

# **LEGAL AID PRACTITIONERS GROUP**

## **ADVISORY COMMITTEE RECRUITMENT PACK**

### **Contents:**

- 1. Letter from our Chairs**
- 2. About us**
- 3. Our strategic objectives**
- 4. Organisational Structure and Staffing**
- 5. The Role of the Advisory Committee**
- 6. How to apply**



**March 2020**

## 1. Letter from our Chairs

Dear Candidate,

Thank you for your interest in the work of LAPG and for considering becoming a member of our Advisory Committee. To help you decide whether to apply we thought it would be useful to set out a bit about us, what we do and the invaluable contribution of the Committee.

We are a membership body representing legal aid practitioners in England and Wales and the clients they serve. We broadly describe our external work under three strands:

- Improving the **operation** of the legal aid scheme and practitioners' ability to work effectively and sustainably within the scheme
- **Influencing** government and policy-makers to promote legal aid and access to justice
- Fostering a **community** of legal aid practitioners

We also have a fourth work strand focussing on the sustainability of LAPG.

Our voluntary Advisory Committee of specialist lawyers and practice managers help answer member enquiries, attend meetings with the LAA and MoJ, speak at the LAPG conference and support our events including the Legal Aid Lawyer of the Year Awards. We also have a separate and distinct Board of Directors, LAPG's governance body.

We are looking for enthusiastic and committed individuals with legal aid expertise in the following areas of law to join our Advisory Committee:

- Crime
- Housing/Debt
- Community Care
- Court of Protection and Mental Capacity
- Mental Health
- Immigration and Asylum
- Public Law
- Inquests
- Costs and Practice Management
- IT/Tech
- The Not-for-Profit sector.

The key priorities are to support the Chief Executive and staff to deliver on the Strategic Plan, to provide sector-specific knowledge and wisdom, and to assist LAPG with its policy, campaigning and representative work. You will be joining a dedicated team of people who have expertise drawn from different legal disciplines within the Legal Aid sector, who have a shared ambition of advancing the cause of access to justice and ensuring the future of the delivery of legal advice to those without means. Whilst there is lots to be done, the enthusiasm and support of working together with such a committed group lends itself well to real progress, excellent comradery and a lot of fun.

We look forward to hearing from you.

**Nicola Mackintosh and Jenny Beck**  
**Co-Chairs of the Board of Directors**

## 2. About us

### Legal Aid Practitioners Group (LAPG)

LAPG is a membership body representing legal aid practitioners in England and Wales and the clients they serve. Our Members are private practice and not-for-profit (NfP) organisations, Law Centres, barristers and costs lawyers. We believe that access to justice is a fundamental right and as such we campaign for a fair, comprehensive and accessible legal aid scheme. We work closely with other representative bodies to raise awareness about the importance of legal aid, the work of legal aid practitioners and the needs of clients. We seek to work with the Legal Aid Agency (LAA) and Ministry of Justice (MoJ) on specific issues, and attend a range of operational and policy meetings. We respond to consultations on justice issues.

We **influence** the policy makers in government by lobbying for improvements to the rules and regulations, in an effort to improve the current system which excludes some of the most vulnerable members of society. We fight for change to remedy the devastating impacts of the cuts, and by tirelessly informing and advising decision-makers on the likely consequences of proposed actions. We run the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Legal Aid, in conjunction with Young Legal Aid Lawyers, to campaign, and to serve as a platform to raise issues and generate discussion in Parliament.

We provide **operational support** to all those on the front line by campaigning for improvements to the administration of the scheme and by helping providers to resolve their contracting issues. We provide training and resources to practitioners to help them to navigate the legal aid scheme and run sustainable practices.

We foster a **community** of legal aid lawyers by celebrating, training and supporting current practitioners and those who aspire to work in access to justice. We run training courses for practitioners, an annual conference, and the Legal Aid Lawyer of the Year awards (the LALYs) to celebrate the work done at the coalface by legal aid lawyers.

Our voluntary Advisory Committee of specialist lawyers and practice managers help answer member enquiries, attend meetings with the LAA and MoJ, speak at the LAPG conference and support our events including the LALYs. We also have a separate and distinct Board of Directors, LAPG's governance body.

And of course, we cannot do any of this important work without the help and support of our Members. We are extremely proud of our membership and the work of legal aid lawyers in England and Wales.

LAPG is registered at Companies House as a Company Limited by Guarantee. Each of our members ordinarily has a liability of just £1 should LAPG become insolvent and be put into administration. Our current constitution is set out in its Memorandum and Articles of Association (please contact us if you would like a copy).

LAPG operates on a non-profit basis and is currently applying for charitable status. At present, LAPG is proposing to pursue the following Charitable Objects, which reflect the crucial role that legal aid plays in enabling access to justice for those of limited means:

*"The objects of the charity are the relief of poverty through ensuring universal public access to, and awareness of, quality, targeted and effective legal advice."*

## Membership

Membership of LAPG is open to:

- Law Firms (licensed or authorised under the Legal Services Act 2007)
- Barristers Chambers
- NGO Legal Advice Providers (e.g. Law Centres)
- Legal Management Consultancy Practices
- Individual lawyers (practising or non-practising) including solicitors, barristers, legal executives and costs lawyers

Provided that they are actively involved in work within or closely associated to the legal aid scheme (or have been so involved within the last 3 years) and support the aims and objectives of LAPG.

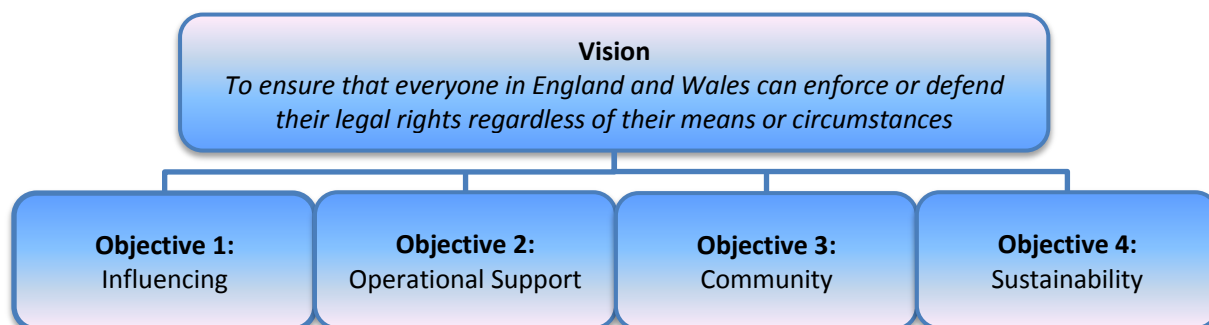
Any member (or approved representative of a corporate member) can stand for election to the Board of Directors (the Board) or to the LAPG Advisory Committee (the Committee).

The membership fee payable is set by the Board and is reviewed annually. Each member (whether individual or corporate) gets one vote at the Annual General Meeting. Associated members, should such a class of membership be developed, do not get a vote at the AGM.

## 3. Our strategic objectives

### Our Four Strategic Objectives

To enable LAPG's staff, directors and volunteers to focus on our vision and advance our charitable objects we have framed our work as four strategic objectives.



Objectives 1-3 are external and broadly describe the work that LAPG carries out to fulfil our purpose. Objective 4 is internal but no less important, as we seek to ensure that we are sustainable and can continue to deliver for our members and the clients they serve.

## 4. Organisational Structure and Staffing

### Membership

LAPG is a membership organisation and seeks to support and represent the views of its members. Members also provide a governance function by considering the proposals and resolutions tabled at AGMs and by nominating staff members to be Directors or to sit on the Advisory Committee.

## Board of Directors

The Board is the governing body of LAPG, with overall responsibility for staffing resources, strategy, sound financial management and risk management. When LAPG obtains dual status as a charity, the Board of Directors will assume the dual function of Board of Trustees.

## Advisory Committee

A non-decision making body, the Advisory Committee provides LAPG with considerable expertise and resource to carry out policy work, respond to consultations, support members and develop training and other resources for practitioners.



## 5. The Role of the Advisory Committee

We are seeking new members to join our Advisory Committee.

The Board decided on 15 July 2019 to establish the Advisory Committee. This is a Committee drawn from the wider LAPG membership and its role is to provide sector-specific knowledge and experience and to assist LAPG with its policy, campaigning and representative work.

### Selection of Advisory Committee Members

Members of the Committee are selected from the wider membership to ensure that the Committee reflects the membership in terms of:

- Categories of Law;
- Size of organisation;
- Geographical location of organisation

Committee members are expected to contribute up to 6 working days each year (attending meetings and responding to emails, member queries etc,) as well as attending at the LAPG annual conference (and pre-conference dinner) and the Legal Aid Lawyer of the Year Awards.

Committee members are appointed by the Board and will be expected to remain on the Committee for 3 years. 1/3 of members must retire each year (but can be re-appointed). There is no limit to the number of times an individual may be re-appointed to the Committee however LAPG recognises the need to refresh membership from time to time to reflect the changing membership of LAPG more generally.

Prospective Committee Members may be invited to attend at 1-2 Committee Meetings as an observer and, if the Board so decide, they can be appointed to the Committee at any point (as above, and in accordance with the procedure outlined the Governance Manual).

## The Work of the Committee

Committee members are expected to provide expertise and wisdom and to contribute, as far as they are able, to:

- Assisting with setting LAPG's strategy and objectives;
- Updating, as necessary, the LAPG Manifesto or any other document intended for publication expressing the views of LAPG;
- Assisting LAPG to engage with Government and respond to consultations and other issues;
- Assisting with member queries;
- Assisting with the organisation and running of the LAPG Conference and LALY's;

In particular they will be expected to:

- Provide expert input to resolve member enquiries;
- Contribute to formal consultations and research processes;
- Develop content for LAPG's training programme;
- Represent LAPG at external meetings, such as legal aid contract, policy or operational meetings with the LAA and MOJ;
- Provide content for LAPG Member Updates;
- Attend APPG events and assist with the APPG training programme (where relevant);
- Act as ambassadors for LAPG at external events;
- Help to keep LAPG abreast of developments in the legal aid and wider justice sector.

The full Committee meets at least 3 times each year (and at the conference). Meetings are held, in person, in London (other than when the Conference is outside of London) but there is always an option for Committee members to dial-in or video conference at meetings.

LAPG will meet the reasonable travel and accommodation costs of Committee members in respect of their work as Committee members (provided that there are sufficient funds available to do so). Committee Members will not be notified to Companies House as formal Directors (unless they are also members of the Board).

In order to avoid any claim that Committee members have been acting as Directors or de facto Directors, we will ensure that the work of the Board and Committee is clearly delineated. For this reason, members of the Committee are not expected to take part in any management or governance decisions and any advice that they offer which potentially impacts on a management or governance issue is ultimately a matter for the Board and not for members of the Committee operating in their capacity as Committee Members.

Members of the Committee must be able to make available sufficient time to properly perform their functions as Committee members.

## 6. How to apply

Applications should be made, in writing, to the CEO of LAPG, Chris Minnoch. Please include an up-to-date CV and a brief narrative of 300-500 words setting out how you can add value to LAPG's work and what expertise and insight they can bring to the Committee.

Applications can be sent to Chris by email to [chris.minnoch@lapg.co.uk](mailto:chris.minnoch@lapg.co.uk) or to LAPG, 12 Baylis Road, London SE1 7AA.

LAPG's Board of Directors will review all application, shortlist candidates and carry out interviews before deciding on which applicants to appoint to the Committee.

We hope that you will find all the information you need in this application pack, but if you have any further queries or want to discuss the role with one of the current Advisory Committee or Board members, please get in touch with us on 020 7833 7431.

The deadline for applications is **5pm, Thursday the 9<sup>th</sup> of April 2020**.