



Legal Aid Practitioners Group

A Review of our work and achievements in 2024

Political influencing, headed up by Ro Jana and with support from Harri Kellett:

- Expanded the remit of the All-Party Parliamentary Group, placing legal aid at the centre of the access to justice agenda.
- Expanded membership to 29 parliamentarians across the Commons and Lords and widened participation across political parties.
- Developed relationships with Ministers, the AG and SG, and shadows, both under the previous and current government.
- Hosted and spoke at Party Conference events for Labour, the Conservatives and the Lib Dems, working with organisations such as the Society of Labour Lawyers, The Law Society, the Society of Conservative Lawyers and giving practitioners a platform to engage with politicians.
- Delivered training for hundreds of MP's caseworkers in the House of Commons – helping them understand issues their constituents face and why referrals to legal aid lawyers have become so difficult.
- Informed parliamentarians and their staff through monthly email bulletins and quarterly analyses of legal aid statistics.
- Prepared briefing papers for ministerial teams, setting the scene and providing ideas on how to improve access to justice through investing in legal aid: Housing, Immigration and Asylum, Crime, Special Education Needs and Family
- Held parliamentary meetings and planned next year's meetings on prisons, housing and immigration and asylum.
- Helped launch and support the Take Your MP to Work Campaign with YLAL and Migrants Organise and distributed resources to MPs on legal aid, pro bono and public legal education.

Operational Support and Legal Aid Policy, headed up by Kate Pasfield:

- Responded to formal consultations: CILEX accreditation in crime; Domestic Abuse Protection Notices and Orders; Crime Lower fees; OISC fees; Public Accounts Committee; evidence requirements for domestic violence; Contempt of court; Standard Crime Contract 2025; Standard Civil Contract 2024.
- Directly engaged with the MOJ through involvement in all work strands of the Review of Civil Legal Aid and the call for evidence; on the development of the 'Legal Support Strategy'; the Private Family Early Legal Advice pilot; the Review of HLPAS schemes and training grants; Reinstatement of the Welfare Benefits escape fee; with HMCTS and MOJ on the development of a digital possession portal; with The Law Society on a 'trusted provider' model.
- Engaged with sector colleagues through the Specialist Practitioners Groups; HRA coalition; Migrants Organise; Access Social Care working group; Law Society Access to Justice Committee; Civil Justice Council; Legal Support Advisory Group; Administrative Justice Council.
- Expanded our Advisory Committee with new members, adding to the depth and breadth of experience from the legal aid frontline.
- Engaged with the LAA through umpteen ad hoc groups looking at things like means testing and the development of a market engagement strategy. Through tender processes; changes to guidance and contracts; The Civil and Crime Contracts Consultative groups; The Process Efficiency Team.



Member Support, from Kate and Anna Neira Quesada:

- Assisted members with queries about their legal aid services and managing their organisations, with support from our quite exceptional Advisory Committee members.
- Weekly email updates covering all things legal aid and access to justice – accessed over 30,000 times by practitioners.
- Developed our website and resources for members.
- Advertised member vacancies and assisted with recruitment.
- Expanded our social media presence to share information and updates with members.

The Legal Aid Lawyer of the Year awards, from Team LALY, including co-organiser Fiona Bawdon:

- Delivered another quite staggering LALY awards with over 500 guests
- 13 awards to recognise the life-changing work of practitioners and support staff, including a special award for the quite peerless Dame Karen Buck.
- Outstanding Achievement for Toufique Hossain and his incredible public law team at Duncan Lewis.

Training courses and resources, led by Andrea Shumaker, with exemplary support from a range of trainers such as Vicky Ling and Matthew Howgate:

- Developed a new Civil and Family Legal Aid Contract Management Toolkit.
- Developed a new People Management training course.
- Over 300 delegates across our Supervision, Introduction to Legal Aid Courses and our management training courses for private practice providers.
- Funded consultancy support to help organisations with specific management requirements.
- Commissioned practitioners to develop new online training modules on immigration and asylum, crime, family, mental health, mental capacity, community care and housing.

The Management & Leadership Hub, directed by Matthew Howgate, with associate Tina Puryear:

- Commenced the exciting Improving Lives Through Advice programme with support from the Access to Justice Foundation
- Developed our peer support programme
- Reinvigorated our quite exceptional Management & Leadership Programme

Research, with Juliet-Nil Uraz, Kate, Andrea, Ro and Anna:

- Launched our project to measure non-chargeable time generated by the legal aid scheme (thank you to MJC for helping to refine and pilot this project)
- Supported bids to establish a new socio-legal research centre
- Developed relationships with the Socio-Legal Research Association

Annual Legal Aid Conference, from the whole LAPG village!:

- 200+ delegates kindly hosted by Herbert Smith Freehills
- 12 workshops delivered by experts in the field
- 3 plenaries on policy issues and new initiatives, with a Ministerial statement to boot
- 2 drop-in clinics with the Legal Aid Agency and John M Hayes costs specialists
- Something for everyone, across the spectrum of legal aid services, from senior partners to aspiring lawyers with students from six HEIs in attendance too!