



With the announcement last week of the government's review of the disastrous cuts brought in by LASPO and the subsequent Transforming Legal Aid proposals (covering crime and civil) we are working really hard to represent the profession. It would help enormously if we had more members. It helps when subscriptions are received but it helps even more when members give us information or ask questions so that we can follow up on the many issues that need changing to improve the lives of practitioners and their clients.

So if you are not already a member, why not join? All membership fees help us to be independent and do even more.

So here's what LAPG staff, committee members and members did yesterday.

I met with the Behavioural Insights Team who are working with the LAA - they are talking to legal aid providers who use the LAA's Client and Cost Management System (CCMS). They would like to learn about practitioners' experiences with CCMS and LAA's online training and resources, and about the issues that lead practitioners to contact the LAA customer service team. We have received a huge amount of feedback over the years so that was a long discussion. Our hope is that some useful changes will arise out of this.

Then I spoke with LAPG co-chair Jenny Beck about who is invited on to the recently announced LASPO Post Implementation Review teams. Various groups with a lot of knowledge should in our view be on the consultative groups and are not. We emailed the review team to ask for transparency as to who is invited. We discussed some other issues with Jenny who as co-chair does this for free.

I then attended the end of a four hour meeting on the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) with the Legal Aid Agency and The Law Society. Matt Howgate, an LAPG committee member, attended the whole meeting on our behalf which had enabled me to go to the BIT meeting. What was discussed at this meeting? When legal aid work is being carried out we were mapping who is a data processor and who is a data controller. Matt did this for free as part of his committee duties. Matt ran training for LAPG on the GDPR.

Matt and I then grabbed a sandwich to discuss the work he is carrying out for us –we are about to launch a website which pulls together a lot of work that NfPs have carried out e.g. on after the event insurance and charging clients for the first time. The Legal Education Foundation (LEF) funded a number of projects and have funded us to pull the results together so information can be shared.

Throughout the morning, colleagues responded to co-chair Nicola Mackintosh QC (Hon) before she appeared at the Joint Committee on Human Rights. Nicola had prepared for the afternoon session and just wanted some detailed information and up to date policies sent over for her final preparation. She co-wrote the LAPG Manifesto with Jenny Beck which underpins all we say publicly on legal aid and human rights issues. Again, Nicola is not paid for this work.

In the afternoon I wrote and submitted a progress report to the LEF on the funding they give us for the Legal Aid Lawyer of the Year awards. I tried to multi-task and listen to the evidence of the Joint Committee but the screen kept buffering. Occasionally the screen moved on and froze so that Harriet Harman MP Chair of the Committee often looked painfully concerned on screen.

Meanwhile project worker Ro Teather was emailing the Steering Group of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Legal Aid with details of upcoming APPG meetings. The steering group consists of Young Legal Aid Lawyers who are part of the secretariat (with LAPG) of the APPG. The steering group works with the two project workers, Ro Teather in London and Chris Peace in Sheffield, and are Oliver Carter, Katherine Barnes, Verity Quaitte and Heather Thomas of YLAL (who are also busy with their [Social Mobility Report](#)) and Phil Walsh vice-chair of LAPG. Again all of the work they do on this is unpaid.

Ro sent out Mailchimp alerts to all Parliamentarians, MoJ officials and APPG members asking them to “Save the Date” for the next meeting to be held on 17th April. Ro emailed the MoJ LASPO post PIR team to ask how they would like to proceed with the next meeting.

Ro touched base with James Sandbach of LawWorks in relation to the accreditation of the Introduction to Legal Aid course. With funding from the LEF we have gathered information about what MPs, their caseworkers and Councillors know about legal aid and Matt Howgate has written a two hour course which has been delivered around the country. Why are we doing this? We think that civil legal aid has become so complex that it is helpful for more information to be disseminated. We have also prepared a booklet summarising what is in the legal aid scheme for MPs, their caseworkers and Councillors. This has enabled us to engage with a range of politicians in a very constructive manner.

Ro finalised the minutes of the last meeting on 7th March and sent them out to the speakers for checking and dealt with enquiries from caseworkers who want to attend future training.

In the afternoon (when Ro does not work!) she attended the Joint Commission on Human Rights where the excellent trio of Richard Miller of the Law Society; Nicola Mackintosh QC (Hon), Mackintosh Law and LAPG co-chair; and Gareth Peirce of Birnberg Peirce were giving evidence. Ro has just been set up on Twitter so tweeted on behalf of the APPG on Legal Aid.

Sheffield based APPG project worker Chris Peace went over to Henry Hyams’ office in Leeds where a training course was being held for MPs, caseworkers and Councillors about housing casework and legal aid. LAPG member Kate Hignett gave up her time to prepare for this course (using notes prepared by Housing Law Practitioners Association members Sara Stephens, Simon Marciniak and Connor Johnston) and delivered it very successfully.

Chris was also keeping an eye on emails about the course today in Newcastle – “An Introduction to Legal Aid” which Matt Howgate is presenting.

Operations Director Chris Minnoch has protested that he did not have a wildly exciting day.

He did a terrific amount of work and did it terrifically. Which is what he always does.

He finished and submitted a progress report to The Legal Education Foundation to update them on our training and support work (much of which focusses particularly on NfPs). We have had fantastic support from The LEF for a number of projects.

He then did some planning and administration on various aspects of LAPG’s training programme (a tracking exercise, the next Certificate in Practice Management course, participants on previous CPMs, upcoming supervision courses). The Certificate in Practice Management course is a four day course for managers and future managers in legal aid practices (private practice and NfPs). Vicky Ling and Matt Howgate are the main trainers. A new course will begin later this year. Feedback from the course is that people enjoy it and find it very supportive.

He did some general internal admin on MailChimp (software we use for sending out updates), Eventbrite (software we use for all our events) for an APPG training event and the LAPG website.

Chris then started to think about how we can pull together useful resources on our website for the LASPO Post Implementation Review.

Chris then plugged away at matching up data for the Salesforce import. That is another piece of software we are going to use – now that we have grown from one member of staff to four, Salesforce will help us to record who is doing what and save the duplication involved in some of our systems.

Chris checked the Legal Aid Lawyer of the Year (LALY) Crowdfunding website to see how much money has been raised to sponsor the Newcomer award. People's generosity in sponsoring this is staggering. The website is here: <https://www.crowdfunder.co.uk/friends-of-laly18> Chris worked with sponsors Accesspoint to set up the nomination form online and did some emails to publicise the LALY nomination deadline of April 10th – nominations can be made here <http://www.lapg.co.uk/lalys/>

Chris, having pulled together some of the information needed for Nicola, then attended the JCHR evidence session with Ro to support LAPG Co-Chair Nicola Mackintosh. He also tweeted from the event.

So why not follow us on Twitter: @carolstorerLAPG, @chrisLAPG, @APPGLegalAid

See our website www.lapg.co.uk

And please if you are not already a member do join us. Membership information and forms are here: <http://www.lapg.co.uk/membership/>. And if you are undecided email office@lapg.co.uk and we will send you updates for a month so you can see what we do.

Thank you to all LAPG members for feeding into us so regularly to guide our work. Thank you to our committee members who give up so much time to work on behalf of the profession. Thank you to the other organisations we work with like The Law Society and HLPAs.

Carol Storer, LAPG Director
15 March 2018