encourage other providers [**to sign up to be involved in the research.**](#) The final report will be published end of March/beginning April with a view to influencing the MoJ's policy recommendations arising out of RoCLA so please do get involved if you can.

Updated Immigration providers south west support directory

This was updated once again on 21 February with the LAA publishing [**the latest version of this directory here.**](#) Members will recall that this mechanism has been put in place due to a chronic shortage of immigration and asylum providers in the region. The very existence of this directory is yet more proof of the parlous state of legal aid provision across England and Wales, as we and many other groups set out in our Call for Evidence responses.

As noted in our previous Update, we have significant concerns about the use of a remote service directory, particularly for such a vulnerable client group. Apart from the difficulties faced by vulnerable clients in accessing and using remote services, we also expect more direct action from the MoJ to ensure that providers are incentivised to set up and maintain services in all areas of England and Wales. Public Law Project has also

carried out research to determine the efficacy of this particular scheme, which has thrown up considerable concern that it is failing to help clients in the south west to access legal support.

HLPAS Market Engagement events

Published on 9 February, the LAA has announced two market engagement events for current Housing & Debt providers interested in delivering HLPAS services in the St Helens County Court and Family Court and the Lancaster Magistrates Court. If you are interested in attending [get the details here](#).

Criminal Legal Aid News

Crime Lower Consultation - Proposed Pay Increase for Police Station and Youth Court work - responses by 29 Mar 2024

This consultation seeks views on proposals to increase Crime Lower fees for Police Station and Youth Court work but once again the government has declined to propose a fee increase for prison law work.

[The announcement on 29 January is here](#)

[The consultation is here](#)

Crime processing dates

Latest timescales [have been published by the LAA here](#).

Crime claim form updates

The LAA [has published clarification](#) on the AU1 form that claims submitted without a completed AU1 form will be rejected.

The LAA has [also published clarification](#) on the same issue for the LU1 form.



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APPG News & Events

APPG on Access to Justice - Violence Against Women event - 27 February 2024

The APPG on Access to Justice will be running an event in Westminster on 27 February 2024 (14:00-15:30) focusing on Violence Against Women.

The event will be chaired by Baroness Helena Kennedy KC.

Speakers include:

- Laura Farris MP, *Minister for Victims and Safeguarding*
- Alex Davies-Jones MP, *Shadow Minister for DV and Safeguarding*
- Nicole Jacobs, Domestic Abuse Commissioner for England and Wales
- Jenny Beck KC (Hon), *Co-Chair of LAPG and Chair of the Nuffield Family Justice Observatory*
- Dr Nicola Sharp-Jeffs, *Founder and CEO of Surviving Economic Abuse*
- An Expert by Experience

To attend please contact LAPG's Director of Parliamentary Affairs, [Rohini Jana](#).



Sector News & Events

Public Law Project's Online Judicial Review Academy

A complete online course, run in short (1hour +) sessions on Zoom, over 4 days (26-29 February). All sessions are recorded for delegates to access after the training concludes. This course is presented in partnership with 39 Essex Chambers.

Who should attend:

- Junior and trainee lawyers, advisers, advocates and anyone likely to be involved in judicial review claims, or increase their understanding of JR to help their clients.
- Anyone responsible for legal policy in NGOs or Government, or those tasked with



Government decision making.

- Those working in campaigning organisations with a legal strategy and
- Those representing and advising marginalised groups in society

[Full details and booking process here](#)

LAPG News & Events

2024 LALY awards nomination process opens on Monday, 26 February!

It's happening! It's here! The nomination process for the 2024 Legal Aid Lawyer of the Year awards starts on Monday. The nomination window will be open for 8 weeks so please start speaking to colleagues about who you want to nominate as your legal aid hero and start gathering the supporting information to demonstrate just how amazing they are. Full details of this year's categories will be published on Monday so look out for further news on our website and on our social media platforms. In particular, follow @LALYawards for all the latest news.



Renew your LAPG membership before 29 February.

LAPG membership runs from 1 January to 31 December each year. Thank you to the many member organisations and individuals who have already renewed their membership for 2024.

If you are yet to renew your membership, please get in touch with us before 29 February. That is the end of the 10% Early Bird discount, but it is also the last day for full access to LAPG's member services. If you have not renewed by 29 February, we will start to restrict access to:



- Member Updates
- The Member section of our website
- The discount scheme for LAPG training courses and events
- Support with legal aid and practice management issues through our Member Query services

Renewing really couldn't be simpler – you can complete the renewal form online, submit your list of contacts for Member Updates and make payment either through our website or by BACS.

[Visit the Membership page of our website for more details](#)

Not sure whether your organisation has renewed or have any questions about membership, please [get in contact with our Operations Officer, Anna.](#)

LAPG training courses

Supervision Courses

Book your place on any of 2024 Supervision Courses below:

[7TH MARCH 2024](#)

[23RD APRIL 2024](#)

[2ND MAY 2024](#)

[8TH AUGUST 2024](#)

[12 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.

It's been a looong week here in the LAPG office. I am sure it has been for you too, wherever you are working. So please have a good, relaxing, restorative weekend, if you can. If you can't, because you're on duty or have yet another pressing deadline, please remember that you are doing an incredible job on the legal aid frontline and we salute you.

Take care one and all,

Chris Minnoch, CEO [@ChrisLAPG](#)

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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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