

Dear Legal Aid Group Member,

The [new website](#) was launched last July and this email is to highlight the significant resources to those members interested in and practising legal aid. Of course, if you took up the Association's invitation to members to test the website and feedback on your experiences, then you will already be familiar with these resources.

This email is also to prompt you to update your member details on the website to include the specialist area of legal aid (Civil, Criminal and/or Proceeds of Crime Act), as well as to start engaging in the online Forum.

There are two areas on the website created for the Legal Aid Group are:

**Legal Aid Group** - accessed via the *Costs Lawyer Community* drop-down menu on the main horizontal navigation bar

Pages include information on the Legal Aid Group, its executive committee, and its constitution. There is information on the Civil Contract Consultative Group ("CCCG") and Specialist Practitioners Group. Sub-pages hosting minutes of the LAG Committee meetings and minutes of the CCCG (as well as further information on the CCCG) are accessible to ACL members who have logged into the site under their profile (if you are not logged in, these sub-pages will not appear in the sub-menu). There is a LAG Updates page hosting old updates emailed to LAG members. There are also sub-pages on public consultations on legal aid and any responses made by the association, and parliamentary reports identified as particularly relevant to legal aid.

**Legal Aid Documents** – accessed via the *Costs Knowledge Hub* drop-down menu\* on the main horizontal navigation bar (also the sub-menu of the *Legal Aid Group* page)

\* *Legal Aid Documents* only appears in this menu if you are logged into the site as a member.

These pages are only accessible to ACL members who have logged into the site. This information resource is not meant to replace the LAA website, but to act as a go-to guide providing links to relevant online documents. It also forms an archive of historical documents that may not be needed often, but on the occasions that an old case lands on your desk or you need to locate a policy that is now being disputed (sometimes that it ever existed), vast amounts of time can be saved in trying to find what you need. The following pages are available:

- Legislation
  - LASPO Statutory Instruments
  - Legal Aid Act 1988 & Access to Justice Act 1999 Statutory Instruments
- Contracts
- Costs Assessment Guidance (including old Civil Bills Assessment Manual, Criminal Bills Assessment Manual and Crown Court Fee Guidance)
- Rates and Fees
- Family Fixed Fees (LAA fixed fee guides and Q&A materials)
- Other Useful Documents
- Focus Magazines (going back to 1999)
- Useful Links

**Forum** – accessed via the *Costs Lawyer Community* drop-down menu on the main horizontal navigation bar

The Forum is one of the most valuable resources which has been noticeably underused in the last year, consequently vastly decreasing its value. There is no one person in the LAG that is the 'font of all knowledge' and often I am approached about issues that I do not have the definitive answer to and refer the enquirer to the Forum.

Accessing the Forum on the new site is now a two-stage process: you must log into the Main ACL site first and then log into the Forum under a separate profile, this should be the old profile that you had for the old Forum, the posts for which been transferred to the new Forum host. Attached are some screen shots showing the steps to take to log into the Forum. If you have any problems, please contact Diane Pattenden, ACL Operations Manager, on [enquiries@costslawyer.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@costslawyer.co.uk)

**Membership Profiles** - accessed via the Members drop-down menu on the main horizontal navigation bar, on the 'Details' page

The new website 'Find a Costs Lawyer' facility allows members who are qualified costs lawyers to list their areas of practice and specialisms. There are three areas of practice for legal aid:

- Legal Aid Civil
- Legal Aid Criminal
- Legal Aid Proceeds of Crime Act

I urge you to update your profile if you have not done so already.

Those using the 'Find a Costs Lawyer' facility can then filter their searches by these areas of practice and further specialisms (e.g. Judicial Review of High Costs CCFs). Many costs lawyers practising in legal aid have not listed themselves as such on their profile: there are over 100 LAG members and most of those are qualified costs lawyers, yet only 52 costs lawyers appear on 'Find a Costs Lawyer' and some of those are not LAG members.

Regards,

Paul Seddon  
ACL Legal Aid Group Chair



Association of Costs Lawyers, Herringbone House, Lion Road, Palgrave, Diss, Norfolk IP22 1AL  
Tel: 0203 174 0967 DX: 42520 DISS E: [enquiries@costslawyer.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@costslawyer.co.uk) [www.costslawyer.co.uk](http://www.costslawyer.co.uk)

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