

Dear ACL Legal Aid Group member

I would like to take this opportunity to update you on the meeting held last Friday which was attended by Antony Evans, Stephen Barker and Rob Damião on behalf of the LAA. Ann Henderson (who is on the LAPG's advisory committee) and David Smith from Bidwell Henderson were also in attendance.

Firstly, thank you to all those who responded with feedback in anticipation of the meeting; your responses and the information provided was invaluable. I took the time to collate all the feedback into one document (no identifying information was provided within the document) which was provided to the LAA in advance of the meeting. They seemed genuinely concerned and have confirmed that consideration will be given to all the issues raised with a response to be provided. It may be that, where appropriate, requests will be made for additional information to enable further investigation / consideration of the issues. I will be in touch with individual members in the event that any additional information is requested.

Whilst it was a short meeting, I do feel that progress was made and it has been proposed that we hold regular meetings with the LAA (likely to be every two months) to specifically discuss billing issues and obtain information which we can provide to our members. These meetings will also allow us to put your issues / concerns / views direct to the LAA on a regular basis.

As many of you are aware, January's update was a big one. The LAA were effectively forced to upgrade the CCMS by 8 versions in one upgrade due to a change in one of the platforms involved in the system. The LAA are acutely aware of the performance issues affecting CCMS and unfortunately, it is not an easy or quick fix. On the plus side, it is not intended for there to be such a big jump in one upgrade again with smaller upgrades to be implemented in future.

The LAA are aware of ongoing issues regarding larger bills on the CCMS which is due to an overload of data on their systems. Whilst additional server capacity has been introduced, it has not been sufficient to resolve the performance issues. It seems that you are more likely to encounter issues during 'peak times' i.e. between 11am and 3pm, albeit, there is a consistent problem. In the event that you have an issue entering a bill on the CCMS, the advice is to contact their online support team (online-support@legalaid.gsi.gov.uk) to log the problem and you will be allowed to provide a summary level claim with a Bill, Claim 1 or Claim 1A in support. Please note, the standard response will indicate a Claim 1/1A but a Bill is also acceptable. If a Bill is provided and rejected then this is an issue to be raised with Civil Claim Fix.

There is a known issue in uploading XML files for summary level claims. At the moment, the ability to upload a summary level claim via the claim upload facility is affected and the current workaround is to prepare a summary level claim direct on to the CCMS.

Please do take the time to log any issues with the LAA's Online Support Team as the more information they have regarding the issues, the more likely the resolution of those issues will jump up the queue of outstanding CCMS upgrade work.

There is to be a new CCMS question which will be coming in for those matters where Court assessed bills would be an option but you choose to send the claim to the LAA for assessment. Following answering no to the question "Have you sent the Bill to Court", a new question will appear along the lines of: "Are you voluntarily sending your Bill to the LAA for assessment". This will enable the LAA to route the claim to the right caseworker for assessment. They will be introducing some training

modules regarding the changes and I understand that their Digital team will be ensuring that information is available to software providers so that they will be ready for the change.

I do get the impression that the LAA are keen to get bills moving where they are “stuck”. If you have a CCMS bill which is ‘stuck’ and you have tried all usual forms of communication / approaches to resolve the issue and waited out the published timeframe for response then Antony, Stephen and Rob have indicated that they are willing to investigate individual issues and work on resolving the same. If you do find yourself at an impasse on a matter which has not been resolved within a reasonable timeframe and by using the usual channels, please feel free to e-mail us with the issue which we can pass on to the LAA for their consideration. It is imperative that you include confirmation of the steps you have tried to take to resolve the issue as they will expect the usual channels to have been exhausted first.

I hope the above is of use. Please do not hesitate to contact me should any further information or clarification be required

Kind regards

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