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**LAPG wins grant to boost management skills of legal aid firms**

The Legal Aid Practitioners Group has been selected, along with the likes of Civil Engineering Contractors Association and Chester University, to receive a share of £875,000 funding, from the UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES).

The funding – which is part of the UKCES UK Futures Programme - will enable LAPG to create bespoke management training for legal aid firms and organisations.

Many legal aid firms and not-for-profit providers have traditionally struggled to focus strategically on management, because of lack of time, resources and management expertise.

LAPG will use the funding to create a package of management training which is flexible, affordable and relevant enough to overcome these obstacles.

**Carol Storer, LAPG director**, said:

‘Everyone knows that the best lawyers do not always want to become managers but may have management thrust upon them. Firms are under increasingly acute financial pressure, which makes it all but impossible for them to invest in management and training, or draw breath long enough to react strategically to the changes they face. This funding will help take a huge burden off the sector, by allowing LAPG to develop training programmes on their behalf, and create a more efficient and sustainable future for organisations and the clients they serve.’

The training will be aimed not just at those running practices today, but also at the legal aid managers of the future. It is being developed by LAPG, in collaboration with specialist legal aid consultants Vicky Ling and Matthew Howgate.

Consultation sessions have already been held around the country, in Manchester, Newcastle, Bangor and London, which show there is a strong appetite within the profession for this kind of support and input.

**Nicola Mackintosh QC (Hon), LAPG co-chair and Sole Principal of Mackintosh Law** in south east London, said:

‘Running a legal aid firm is a uniquely challenging experience. The sector is highly regulated and the work is extremely skilled, complex and demanding. All of this has to be dealt with against a backdrop of reductions in fees. It is increasingly difficult for firms to innovate or invest in their own futures, which is why this grant will be so invaluable to the profession, not just now but for the years ahead.’

**Sue Kirby, a senior manager at UKCES and Competition Lead for the UK Futures Programme Management and Leadership competition,** said:“UKCES is pleased to work with LAPG to investigate approaches to developing skills in the legal services sector, particularly with SME businesses and not-for-profits. The lessons learnt will be shared widely and we hope that more supply chain businesses and networks will take the time to think about, and invest in developing their management and leadership needs; helping to improve business performance and competitiveness.”

For more information, contact: Carol Storer 07801 593963

Notes for editors:

1. LAPG is a leading grassroots organisation for legal aid providers. Training under this scheme will be available to members and non-members, alike.

2. The UK Commission for Employment and Skills is a publicly funded, industry-led organisation providing strategic leadership on skills and employment issues in the four home nations of the UK.

3. The UK Futures Programme is administered by UKCES. It offers opportunities for businesses across the UK to develop innovative solutions to long-standing or emerging skills issues.

4. UKCES is investing a total of £875,000 in six employer-led projects to test innovative approaches to boosting management and leadership skills. Recipients include: LAPG, Civil Engineering Contractors Association, Robert Woodhead, Black Country Consortium, Action Sustainability, University of Chester.

5. LAPG won the funding in an open competition.

6. Vicky Ling is author of the Legal Aid Handbook and has run a successful specialist legal sector management consultancy for 17 years. She has led projects with clients including sole practitioners as well as large national and regional firms, ranging from contract bidding strategies, to service delivery design and implementation, new business models and re-structuring. She also has significant experience in managing third sector legal services; a Law Centre, a CAB and an independent advice centre.

Matthew Howgate is an experienced management and strategy consultant working with law firms, advice agencies and local authorities. Formerly a legal aid lawyer and then Senior Legal Adviser and head of continuous improvement to the Legal Services Commission, he now helps organisations and individuals improve their management knowledge and practices. He regularly speaks at conferences and provides management training.

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