



An overview of LAPG's operational, influencing and community work in 2021.

- We provided secretariat support to the **All-Party Parliamentary Group on Legal Aid**, to enable it to carry out the *Westminster Commission Inquiry into the Sustainability of Legal Aid*. After a year of hearing evidence and collating research and data, the Commission published [their extraordinary and powerful report and recommendations](#), which are already being used to influence policy at the highest level.
- In April we commenced the **Legal Aid Census**, a set of surveys designed to gather data to help us understand the legal aid workforce. We have all long bemoaned the lack of reliable data about legal aid practitioners (and the policies that have been implemented despite that lack of data) and we wanted to fix that problem. We received 2500 responses to the survey, and our independent panel of academics have now completed their analysis. We will publish their findings and our recommendations based on this analysis early in the New Year.
- We provided written and oral evidence to the **Justice Select Committee's** inquiry into the Future of Legal Aid, culminating in a [report calling for widespread reforms to the system](#).
- We have continued to lobby the LAA to ensure that the **contingency arrangements**, such as flexibility over office opening hours, remote working, supervision and postal applications, continue to meet your needs and the needs of your clients in these incredibly difficult times. This has included **cash flow measures to support providers**, such as POAs and interim/staged payments to try to ameliorate some of the impact of the pandemic.
- In February our **Annual Conference** moved online, with 800 practitioners, policy people, civil servants and students joining us for a diverse series of 31 workshops, wellbeing and social events across of fun and informative week. We recorded all the sessions, making a host of useful content available to members.
- We bring practitioners together every year to celebrate the incredible impact of legal aid through the **Legal Aid Lawyer of the Year Awards**. Once again this year we could not run our customary live event but we delivered another [online, live triumph, with 2500 views](#). We run the awards on a non-profit making basis, and this year the event was again free, so that all practitioners can be part of the LALY family. Between the start of the nomination process and the live ceremony, the LALY awards generated well over 1,200,000 impressions on Twitter, significantly increasing the profile of legal aid and the brilliant practitioners delivering such vital services.
- We have continued to work with the LAA on improvements to decision-making following our **LAA decision-making survey on the culture of refusal**. This work has directly led to the LAA taking a hard look at its decision-making processes and resulted in initiatives such as the 'application fixer', greater accountability and better training for caseworkers. This work is continuing through ad hoc meetings and the Process Efficiency Team.
- As last year progressed, we heard from many of you about feelings of stress and burn-out. We know that working in legal aid is difficult at the best of times. In collaboration with city firm Linklaters, we created [two dedicated support services for legal aid practitioners](#) – one focussing on individual needs and another supporting more effective working relationships across teams or organisations.



- As an **official consultee body** (along with The Law Society and Bar Council) the government must consult us on all proposed contract changes. This year we have represented your views through a wide range of consultation processes, including changes to the Standard Civil and Crime Contract to make supervision and postal applications more flexible, make more general changes to the Crime Contract ahead of the recent tender round, introduce new payment mechanisms for the HPCDS contracts, changes to housing contracts, the immigration and asylum specification, immigration detainees in prison, pre-charge engagement, and the transfer of civil bills from the courts to the LAA. We have also facilitated a series of informal meetings between providers and the LAA on potential changes to the next Standard Civil Contract.
- We have continued to lobby Ministers and the senior team at the MOJ about **the sustainability of the civil legal aid sector**. We are pushing for a formal review of organisational sustainability and accelerated measures to ensure short-term survival of providers.
- We fed directly into the **Criminal Legal Aid Review** by facilitating meetings between providers and the MOJ team, along with submitting evidence and data to push for substantial change and investment. [The Review has reported](#), calling for more investment and structural reform.
- On the **housing front**, we were members of the Master of the Rolls Working Group for Possession Proceedings. We have worked closely with duty providers and the LAA on changes to the HPCDS guidance to reflect changes in court listing practices and pushed for improvements to the scheme, which have resulted in a [recent consultation](#).
- We have continued to **answer Member queries** on operational issues, with those queries and our own concerns feeding into our **policy work** directly with the LAA and MOJ. We meet with MOJ and LAA through the range of formal processes set out above, and via ad hoc meetings.
- We engage with the MOJ on the future of legal aid policy through the Legal Support Action Plan. We sit on all of the **Advisory Groups** set up to advise and shape government proposals around the means test, the criminal legal aid review, the early advice pilot and other key areas of the Action Plan. Our role is to ensure that your voices are heard so that we can safeguard and improve legal aid and increase client access.
- Members receive **regular email updates** on operational and policy issues, news and events. These come out about once a week and keep you informed about all things legal aid and related access to justice issues.
- We support Members with **recruitment**, advertising your vacancies for free on our website and on social media. We also encourage the next generation of legal aid lawyers through our work with Young Legal Aid Lawyers and with a range of universities and colleges.
- Each year we deliver **training courses** tailored to your needs. We offer an intensive practice management course, delivered a management course to over 90 NfPs delegates, held regular workshops on LAA supervision, and launched our online introduction to legal aid course for new practitioners. Over the last three years more than 540 practitioners have attended our training courses. With support from The Legal Education Foundation and Therium Access, we have expanded our staff team to dedicate even more resource to supporting you and helping you to deliver your services and support your staff team.