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LAPG Member Update

Issue 4 of 2022

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Legal Aid News & Events

Tender opportunities for housing and HPCDS services

From the LAA on 24 February 2022:

We are inviting expressions of interest from organisations currently delivering housing and debt



work to deliver services starting as soon as possible in 3 HPCDS areas:

- Crewe
- Hull
- Walsall

We are also inviting expressions of interest for the following HPCDS areas from 1 April 2022:

- Bath, Bristol
- Lancaster
- Stafford

This is for the delivery of HPCDS services until 30 September 2022. This opportunity is open to all 2018 Standard Civil Contract holders currently delivering housing and debt services and is not limited to current HPCDS providers.

Housing and debt work

We are also inviting expressions of interest to deliver housing and debt contract work in the following procurement areas until 31 August 2022:

- City of Kingston upon Hull
- Cheshire
- Redcar and Cleveland
- Shropshire
- Staffordshire
- South Tyneside
- Trafford
- Walsall
- Wigan

This opportunity is open to all holders of the 2018 Standard Civil Contract and is not limited to current housing and debt providers. There is no limit to the number of contracts that can be awarded to deliver housing and debt services.

When awarding housing and debt contracts, preference will be given to organisations able to meet all the minimum contract requirements. This includes having an office with a permanent presence in the corresponding housing and debt procurement area.

However, we would also be interested to hear from organisations with an office which is a part-time presence in the corresponding procurement area.

When awarding HPCDS contracts preference will be given to organisations:

- currently delivering housing and debt services from an office in the corresponding procurement

- area
- able to start delivering services as soon as possible

How to apply

You can apply by downloading and completing the relevant expression of interest document from our civil tender page on GOV.UK – see below. The deadline is midday on 14 March 2022.

Further information

civil.contracts@justice.gov.uk – to return the expression of interest document

[Civil tender activity 2022](#) – to find out more and download documents

The removal of ‘non-KPI rejects’ – how are you faring under the new system?

Since April 2021, the LAA removed the distinction between KPI and non-KPI rejects. Having discussed this with the Association of Costs Lawyers it is clear that the LAA did not release any specific communication about this. Although it was included in a slide-deck for the CCCG meeting in July 2021, the ACL only became aware of this when draft amendments to the Electronic Handbook were released to them for comment. The LAA say they believed the old system was confusing and technical and was masking issues, like missing disbursement vouchers, as non-KPI rejects, so they wanted to simplify the system to work with providers in getting it right the first-time round. Contract managers have been having one-to-one conversations with firms to discuss reject rates, but the LAA say they are not taking a heavy-handed approach and are not going to penalise firms for missing KPI targets at this stage. They say that that through October to November 2021 they had the lowest overall reject rate ever.

The updated Electronic Handbook still has not been released due to an error found that needs to be rectified first, so December 2020 v3.1 Handbook is still on the LAA’s website.

We agreed with the ACL that we would monitor



this situation and any changes of approach by the LAA. A member firm has now raised the following concern so we would like to hear from other members if they have had similar experiences or any other concerns about the LAA's approach to rejects and KPIs:

'We wondered whether other providers have mentioned the increase in their KPI percentage on Civil Bill Rejects since the LAA abolished 'non KPI rejects'?

I have raised this with consultants and they confirmed their clients have generally seen a large increase since non KPI rejects were taken away but that Contract Managers had taken a soft approach initially.

One of the issues we are finding is that we are being penalised for rejects we have no control over, counsel rejects count towards our KPI's and despite stressing how important it is to clerks that claims are submitted on time, disbursement vouchers are uploaded and claims should reconcile with allocated costs, this is impacting on our KPI's and subsequently contract notices are being raised against firms.

The only negotiation tactic we have with counsel is warning that we will consider taking fork elsewhere in future, obviously quality of advice should be a priority but in some areas of law, there are limited alternatives especially when we wish to do the best for our clients.

If members are concerned about the LAA approach to KPIs and rejects, [please contact us](#).

Nil-assessment of ECF cases on means grounds



Public
Law
Project

PLP has raised a serious concern with the LAA about their decision-making when providers finally bill their ECF controlled work cases. In particular, PLP is aware of the LAA nil-assessing files on means grounds at the escape fee billing stage, despite the ECC team having considered these forms and evidence during the ECF process. PLP is gathering examples to provide to the LAA, which has accepted this should not happen. Have you had any files that you completed under ECF nil-assessed by the escape fee team on means grounds? If you are aware of any such cases and are willing to provide details, please contact:

Criminal Legal Aid Review – Law Society survey and APPG on Legal Aid webinar

So where are we with the Criminal Legal Aid Review?

Following the publication of [Sir Christopher Bellamy's Criminal Legal Aid Independent Review report](#) on 29 November 2021, the government committed to responding by the end of March 2022. [Crimeline tweeted this week](#) that the MOJ intends to publish its response to the independent review during the week commencing 14 March 2022, with [the Gazette reporting a similar timeline](#). The government response is likely to deal directly with Sir Christopher's recommendations and we may also see the launch of a consultation process about proposed reforms. In the meantime, talk of some form of industrial action by the Criminal Bar continues as they have called for earlier action by the MOJ to implement fee increases in particular.

Recent APPG meeting with Minister Cartlidge

The All-Party Parliamentary Group on Legal Aid hosted an online meeting on 9 February 2022 to consider the CLAIR report. The Minister with responsibility for criminal legal aid, James Cartlidge MP, spoke, along with representatives from a wide range of practitioner groups. If you missed this meeting, [watch the recording here](#) to get a summary of the government's current position and the views of groups representing criminal solicitors, barristers and junior practitioners.

Law Society survey on early action request to government

The Law Society has launched the following survey: *Criminal legal aid review - proposals for early action*, which is described thus:

The Ministry of Justice (MoJ) is expected to respond to the proposals in the Criminal Legal Aid Review by March 2022.

We're urging the MoJ to announce that it will take early action on the following proposals:

- An across-the-board increase in remuneration rates (at least 15% above present levels)
- Revised proposals for pre-charge engagement
- Introduction of a default assumption in favour of legal advice for youth suspects
- Removal of the means test anomaly for defendants who plead guilty in the Magistrates Court and are then committed for sentence to the Crown Court
- A guilty plea in the Crown Court where the Magistrates would have accepted jurisdiction should attract the proper Crown Court fee, not the Magistrates Court fee

You can read more detail on each proposal here: www.lawsociety.org.uk/topics/legal-aid/criminal-legal-aid-report-key-recommendations

[Complete this important survey here](#)

Letters notifying 2022 crime contract applicants



From the LAA on 21 February 2022:

Applicant organisations will start learning the outcome of their bids for work under the 2022 Standard Crime Contract from 21 February.

We will be using the LAA eTendering system to send notification letters.

Monitoring the eTendering system message boards

There are a large number of bidders and accordingly the process of notification will last through the week. If you have bid for a 2022 Standard Crime Contract then you should monitor the LAA eTendering system message board for your notification letter. You will need to ensure you have a registered user available to access the letter.

Anyone bidding who has not received their notification by Monday 28 February should send a message through the LAA eTendering system.

What will the letter cover?

Your notification letter will set out the:

- *outcome of our initial assessment of your bid*
- *what you should do next in terms of providing verification information as relevant*

Verification deadline

The deadline for submitting compliant verification information is 11:59 pm on 27 March 2022.

Further information

[2022 Standard Crime Contract](#)

Legal Aid Lawyer of the Year awards 2022 – nominations to be launched next week



After two years as a virtual awards ceremony due to the pandemic, the Legal Aid Lawyer of the Year awards will be back to an in-person event. There is even more to celebrate than usual in 2022, as this is the 20th anniversary of these important awards.

Nothing could ever replace the atmosphere, fellowship, and sheer excitement and delight of a traditional LALY ceremony. However, going virtual gave the friends and families of our finalists the chance to tune in and watch the ceremony unfolding live on screen. Some told us that their grandmother or sibling finally understood what drove them to dedicate their career to legal aid, when they heard about the life-changing impact of the work of finalists. More than 7,000 people viewed the online ceremonies held in 2020 and 2021 – a truly remarkable response from the legal aid world.

With restrictions easing, we are delighted to be able to celebrate our 20th anniversary in traditional LALY style, with a face to face gathering of legal aid lawyers, their friends, families and colleagues. As well as lauding this year's finalists and winners, we also plan to ensure the ceremony gives due credit to those who have graced the LALY stage in previous years, and continue to be the glue that holds together our creaking justice system.

Look out for news next week of the official launch of the nomination process. Follow us on Twitter for latest #LALY22 news:

@LALYawards

@WeAreLAPG

Extension of help with POA contingency cost claims



News story from the LAA from 8 February 2022:

We are extending support for providers in balancing off outstanding cases claimed under the now closed 100% payment on account (POA) contingency process.

Support arrangements for providers who claimed a 100% contingency POA payment will now be extended to 11 March 2022.

What is the support for?

The support is to help providers balance off outstanding cases claimed under the 100% POA contingency process, which ran from April 2020 until June 2021.

Why is this happening now?

We are extending the deadline for the support arrangements to 11 March 2022 in response to changes to work from home guidance in December 2021.

The support arrangements were originally due to end at the end of January 2022.

How did the contingency work?

The 100% POA contingency process allowed providers to claim for a temporary payment on older claims using a POAC1 form. They could claim 100% of the costs under a POA payment. As indicated, this scheme has now closed.

How are you helping now?

We will contact firms directly who have outstanding 100% POAs to advise they submit their final claims to us by 11 March 2022.

Where this deadline is not going to be possible, we will

consider requests for extensions based on individual circumstances.

If we do not hear from you in return by 25 March 2022, we will seek repayment of outstanding POAs.

Submitting paper claims

Paper claims can be sent to us electronically for assessment using the guidance below.

Further information

[Electronic submissions of paper bills: Quick Guide](#) – training and support website

[Schedule of processes restarting after COVID-19 contingency](#)

ContactCivil@justice.gov.uk – for any queries on the process

LAPG Training & Support

LAPG welcomes new training and development lead



Some exciting news to share with members – we have recently appointed Andrea Shumaker to the role of Learning and Development Assistant. Andrea will be supporting the team to deliver our Supervision Courses, the online Introduction to Legal Aid course (and the development of our next online modules) and the Certificate in Practice Management course.

If you have any questions about our training courses or want to discuss the training and development needs of your team, please [get in touch with Andrea](#).

We're now taking bookings for the LAPG Certificate in Practice Management



Focussed primarily on the needs of managers and

supervisors in private practice, the LAPG CPM covers key strategic and management issues over 5 full-day online workshops:

- 28 April 2022 - Session 1: Time Management & Strategic Planning
- 19 May 2022 - Session 2: Financial Management
- 16 June 2022 - Session 3: People Management
- 14 July 2022 - Session 4: Policies and Compliance
- 8 September 2022 - Session 5: Communications (a.m.) & Legal Aid Contracting (p.m.)

More information about this course is [available on our website here](#).

We have now opened the booking process for the full certificate course. At just £499 for LAPG Members (£649 for non-members) this course is incredible value for legal aid practitioners. We are able to heavily discount this course thanks to the generous support of The Legal Education Foundation and the Community Justice Fund. In the coming weeks we will also start taking bookings for individual sessions, which can either be attended as discrete courses or for those who wish to work towards the full Certificate over a number of years.

A recent graduate of the 2021 CPM course said:

“I would highly recommend the LAPG Certificate in Practice Management course for all partners and managers in legal aid firms. It is the only law management course I know of aimed exclusively at helping legal aid firms to manage their businesses – good management is so essential for delivering access to justice to all. The course is full of practical tips and over 5 sessions gives you get a very good overview of all the key aspects of running a legal aid practice.”

Managing Partner of a large legal aid firm

If you would like to know more about this course, or to reserve your place, contact [Andrea Shumaker](#).

Supervision Courses and Introduction to Legal Aid

online training module

Supervision



Our next online Supervision Courses take place in March (10 & 25) and June (10 & 17) 2022. 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.

[MARCH 2022 COURSE - BOOK YOUR PLACE HERE](#)

[JUNE 2022 COURSE - BOOK YOUR PLACE HERE](#)

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.

To subscribe for just £99 please email [Anna Neira Quesada](mailto:anna.neira@lapg.org.uk).

The Management & Leadership Programme

A note also that we are now taking bookings for the LAPG MLP.

This exceptional course focusses on the training needs of those in management positions in the Not-for-Profit advice sector and is being delivered under the auspices of our recently launched Management & Leadership Hub. We have redesigned this course and the 2022 version will commence with a launch event in April.

This year, through the support of the Legal Education Foundation and the AB Charitable Trust, we can offer 24 **free** places on this prestigious programme, which covers:

- Strategic & Operational Planning
- Financial Management

- Leadership, team dynamics and people management
- Quality standards, risk management and policies & procedures
- Diversity, equality & inclusion
- Data management and use, charity governance & regulatory compliance
- Communications & Fundraising

The course is delivered online, with seminars on 8 days between April and December 2022.

[For more information about this course and to register your interest see here](#)



2022 LAPG Membership renewals

A huge thank you to all of the organisations that have renewed membership for 2022. Your support ensures that we can maintain a strong and independent voice to advocate for legal aid practitioners and access to justice at the highest levels of political influencing and push for operational improvements to the legal aid scheme with the LAA.

LAPG Membership runs from January to December so now is the time to refresh your LAPG Member status. This year, given the unprecedented pressures facing you all, we have once again frozen fees, after reducing them by 10% last year. We have now extended the Early Bird renewal rate to 18 March 2022 so renew now to benefit from the discount.

Number of fee earners	Early Bird Fee (runs to 18.03.22)	Standard Fee (from 19.03.22)
1 – 5 fee earners	£150.00	£175.00
6 – 10 fee earners	£225.00	£265.00
11 – 20 fee earners	£325.00	£380.00
21 – 30 fee earners	£425.00	£520.00
31 – 50 fee earners	£530.00	£605.00
51+ fee earners	£620.00	£700.00
Non-contract holding rate	£250.00	£315.00

To download the membership renewal form or for more information on the renewal process please [visit the Membership page of our website](#).

If you have any queries about LAPG membership or the renewal process, please contact our ever-helpful Operations Officer, [Anna Neira Quesada](#).

Well, well, it really is hotting up in criminal legal aid, with the government set to respond to the Independent Review in a matter of weeks. It seems likely that the Means Test Review consultation will be announced around about the same time. With an Early Legal Advice Pilot about to commence there is so much to do! Look out for more news next week about the 2022 LALYs!

Take care,

Chris Minnoch, CEO [@ChrisLAPG](#)

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[#WeAreLegalAid](#)
24/02/22



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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!

**LEGAL AID
LAWYER
OF THE YEAR AWARDS**



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