

# focusmagazine

The service provider newsletter of  
the **Legal Services Commission**

## Delivering high quality community services

Since opening last year Portsmouth Community Legal Advice Centre has quickly established itself as vital to the needs of the city



**Challenging times**  
Legal Aid Minister  
Lord Bach talks to Focus

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# Your new-look Focus



**Mark Workman, Editor**

## Editorial

Welcome to your new-look Focus. We've opted for a design that is easy on the eye and suitable for the online world that Focus now inhabits.

The aim was to make the publication a lot more 'user-friendly' with clear sign-posting to help you navigate your way around.

**"The aim was to make the publication a lot more 'user-friendly' with clear sign-posting to help you navigate your way around"**

Regular readers of the LSC Update emails we send out to providers will be familiar with the colour coding we have used to identify 'civil', 'criminal' and 'cross-cutting' articles. This is a feature many of you have been asking for so that you can identify more easily the stories you are most interested in reading.

You'll see that the headlines typically have a couple of words set in bold text to help identify particular points of interest. We've also tried to make the web links more obvious.

## Helps and tips for reading Focus

Focus is only available online and it is worth checking to see if you have the latest version of Adobe Acrobat Reader. This will allow you to read the magazine how you want, allowing you to zoom into a page, view a single page, or two pages at a time.

You can also search for items and even download a copy of the document to take away with you.

To help you with Acrobat Reader we have created some guidance, which can be found at [www.legalservices.gov.uk/help/pdf.asp](http://www.legalservices.gov.uk/help/pdf.asp) or by clicking 'HELP' on the navigation bar at the top right of every right or odd numbered page.

As you read the magazine you will see that we have included interactive elements in the design. Links within stories will allow you to go straight to webpages or email contacts. Across the top of every Focus page you will find navigation links to direct you to different parts of the document.

For those of you who like to know these things Focus has been created in Adobe Acrobat Portable Document Format – known in short as PDF. Almost all documents on the LSC website are in PDF. This is the standard for electronic document distribution.

## Content is the key

Of course, the spirit of Focus is the content. You'll find a wide range of features and stories in the current issue to keep you updated on the changing world we all work in.

These include an in-depth interview with legal aid minister Lord Bach and a research piece on how geography affects access to advice. There is also an independent perspective from a leading Chambers on the commercial environment and the future for the publicly funded Bar.

## Best wishes for 2009

**Mark Workman**  
Editor

## Contact info

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## Useful links

### Corporate News -

Corporate announcements, including policy reforms and new consultation announcements

### Civil News -

News and updates for service providers working within the Community Legal Service (CLS)

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### LSC Update -

The Legal Services email alert for all service providers

### Focus Magazine -

Homepage for the Focus magazine, containing the latest issue and recent back issues

# Parliamentary Under Secretary Of State Lord Bach, Minister for Legal Aid

## Interview

*In just a few months legal aid minister Lord Bach has developed a firm view on the progress needed if we are to keep protecting the most vulnerable people in our society. He shared some thoughts at his Westminster office...*

### Key challenges & Delivery Transformation

Lord Bach is a big picture man as he explained when running through key issues for 2009.

He said: 'We have some big challenges in the year ahead. There are some important initiatives for reducing spending on some aspects of legal aid. The idea is to make sure that we balance making these savings with giving people the support they need. In fact, making the savings will enable us to help more people.'

'That is what I see as underpinning issues like best value tendering, Crown Court means testing, the new civil contract and the harmonisation of family advocacy payments.'

**"I am in constant touch with providers... to find out what their problems and issues are"**

'We're doing our best to ensure fairness in order to try and help the most vulnerable people at a time of economic difficulty. In a recession these are the people most at risk of not having their needs met. We have to guard against that, achieve maximum value for money and help as many people as possible.'

'I believe that the LSC's switch to electronic working and simpler business processes through its Delivery Transformation programme will be vital in helping legal aid to remain sustainable.'

'Full electronic working by 2010 is the target and this can save the taxpayer lots of money. So I am very much in favour.'

### Training contract grants

Lord Bach has particular praise for the 'crucial work' of the training contract grants scheme to support the training and development of legal aid

solicitors. He said: 'The LSC has a good reputation in this field and the scheme has already provided more than £50 million for training.'

The allocation of New Matter Starts also came in for a special mention. The minister said: 'More clients are in difficult times seeking advice in the debt field, housing and family law.'

'The LSC has created some flexibility to increase New Matter Starts in specific categories to meet the new situation we are in. It is very important to recognise that in new economic circumstances the needs will alter and that the LSC is flexible enough to deal with that.'

### How the LSC can improve

All large organisations can do better according to Lord Bach – whether private or public. For example, he thinks that both the LSC and Ministry of Justice (MoJ) need to make more of an effort to promote the benefits of Community Legal Advice Centres and Community Legal Advice Networks, and recognising the important work being done by providers like Law Centres and Citizens Advice Bureaux, whether as part of the CLA service or elsewhere.

But the biggest issue here for Lord Bach is our relations with stakeholders. He said: 'It is inevitable that there should be tensions between those who give funding and those receive it. But it is a vital relationship. So I'm pleased to see that the LSC is working hard to improve its relations with providers.'

'I do believe there are now better relations

than in the past between the LSC and providers. That is important because there needs to be respect for the LSC and what it is trying to deliver – as well as respect for providers and the vital work they are doing. Both are essential for legal aid clients to get the help they need.'

### Government commitment to the legal aid system

Lord Bach says he is looking forward to the 60th anniversary of the 1949 Legal Aid and Legal Advice Act later this year. He said: 'I think we should all be proud of the legal aid record over the past 60 years.'

'Around two million people a year are benefiting from help with their legal problems. It is worth pointing out that this country is still the most generous by far in terms of legal aid expenditure per head of population.'

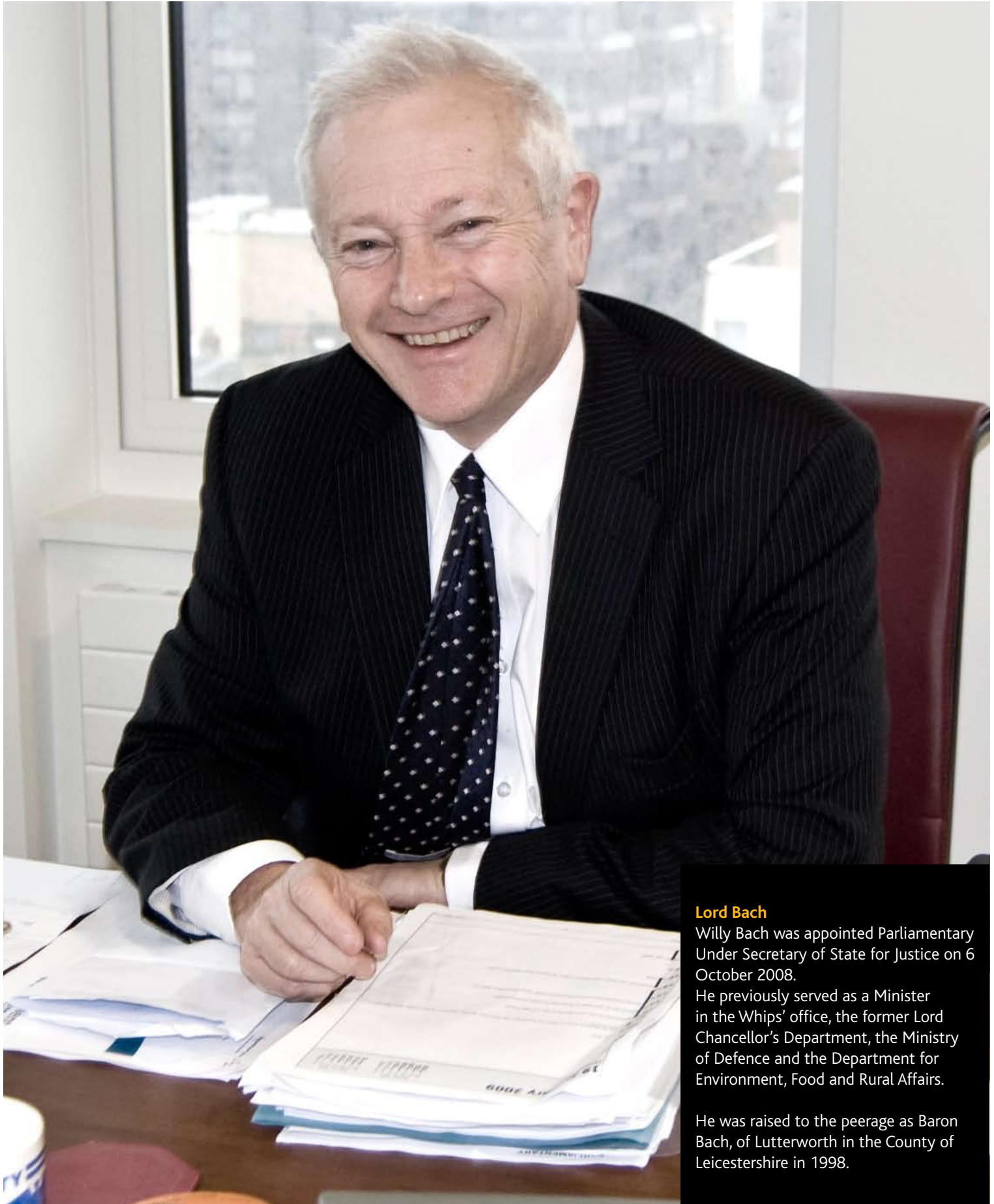
'The total spend has increased from £536 million in 1982 to around £2 billion a year now. Locally, legal aid continues to underpin our legal system. But we always have to accept that the resources are going to be limited and there is extra pressure at a time of economic depression.'

'So the Government is determined to keep its commitment to the legal aid system. But it has to be a modern system for the times we live in. I come back to the importance of best value tendering. That will allow us to help as many people as possible.'

### Tough on expenditure and passionate about quality

Lord Bach says it is 'crucial' to maintain quality at the same time as driving up efficiency. He has a mantra, which is that 'poor advice is worse than no advice at all'.

CONTINUED »

**Lord Bach**

Willy Bach was appointed Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Justice on 6 October 2008.

He previously served as a Minister in the Whips' office, the former Lord Chancellor's Department, the Ministry of Defence and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

He was raised to the peerage as Baron Bach, of Lutterworth in the County of Leicestershire in 1998.



### Clockwise from top right

The Legal Aid Team (from left: Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Justice Suma Chakrabarti - Lord Bach - LSC Chief Executive Carolyn Regan - LSC Chair Sir Bill Callaghan)

Lord Bach meets LSC Executive Director for Commissioning Hugh Barrett

Lord Bach in his office at Petty France



**“We should all be proud of the legal aid record over the past 60 years”**



### » CONTINUED

He added: ‘Quality is vital in my mind. I know systems are already in existence to ensure quality. I keep a special eye on that. Particularly at a time when there is real pressure on the legal aid fund.’

Lord Bach is committed to the continued introduction of fixed fees and said: ‘This will be difficult but vital for everyone if we are to get best value into our legal aid system. I am in constant touch with providers and other organisations in order to find out what their challenges and issues are.’

‘I know in the short-term the transition has not been easy for providers. But I’m convinced that eventually they will see the advantages.’

### Crown Court means testing

The minister is firmly behind the proposal on Crown Court means testing, which is under

consultation until 29 January. If it goes ahead it is proposed that Crown Courts in Norwich, Swansea, Preston, Bradford, and Blackfriars will begin their pilot later in the year.

Under the joint MoJ and LSC proposal everyone who is tried at a Crown Court will be offered legal aid. However, the wealthiest defendants will make monthly contributions during the case. This money will be refunded if they are eventually found not guilty.

### Awards of costs from central funds

A second consultation is also running until 29 January on the award of costs from central funds in criminal cases. Led solely by the MoJ this consultation is looking at reforms to the system of payment of acquitted defendants’ legal costs. The idea is to rein in costs to the public purse where

individuals instruct lawyers privately instead of applying for legal aid in Crown Court cases.

Lord Bach said: ‘We are talking here about legal aid being offered to all those who appear before the Crown Court. So if the defendant decides to go private that is their decision.’

‘I do not see why if that defendant is found “not guilty” they should receive any more than costs that he or she would have incurred if they had been legally aided. That seems to be just to me. After all, legally aided representation is good representation.’



Young Solicitor of the Year Jo Hickman (centre) collects her award from LALY chair of the judging panel Cherie Booth QC and the evening's compere, John Howard

Photo: Robert Aberman

## Human rights specialist scoops young solicitor award

*Public law and human rights specialist Jo Hickman from London law firm Fisher Meredith has won the Young Legal Aid Solicitor of the Year award sponsored by the LSC.*

Jo scooped the award at the sixth annual Legal Aid Lawyer of the Year awards ceremony, which took place in London in December. She said: 'I knew I'd been nominated for the award but it was a complete surprise when I went on to win it.'

'I was particularly touched because I was put forward by a combination of people I work with including other solicitors and clients – and that meant a lot to me.'

Cherie Booth QC, who is chair of the judging panel, presented the awards, which are organised by the Legal Aid Practitioners Group.

The idea is to celebrate the work of lawyers who have dedicated their careers to legal aid work and helping clients. The LSC has sponsored the 'Young Solicitor' award since 2004.

Before qualifying as a solicitor, Jo was a caseworker with the Refugee Legal Centre. She continues to use the expertise and experience she developed there in helping to protect the rights of some of the most vulnerable and disenfranchised groups in society.

Jo specialises in public and human rights law, particularly in cases concerning education, community care, unlawful detention,

discrimination and access to justice. She is chair of the Foreign National Prisoners Network.

Jo said: 'I get a lot of satisfaction and frustration in equal measure from the work that I do. It is not an easy option but it is very much my chosen career.'

'Lawyers – and legal aid lawyers in particular – play a vital role in enabling and empowering ordinary people to challenge public bodies when they are acting unfairly. Quality representation in this area can make a huge difference to people's lives.'

A raft of testimonials from clients of all types and ages supported Jo's nomination for the award.

### 2009 LALYs

Plans are now being made for a special 2009 event, which will coincide with the 25th anniversary of the Legal Aid Practitioners Group and the 60th anniversary of legal aid.

### Contact & Information

» [www.lapg.co.uk](http://www.lapg.co.uk)

## Legal Aid Lawyer of the Year Awards

### Outstanding achievement award

Another winner on the night was Tony Edwards, a former LSC Commissioner and senior partner of TV Edwards in London.

Tony has carried out legal aid work for 36 years. He won the Outstanding Achievement award sponsored by DG Legal.

### Praise for the LSC's Special Cases Unit

Yogi Amin from Irwin Mitchell in Sheffield won the award for Social and Welfare Lawyer – sponsored by Primega Labs.

In recent years, Yogi has brought a number of high profile legally aided cases against Primary Care Trusts for refusing to fund life-saving cancer drugs. Ann Marie Rogers and Colin Ross were both Yogi's clients.

Accepting his award, Yogi praised the staff at the LSC's Special Cases Unit. He expressed appreciation for "the help provided by the LSC" and added: "The staff have a flexible approach and provide a fast turnaround to the requests I make."

### What are the other awards and who won them?

The other winners were:

1. Zarina Gani, Gani and Co Solicitors in London: Criminal Defence Lawyer (sponsored by Criminal Law Solicitors Association)
2. Samantha Little, Russell-Cooke Solicitors in Kingston, Surrey: Family Legal Aid Lawyer (sponsored by Resolution)
3. Kalvir Kaur, Immigration Advisory Service: Immigration Lawyer (sponsored by Anglia DNA)
4. Robert Latham, Doughty Street Chambers: Legal Aid Barrister (sponsored by the Bar Council)
5. Jackson and Canter in Liverpool: Legal Aid Firm/Not-for-profit Agency (sponsored by Matrix Chambers)
6. Julie Burton, Julie Burton Law in Gwynedd: Mental Health Lawyer (sponsored by Allen & Overy)
7. Felicity Williams, 6 Kings Bench Walk: Young Legal Aid Barrister (sponsored by Irwin Mitchell)

## New centre chimes with Pompey's needs

*Since opening last April, Portsmouth Community Legal Advice Centre has already helped 4,400 people looking for advice on family problems, employment, housing, benefits, debt and other social issues. We decided to take a closer look as the centre's first anniversary approaches...*

### Why Portsmouth?

Portsmouth was identified as a potential area in which to develop a Community Legal Advice Centre because it featured high on the index of multiple deprivation.

It was also clear that existing advice provision in the city did not offer a full range of social welfare law services. It was fragmented and did not offer clients a joined-up integrated legal advice service.

Portsmouth City Council, a local authority committed to delivering high quality and joined-up advice services to its local communities, was keen to be involved.

### Background

The LSC worked closely with the city council and consulted with Portsmouth residents to design a service around client needs.

Portsmouth Community Legal Advice Centre started work in April 2008. Based in the city's London Road, the centre provides a 'one-stop shop' for everything from basic information and advice through to representation at court.

There is also a court desk service at the Portsmouth Combined Law Courts. This helps individuals to avoid having their homes repossessed due to mortgage or rent arrears.

The contract to run the new advice centre was awarded to Southern Focus Trust (SFT) after an open and competitive tender process. SFT is a Portsmouth based charity that provides care, support and advice services to people across Hampshire and Dorset. It has provided legal advice in Portsmouth for more than 20 years.

### Composition of the new service

SFT has joined up with Portsmouth Citizens Advice Bureau to deliver the full range of services. Under the existing structure the CAB is sub-contracted by SFT to deliver the general advice element of the new service. The CAB has provided advice services in the city since 1939.

SFT is responsible for delivering all of the centre's specialist advice services for debt, welfare



**Portsmouth CLAC**  
Existing advice provision in the city did not offer a full range of social welfare law services

benefits, housing, employment and community care. The centre also provides specialist advice on family matters.

### Delivering the centre

SFT renovated existing office space to house the new centre. This has enabled it to run a full service under one roof. Staff from the CAB work from within these city centre based premises. It runs as a true 'one-stop shop' ensuring that members of the public can gain easy access to the full range of advice services.

In addition to the main centre, regular outreach services are provided at easy to reach places in priority areas across Portsmouth. Services can be accessed directly from these outreach points. Alternatively, people can use the outreach point to make appointments at the main centre.

### Links and referrals

SFT has forged strong links with local voluntary organisations as well as local solicitor firms to make sure that clients are effectively signposted to the new centre.

While the vast majority of cases can be dealt with effectively by the centre, referrals are made

for those needing specialist help that cannot be provided in-house. For example, partnerships have been developed with local mental health and immigration providers to make sure that clients facing such problems can be referred for advice. The centre monitors the progress of cases it refers to make sure clients get the help they need.

### Vital local service

Since opening for business, the centre has helped 4,400 people.

Its importance to the city has just been recognised in a competition run by the local newspaper.

The centre's manager Gail McMillan, Citizens Advice manager Simon Lawson and head solicitor Denise Childs have been named Team of the Year in the Portsmouth News Business Excellence Awards.

Gail said: 'The centre is providing a vital service to the local community. People who can least afford it can now access high quality advice on a whole range of problems.'

'All the staff at the centre are committed to helping people with their problems and work as one team to ensure that people in Portsmouth can get the help they need all in one place.'



## “People who can least afford it can now access high quality advice”



### Vision for the Community Legal Service

In 2006 the LSC launched a new five-year strategy for the Community Legal Service (CLS). The strategy is based around two key themes:

- Increased focus on the needs of the client
- Working in partnership across the CLS – including working with central and local government.

The strategy includes commissioning Community Legal Advice Centres and Networks. These provide access to services ranging from basic advice to legal representation in the full range of social welfare law problems. They also help with children and family legal problems.

The LSC has now opened five Community Legal Advice Centres. These are in:

- Gateshead
- Portsmouth
- Leicester
- Derby
- Hull

We will be opening further centres as well as the first networks in 2009.

### Case Study

## Mother with young family saved from homelessness

**A mother with three young children was rehoused and awarded Income Support and full housing benefit after approaching Portsmouth Community Legal Advice Centre for help when she was evicted from private rented accommodation.**

The client had moved to the accommodation following the breakdown of her marriage. She had received some of the equity from the proceeds of the sale of the marital home in June 2007. But after an emotional breakdown she had spent the money. When this ran out, she couldn't pay her rent but was refused Income Support because of the equity she had received.

Once evicted the client was likely to be found intentionally homeless by the council. So she would not be entitled to be rehoused.

The client's only income was Child Benefit, Child Tax Credit and

Working Tax Credit. However, she had not been entitled to the Working Tax Credit, which she'd claimed and received, as she had not been working – in fact, she was not well enough to work. The client was too afraid to notify HMRC of the change in circumstances and the overpayment.

The Community Legal Advice centre caseworker opened a Prevention of Homelessness case for the client and launched a Housing Benefit appeal and an Income Support Appeal.

Portsmouth City Council accepted a homelessness duty and rehoused the client and her children. Income Support made a decision that she did not deliberately spend all of her equity for the purpose of claiming benefits. She has now been awarded full Housing Benefit, on-going Income Support and a backdated Income Support sum.

## ■ Investigators help preserve sustainable legal aid

*Valuing racehorses, helicopters and yachts is all in a day's work for the LSC's Special Investigations Unit (SIU). We take a look at how team members are helping to preserve a sustainable legal aid scheme...*

At a time when the Legal Services Commission's budget is fixed at £2 billion a year, the role of our Special Investigations Unit (SIU) is more important than ever.

Everyone who applies for civil legal aid funding for a case must meet the LSC's legal merits and financial means eligibility test. These are the first, basic steps in making sure that legal aid only goes to people who are entitled to it.

The SIU comes on board when there are unanswered questions about someone's means, or we receive representations from third parties – often the solicitors acting for the other side. The SIU team are tasked with investigating cases referred to them by a regional office.

finances, and requesting documentary evidence to prove their case from other parties such as banks, Inland Revenue and Companies' House.

In 2007-8, the unit received referrals for 198 cases of civil legal aid and directorships. Out of those referred for investigation, a whopping 86% resulted in the certificate having its status changed.

That comes when SIU make a recommendation to the regional office, and could prompt a number of actions: refusal of the certificate at the outset, its withdrawal even after legal aid was originally granted, its revocation – when means dishonesty has been uncovered – or its discharge.

and the Police on a regular basis.

But the civil side relies on referrals from within the LSC, and it's also worth remembering that case managers themselves are the first filter where means checks are concerned.

After all, they are the ones who do the referrals to SIU, and base these referrals on information that suggests further investigation is required.

### Positive survey result

This very point came out of a survey of regional offices, which was carried out by the unit in late 2008.

The results of the survey were generally extremely welcoming of the work SIU does, with 100 per cent of those responding stating that they felt referrals to the unit were useful.

When you consider the money we need to save, and the people who need our help, it's clear the unit is more important than ever. Worth bearing in mind when you need an investigation done!

**“It was through SIU's attention to detail that savings of £2.1 million were achieved on civil law cases in the 2007-8 financial year”**

### Financial detectives

The SIU can be called upon to investigate means at any point in a case's lifetime, perhaps because of complex financial affairs, an aura of wealth, or overseas assets. Whatever the circumstances, it sets our financial detectives on the trail.

These investigations involve the unit's caseworkers seeking to clarify a person's income and capital. As we all know, how much money someone has can be a thorny issue.

But while it may be a tough job, it's interesting work. Among the investigations the team have carried out over the years are cases where they were called upon to value sheep, racehorses, helicopters, light aircraft, yachts, cash hidden in cellars, antiques and property from places as diverse as Turkey and the British Virgin Islands. Or how about those bank accounts in Lichtenstein?

The general procedure is to talk to the person involved, asking them questions about their

There may even be a change in the level of the person's financial contribution towards the cost of their certificate.

It was through SIU's attention to detail that savings of £2.1 million were achieved on civil law cases in the 2007-8 financial year. Think of all the extra legal help that these savings can pay for! If your office has a case you need to refer, that's worth bearing in mind.

### Criminal proceedings

SIU's other strand of work relates to criminal proceedings. This takes up a large amount of the unit's time.

The work here is in the form of criminal investigations for the Crown Court and Data Protection Act requests from prosecuting authorities, usually to assist them in detecting a crime. That means working with the likes of the Department of Work & Pensions, local councils

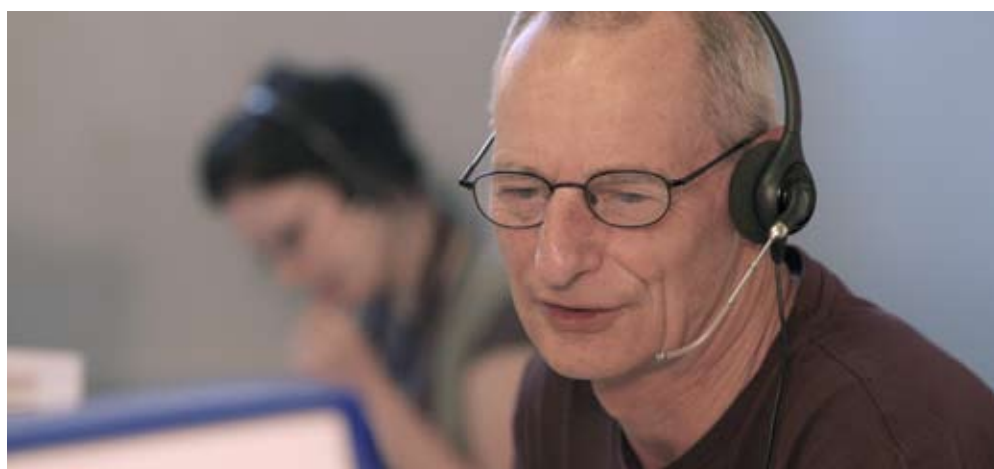
### Contact & Information

» [laura.eshelby@legalservices.gov.uk](mailto:laura.eshelby@legalservices.gov.uk)  
(Special Investigations Unit)

» 020 7718 8028

## Tender for family telephone service announced

*The LSC is inviting tenders for contracts to deliver family advice as part of the CLA Helpline telephone service.*



A pilot scheme to deliver family advice through the CLA Helpline has now been running successfully for more than a year.

It has been extremely popular with clients and there has been a high level of demand for the service. Following an evaluation the LSC would now like to roll the service out nationally.

### Community Legal Advice

Community Legal Advice is a telephone helpline funded by the LSC, which provides legal advice direct to the public on a range of common legal problems. The helpline currently offers specialist legal advice, including casework, to clients eligible for legal aid on five topics of law:

- employment
- education
- welfare benefits
- debt
- housing

### The family pilot

The family CLA Helpline pilot tested the delivery of specialist family telephone advice through the CLA helpline. The pilot was developed in response to data captured from the CLA helpline. This indicated that a high percentage of calls related to a family query.

The aim of the pilot was to establish what kind of family problems could appropriately be addressed over the telephone. Also, whether this method of delivery offered value for money and good outcomes for clients as well as measuring demand for such a service.

During the first year, 6,311 clients received help from telephone specialists under the pilot scheme. However, due to limited capacity under the pilot, these clients represented less than 40% of eligible clients calling the helpline. So the LSC is now looking to expand the service in order to meet this demand.

### The national tender

The LSC is now inviting tenders from organisations able to offer specialist advice in family law to provide the national service. Existing providers to the LSC, not for profit and voluntary organisations and commercial organisations are invited to submit tenders.

Tender documents were published on 12 January and the deadline for receipt of tenders is 27 February 2009. Contracts will be awarded in April 2009 with a service start date of July 2009.

### Key findings from the pilot evaluation

- The helpline currently receives an estimated 1,400 calls per month from financially eligible clients with a family problem.
- Telephone advice appears most popular for clients with cases involving contact with children in private law proceedings (36% of cases) and in matters involving divorce (14% of cases).
- 100% of telephone clients surveyed would recommend the service and 82% said the advice they received enabled them to resolve their problem.
- The helpline had a wide geographical reach, with clients calling from all over England and Wales.
- The pilot proved successful in reaching a diverse client base. 11% of family helpline callers described themselves as having a disability and 20% of helpline callers were from a BME background.
- Very few also get face to face advice.

The full evaluation of the pilot service can be found alongside the tender documentation by using the contact link below.

### Contact & Information

» LSC website > Community Legal Service (CLS) > Tenders

# ■ Make your voice heard through our e-consultations

*We run consultations throughout the year to get feedback from stakeholders that informs our policy development. Please give us your views about our policies using our easy-to-use online software.*

Examples of recent issues covered in our consultations are:

- Means Testing and the Crown Court
- Civil Bid Rounds for 2010 Contracts
- Virtual Court.

## Make your views known

Anyone can respond to our consultations and our online system allows as many people to take part as possible. The system is secure, efficient and user-friendly. So if you are interested in making your views known please register on the LSC website – see below.

**“We launched 11 consultations in 2008 and our online tool has been well-received by those who used it”**

LSC consultation coordinator Cate Jolley said: 'Consultation enables us to test ideas with stakeholders and hear a range of perspectives.

'Getting people's feedback on our policy proposals helps us to develop the legal aid schemes as part of the transformation programme.

'We launched 11 consultations in 2008 and our online tool has been well-received by those who used it.

'For example, our first online consultation, launched in December 2007, was about Best Value Tendering. We were very pleased with the online responses.

'We found that 97% of those who gave feedback about the e-consultation process felt it to be either better or no different to historical methods of responding.'

## Green values and efficiency

We're asking all stakeholders to respond to consultations online. As well as the environmental benefits of using less paper, e-consultation is

more efficient for both providers and the LSC and also supports the wider LSC move to increased electronic working. Registering online is secure, and you only need an email address to do it.

During the first year of 'e-consult' we made provision for people to download an offline response template onto their computer, and then email or post it back to us.

The offline response templates mirrored the online questionnaire. We plan to stop attaching these to our online pages in 2009 though you can still respond offline by request, for example, if you prefer large print.

## What's in it for me?

As well as being a greener alternative to paper-based consultation, responding via e-consult allows you to:

- Work securely – 'e-consult' is hosted on a secure server and because it's web-based you can access it wherever you have internet access.
- Be the first in the know – by registering for e-consult you can be among the first to find out about new consultations and other LSC developments.
- Save in draft – so you don't have to complete your response in one go.
- Share final draft – if you're responding on behalf of a number of people, you can share your draft before submitting your response.
- Access your responses in future – by logging in, you access your own personal page where you can view all your online responses to LSC consultations.

## Surveys

We also use the online system to run surveys. We ran five online surveys between March and November 2008 – you might have taken part in the one about the LSC Manual.

We use surveys to get quantitative feedback and evidence, and when people respond online it helps us to analyse the results.

You can find out more about surveys on the LSC website.

## New Government Code

The LSC has been following the new Government Code of Practice on Consultation since it was extended to non-departmental bodies on 1 November 2008. Before then we had our own Code of Practice on LSC Consultations, which followed the same key consultation principles and criteria.

We welcome the new Code and are committed to effective consultation and complying with best practice standards.

You can read through the Code on the LSC website – see below.

## Our responses to external consultations

In addition to running our own consultations, during 2008 we responded to more than 20 consultations from external stakeholders relating to legal aid or the Government's plans to modernise justice.

You can find all our responses since January 2008 on our website, as part of our commitment to ensuring transparency.

## Contact & Information

- » LSC website > about us > consultations
- » LSC website > about us > surveys
- » Cate.Jolley@legalservices.gov.uk
- » tel: 020 7783 7200

## ■ Response paper outlines switch to electronic working

*Following a consultation over the summer, the Legal Services Commission (LSC) published its response to the Managing Legal Aid Cases in Partnership – Delivery Transformation consultation paper (April 2008) in December 2008.*

### Saving millions of pounds

Full electronic working for civil legal aid work will be here from 2010 says the LSC in its responses to the consultation held last year.

This move will transform the delivery of legal aid and save taxpayers millions of pounds. Further benefits of Delivery Transformation for clients, providers and the LSC include:

- faster decision-making and progress of cases
- clients having access, via providers, to up-to-date information on progress and the financial status of their case
- reduced cost and time in administration for both providers and the LSC
- a reduction in the risks associated with paper-based transactions, such as missing documents and paper consumption.

You can view a complete copy of the response paper on the closed consultation page of the LSC website.

### Update on transformation design activity

The design for the core processes has now been completed. This covers:

- applying for legal aid
- managing certificates
- being paid for work

The design work took into account 61 responses to the consultation exercise plus input from 20 provider visits and current state workshops with providers and staff.

The descriptions can be found on the 'workshops for providers' page of the LSC website under 'Transforming legal aid processes'.

Fifty keen volunteers made up of providers and staff have since met across the country to work together to review and approve the designs. The designs have been positively received. One provider said: 'This is the best thing the LSC has ever done'.

The new system allows the LSC to meet



demand for electronic working as well as benefit providers and clients by eliminating rejects, making real time decisions, getting rid of paper based processes and increasing consistency of decision making.

Clients will also benefit from increased transparency and through new processes that make paying a contribution easier. All parties will profit from new ways of working that allow the provider and the LSC to use the same systems and information. This means they can work in partnership to make the right decisions every time – and at the right time to most help the client with their legal issue.

The designs of the new processes for the core system are complete. But work continues on the support systems such as telephony and work flow. Input from providers and staff will be vital to the success of these areas.

Changes will be implemented in three stages. The first stage will be internal to the LSC and will happen in October 2009. From January 2010 we will make the processes associated with

making an application and managing a certificate available to suppliers. By October 2010 the remaining processes, including billing and case balancing will have been implemented.

### How you can get involved

Please use the contacts below if you would like to get involved in the development of Delivery Transformation or simply to express your views.

#### Contact & Information

- » [karen.watson@legalservices.gov.uk](mailto:karen.watson@legalservices.gov.uk) (future development)
- » [delivery.transformation@legalservices.gov.uk](mailto:delivery.transformation@legalservices.gov.uk) (general enquiries)
- » LSC website > about us > consultations > closed
- » LSC website > about us > transforming ourselves > transforming legal aid process > workshops for providers

# Partnership effort improves emergency funding processes

*Emergency certificates to fund legal aid work are being replaced more quickly with substantive versions thanks to the combined efforts of the LSC and family law group Resolution.*

The main focus of our work with Resolution on this project was to improve emergency application processes. As a result emergency certificates are now being replaced with substantive ones within 28 days in 83% of all cases.

This performance was dramatically better than the target of 75%. This was set in July last year after the introduction of a revised process, which was rolled out across all the LSC's regional office processing teams.

Delays in issuing a substantive certificate after an emergency certificate leads to:

- gaps in funding
- loss of protection against a costs order for the client
- increased telephone calls and complaints for LSC staff
- extra work for providers – contacting the LSC to seek extensions to time limits.

## Too risky

A request to address this issue by extending the initial time limit on emergency certificates from four to eight weeks was declined after careful and detailed consideration. We decided this would be too risky for both the legal aid fund and the client.

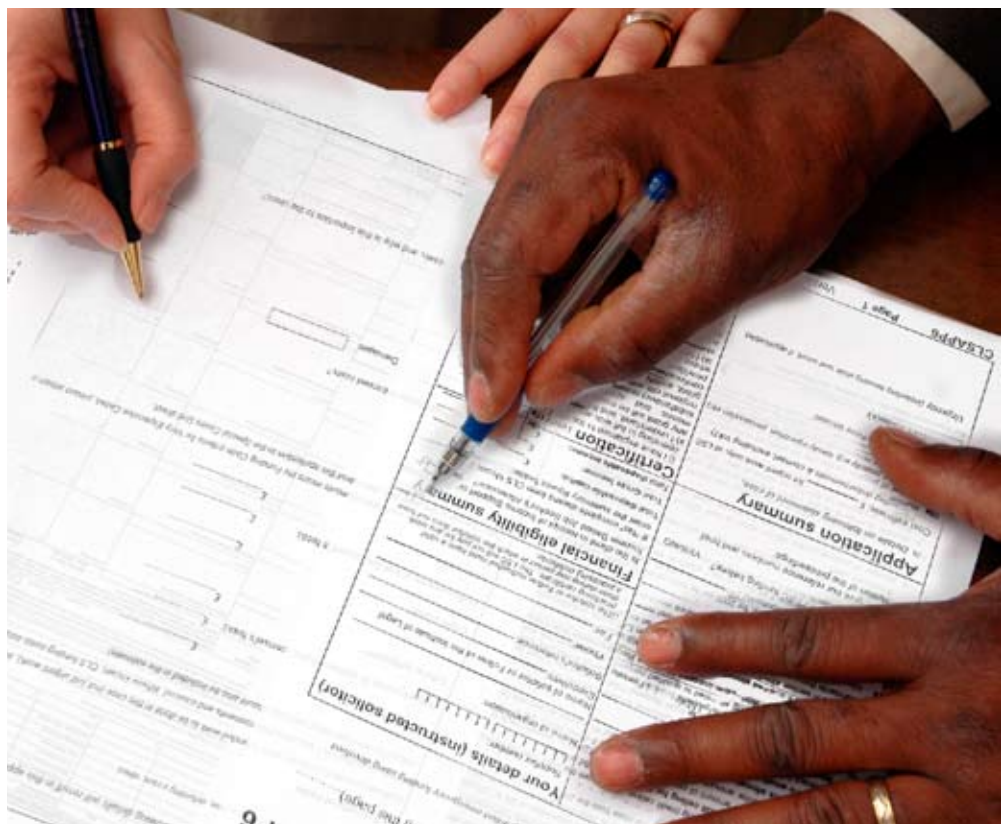
Instead, the LSC decided it would be better to review and amend the processes for dealing with emergency applications nationally.

The 75% target was chosen to allow for cases beyond LSC control. For example, where:

- an offer of funding is issued
- further information is required to complete a means assessment
- there is delay in submitting a devolved powers application
- an application is rejected as incomplete.

## Customer service

The target is now being reviewed to decide whether it has been set at the correct level to drive improved performance. It is expected to



**“This performance was dramatically better than the target of 75%”**

become one of the formal targets against which customer service is measured from April, 2009.

You can help us further improve performance by encouraging clients to respond immediately to any requests for further information from the LSC. Also, to accept any offer of funding as soon as possible following receipt.

To help further reduce any potential delay, please see the panel on page 15. This gives guidance on common errors made by providers exercising devolved powers.

On a broader level these successes are one part of the LSC's work with Resolution –

a specialist association for family solicitors. The LSC has been working with Resolution since early in 2008 on several areas of policy and processes.

## Contact & Information

» LSC Customer Support Manager Christopher Purvis, South Tyneside Regional Office.  
Telephone: 0191 428 3638.

» Christopher.Purvis@legalservices.gov.uk

## Errors to avoid with emergency certificates

### Devolved Powers Emergencies

#### Omission of a scope limitation (12.4 Funding Code Decision Making Guidance)

- All emergency applications must be limited only to the urgent steps required to protect the client's interests. This is in addition to the standard four week time limitation and £1,500 cost limitation.

#### Work beyond scope limitation

- Although the emergency will be live for at least four weeks, all work done under an emergency certificate must fall within the scope limitation you have imposed. The cost of work beyond the scope limitation, even if within the four week period, will not be recoverable, unless the scope limitation is amended.

#### Not a genuine emergency (12.2 Funding Code Decision Making Guidance)

- The work envisaged must be urgent i.e. it must be necessary to do it before a substantive application could be made and determined. If a substantive application could be processed in sufficient time to allow the necessary action to be taken after the grant of a full certificate then emergency representation will be inappropriate.

#### Late submission (12.4 (20) Funding Code Decision Making Guidance)

- When exercising devolved powers, emergency applications must be submitted to the appropriate regional office within five working days. Failure to submit the application within five working days will result in the emergency certificate being date limited to cover only work done within the first five working days of the grant, and no payment will be made for work under the emergency beyond that period.

- Do not delay submission due to awaiting means information (e.g. L17). If you are not able to obtain all necessary means information you should submit your application to the regional office telling them information remains outstanding. The regional office should secure the outstanding information direct from the client.

#### Financial ineligibility of the client (12.3 Funding Code Decision Making Guidance)

- An emergency certificate must not be granted where the client is unlikely to qualify financially. Before exercising devolved powers, consider whether the client is likely to be eligible for Public Funding. The easiest way to do so is to use the CLS MEANS6 or Means Calculator on the LSC and CLA websites.
- Remember to keep evidence that you have considered the client's financial eligibility on your file. If you are not able to demonstrate you have considered the client's financial eligibility, the LSC may refuse to meet the costs incurred under the emergency certificate.

#### Application forms not signed by solicitor/client

- All LSC offices adopt a 'soft reject' policy whereby if it is possible to request/obtain further information over the telephone to enable them to deal with an application rather than reject it, they will do so. However, where application forms are not signed by the client and/or the solicitor, this is a mandatory reject, and if the application is a devolved powers emergency, this will inevitably delay the issue of the substantive certificate.

## ■ Consultation events on Crown Court means testing

*Litigators and advocates have been having their say on the joint LSC and Ministry of Justice (MoJ) Crown Court means testing proposals at interactive events across England and Wales.*

Around 100 solicitors and advocates were expected to attend the events at five courts where the proposed new means testing scheme might be piloted – Norwich, Swansea, Preston, Bradford and Blackfriars.

Event organiser Sarah Schofield said: 'The events were a good opportunity for practitioners to hear more details about the proposals and for us to hear from them.'

We were able to answer some of their questions and allay some concerns but also find out about their issues and concerns.

'We made it clear to practitioners that we don't have all the answers – it's a consultation and we wanted to hear from them.'

'The thoughtful contributions they made mean that, if we go ahead, we will be in a much better position to develop a good pilot that's fair to defendants and that won't disrupt the Court's business.'

'We're very grateful for this and will be reflecting their views in our response document.'

The 12-week consultation ran until 29 January 2009. Visitors to the MoJ website were invited to give their written comments.

A formal consultation response will be published around Easter.

### Contact & Information

» MoJ website > Publications > Consultations > Crown Court Means testing

» LSC website > CDS > Criminal legal aid eligibility > Proposed means testing in the Crown Court

## ■ LSC Online relaunch is on track

*More than half our provider base is now submitting through LSC*

*Online and the final groups will be asked to join in March...*

No big bang this time; instead we are taking it one step at a time as each month we invite specific groups of providers to use the new LSC Online system.

We began the relaunch process in August last year and will invite the final group of providers to join in March. And our approach seems to be paying off.

We have learnt from our problems of a year ago and, halfway through the relaunch, the feedback from our providers to date is extremely encouraging. Although we still have work to do, the month on month increase in provider submissions is on track and everything is going to plan so far.

Each month specific groups of providers ('waves') come back online and each wave is closely monitored.

Before every wave, there is roughly an eight-week period of intense activity involving information gathering, checking and communicating with providers, regional account managers and other LSC departments.

Everyone works together to try and ensure providers have all the information and support they need to submit successfully their monthly claims via LSC Online. The work involved to prepare, train and support providers for each wave is considerable.

We are currently on track to have all providers using LSC Online by the end of March. Once the relaunch is complete and the final group of providers has joined the system the contingency email process will no longer be available. From 1 March, 2009 all controlled work claims will need to be submitted electronically by providers through LSC Online.

To get the new LSC Online system to where it is today has been a considerable undertaking. We would like to thank all our providers for their continued patience, support and positive participation over the past 12 months. Without the intensive pre-launch efforts that take place behind the scenes, the smooth transfer for most providers moving from contingency back to LSC Online could never be achieved.



### Behind the scenes

One of our biggest challenges during the relaunch preparations is to update previous submissions.

We must have all historic submissions on the system before a provider is relaunched. Where we are not able to do this we will liaise directly with the provider to find a solution.

We have continued to monitor and fine-tune the IT system that supports LSC Online. The system dealt with our highest usage to date during December without any performance problems.

### What providers are telling us

Understanding whether LSC Online is working well for providers is very important to us so we are actively seeking feedback and comments after each wave.

So far we have surveyed three relaunched

waves of providers, not including a pilot group of 150 providers who have been working with us from the beginning of the relaunch project.

We are particularly interested in the effectiveness of our pre-launch communications, our training workshops and providers experiences of support during their first submission.

Results from 98 'Wave 1' providers mirrored previous feedback from the pilot group and two advanced waves.

### Contact & Information

» Jo Beddow from Strategic Training and Communications if you want to know more about the LSC Online relaunch

» [joanne.beddow@legalservices.gov.uk](mailto:joanne.beddow@legalservices.gov.uk)



## What people thought of our pre-launch communications and support

- 95% of respondents stated our pre-launch communications were effective
- 81% of respondents rated Online Support as good or excellent

After making their first submissions via LSC Online one provider stated that the 'Online Support team provided excellent service and assistance during a very busy period for them'. Another reported that the team was 'Massively helpful'.

Although a smaller number of providers sought assistance from their regional office the level of service showed that:

- 86% of respondents rated regional office support as good or excellent
- A number of providers commented that the training packs were comprehensive, with one stating 'you seem to have covered everything required in the training packs'.

The system itself received praise. One provider said: 'LSC Online is easy to use and it is user friendly'. Of the website another provider said it 'was

great, it was quick and easy to read, I was quite impressed'.

Additionally, we have received comments from some respondents reminding us that we still have some work to do to improve the navigation and search functions of the LSC website. A full review and redesign of the website is currently under way.

### Pre-launch training

- 89% trainee attendees rated their workshops 'useful' or 'very useful'

The training workshops have gone extremely well and one respondent said that 'training was extremely well presented' and 'the staff who gave the seminar were very helpful and knew what they were taking about'.

A number of providers requested we change the format of the workshops so they could have attended more sessions. We have taken this on board and have now redesigned the workshops. The new format workshops started running this month (January 2009).

## So who's online so far?

Wave	Relaunch date	Who was in the wave?	Number of provider offices
Pilot Group	End of Jul 08	Selection of providers spread across all regions	187
Advanced Wave 1	1 Aug 08	Providers in parts of South West England and London	200
Advanced Wave 2	1 Sep 08	Selection of providers in London	226
Wave 1	4 Nov 08	Providers in Wales and parts of London	656
Wave 2	1 Dec 08	Providers in South East England, parts of London and remaining providers in South West England	922
Wave 3	5 January 09	Providers in North East England and parts of North West England	396

**Total number of provider offices relaunched in waves** **2,587**

Wave 4 and 5 (Feb and Mar) include providers from East Midlands, Yorkshire and the Humber and the rest of North West England

# £400m housing safety net for vulnerable families

*Thousands of vulnerable families are now able to avoid the nightmare of losing their homes thanks to a mortgage rescue scheme worth more than £400million.*

Funding of £205million was initially put up by Communities and Local Government (CLG).

This has been matched by a £205million contribution from the Housing Corporation.

The scheme is voluntary for local authorities, but most will want to offer a mortgage rescue option to help reduce homelessness. This a sustainable solution allowing families to stay in their homes and avoid the hardship caused by homelessness.

An estimated 6,000 of the most vulnerable households could be supported by the scheme. Mortgage repossessions are predicted to rise during the current economic downturn.

The CLG Mortgage Rescue Scheme relies on close working between the council, borrower, lender, independent advice providers and the designated social landlord.

## Outline of the proposed CLG scheme

The scheme is not designed to help all borrowers who fall into arrears. It is firmly targeted at those households who can no longer afford their monthly repayments. These are people who would otherwise be eligible for homelessness assistance.

Local authorities will have a major role in the scheme by assessing eligibility, processing applications and signing off the referral from money advice agencies, lenders and Registered Social Landlords (RSLs).

Households eligible for referral into the scheme are likely to be families with dependent children or pregnant women, the elderly, households with disabled members or another recognised vulnerability.

It is likely that households with an income exceeding £60k will not be eligible for the scheme. There may also be upper property value limits applied. Eligibility criteria for assessment is dealt with separately on this page.

## Eligible households can be offered one of two options by the nominated social landlord (RSL):

- Shared equity – where an RSL provides an equity loan reducing the borrower’s monthly mortgage payments and the borrower remains the outright owner of the property.
- Government mortgage to rent – where an RSL clears the secured debt completely and the borrower then becomes a secured tenant of the RSL paying a rent they can afford.

Suitability of each of the above options will depend on individual circumstances and affordability will be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

## The role of the Money Advice Agency

The role of money advice is crucial to the delivery of the scheme and the prevention of homelessness to people in mortgage debt.

Local authorities will need to ensure there is access to good quality Money Advice. This will enable the effective delivery of homelessness prevention for people facing repossession as a result of rent arrears, mortgage debt or bankruptcy.

The provision of Money Advice is now recognised as part of the core delivery of a good quality advice service.

### Contact & Information

- » Mortgage Rescue Team on 020 7944 4400
- » carolynh@shelter.org.uk
- » www.communities.gov.uk

## How to enter the assessment process

**To enter the assessment process the following criteria will need to be met:**

1. The applicant has an up-to-date financial assessment, provided by a designated Money Advice agency qualified and able to provide such a service. This needs to demonstrate the mortgage rescue scheme may be an option upon which all interested parties may act further.
2. Having explored all viable alternatives to repossession, the applicant’s lender is prepared, in principle, to support an application for mortgage rescue.
3. There are no outstanding charges on the applicant’s property that prevent it being sold.
4. An up-to-date valuation of the applicant’s property indicates mortgage rescue is a viable option for all parties.
5. The applicant will have sufficient equity remaining in their home, if this is a requirement, to apply for mortgage rescue.
6. Any subsequent mortgage rescue should result in the creation of a housing solution for the applicant that is affordable, and suitable for them, and anyone who would normally reside with the applicant, or could reasonably be expected to do so.
7. The applicant has been provided with sufficient time, advice and assistance to enable them to make informed decisions about all their housing options, including the mortgage rescue scheme.

# Accuracy vital to avoid payment problems

*The LSC has carried out an initial check of closed civil cases reported on LSC Online since the introduction of the new civil fixed fees.*

It is important for both providers and the LSC that cases are reported accurately to ensure that:

**Providers are paid the correct fees** – in some cases a lower fee is being claimed than should be and providers are not receiving the full payments owed to them.

**Providers' reconciliation positions are accurate** – LSC will reclaim money if it appears we have paid the incorrect fees for work claimed.

**Monitoring of key performance indicators (KPIs) is correct** – It is important the cases you report accurately reflect the work you do. We regularly monitor cases you report, and where you have an unusual claims profile, we may visit you to understand why and in some circumstances we may audit a sample of your files.

**The LSC has accurate data to assess the impact of the fee scheme on providers** – changes to the fee schemes will be consulted on later this year and proposed amendments will be based on the data that we receive from providers.

**We pay VAT when it is payable** – Providers sometimes forget to tick the VAT box for each case.

There are several areas that we are looking at:

1. Validity of repeat claims per client as separate matter starts under the Unified Contract
2. Validity of matter type and end-point code combinations
3. Providers wrongly entering the relevant fixed fee as the profit cost of a claim
4. Possibility of duplicate claims being entered.

## Common reporting errors

### Family

- Make sure that the stage of the case reached matches the fee being claimed. Many cases report that the case has concluded at the first

meeting (FA), but more than a Level 1 fee has been claimed.

- Where you claim a settlement fee, make sure the matter type code matches that. We often see a 'matter not concluded' code used - that cannot be right.

### Immigration

- Claiming graduated fee matters on the basis of hourly rates or vice versa.
- Claiming VAT in asylum matters where VAT is not applicable.
- Entering incorrect values in profit costs fields.
- Claiming incorrect additional payments..

### Mental health

- Recording of the Fixed Fee in Profit Costs field rather than actual hourly rate Profit Costs which means we are not able to assess the impact of the Phase I scheme accurately.
- Incorrect recording of Matter Type and Outcome codes.
- Omission of travel and waiting costs (as opposed to travel-related disbursements) from either/both Profit Costs and Travel Costs and Waiting Costs fields.
- Work being claimed at incorrect Fee Levels causing legitimate Exceptional Cases not to be claimed or vice versa.
- Incorrect 'rolling-up' of matters (this only becomes visible when Exceptional Case Claims are made).

Correct and timely validation is already helping us to ensure that incorrect claims are being rejected and that providers are prompted. For instance, from October 2008, we have built in ways of validating immigration claims into LSC Online to prevent particular code combinations.

We hope to introduce further checks, beneficial to both providers and the LSC, in immigration, mental health and family law and also in other civil categories.

Please contact your regional contracting team if you have any questions about codes.



## Remember to claim exceptional cases

*A number of both civil and crime providers are not claiming all the exceptional cases they are entitled to.*

We have been contacting providers to encourage them to follow the process to claim. In the meantime, please remember that simply reporting the costs of exceptional cases on LSC Online will not result in automatic payment beyond fixed fees.

Provision for exceptional cases was included in the:

- Civil Phase 1 Fee Schemes introduced in October 2007 (Mental Health was introduced in January 2008)
- Crime Police Station Fixed Fee Scheme introduced in January 2008.

Allowance is made for a case to 'escape' the fixed fee and be fully or partly remunerated on an hourly rate basis. These are known as 'exceptional cases' - 85% of applications are paid as 'exceptional'.

Full details about how to claim and the forms that need to be completed are available by searching for 'Exceptional Case Assessments' on the LSC website.

### Contact & Information

» LSC website > About us > What's new > Exceptional Case Assessments

## Your chance to shape QAA

*We are working with the Ministry of Justice to develop a quality assurance scheme to ensure public confidence in publicly funded criminal defence advocates. The QAA pilot offers solicitors and barristers a unique opportunity to help shape any future scheme...*

### What is QAA?

Over the last two years, the LSC and MoJ have been developing the Quality Assurance for Advocates (QAA) scheme with the professions. The aim is to ensure public confidence in the competence of advocates and in their ability to conduct cases of differing levels of complexity.

The project has been assisted at every stage by an advisory body that includes the representative and regulatory arms of the professions, the judiciary and CPS, among others. This means that nominated practitioners and individuals with necessary expertise have been involved in the development of all aspects of the scheme.

### QAA pilot

The QAA pilot to test how best to quality assure publicly funded criminal defence advocates will begin in February.

### Who should get involved?

We are asking solicitors and barristers who undertake criminal legal aid to register their interest to be involved. Participants will play an important part in helping to shape any final quality assurance scheme which would, ultimately, impact on all advocates undertaking legal aid work.

Some advocates will need to appear in one of the following court centres for a trial at least once during the pilot:

- Birmingham Crown Court
- Cardiff Crown Court including Newport Crown Court
- Inner London Crown Court
- Winchester Crown Court.

Judges in these Crown Courts will be involved in the pilot evaluations. Additionally, all advocates, whether or not they appear in one of these centres, or who appear solely in the magistrates' courts, may be required to travel to one of the assessment centres based in Cardiff, Birmingham or London.

### Quality Assurance for Advocates (QAA)

The aim is to ensure public confidence in the competence of advocates and in their ability to conduct cases of differing levels of complexity.



**“The pilot commences in February 2009 and is expected to run for approximately six months”**

### Testing the impacts

Only with your participation can we make proposals for a final scheme that has been properly tested with the profession. While all participation is important, extensive work with diversity groups, representatives and practitioners has highlighted potential impacts that the scheme might have on certain types of advocates.

In order to properly test the impacts, we are particularly interested in seeking the support of:

- women
- advocates from black and minority ethnic groups

- people working part-time
- people with caring responsibilities
- advocates who have a health problem or disability.

### How is assessment being developed?

Cardiff Law School was awarded the contract for the research, design, operation and evaluation of the assessment process for the QAA pilot. As for all development, they are working with a nominated group to:

- consider how to assess an advocate's competence

- consider what credit can be given in any final scheme to an advocate's previous experience, accreditation and qualifications e.g. CPS (external) prosecutor status, solicitors with Higher Rights of Audience
- design the QAA pilot.

#### How will I be assessed?

Feedback from the profession suggests that a number of different assessment methods should be tested. During the pilot, you may be tested against some or all of the possible options to determine the best combination to provide a reliable result whilst keeping assessment to a minimum.

This would then form proposals, for full public consultation, for a final operational scheme.

Assessment methods might include:

- multiple choice tests
- portfolio examination
- simulated advocacy
- pilot evaluations by the judiciary.

#### Who are the assessors?

The assessors in the QAA pilot will be experienced and trained in assessment and include practising barristers, solicitor advocates, QCs and Recorders.

#### When is the pilot taking place?

The pilot commences in February 2009 and is expected to run for approximately six months. The assessments will be carried out in four stages according to level. The four levels are intended to be illustrative of the type of work a criminal defence advocate at a particular level of competence is likely to be undertaking.

#### Do I need to tell anyone that I am taking part?

You are under no obligation to notify your chambers or firm of your participation in the pilot. Information about and results for candidates will not be disclosed and will remain confidential,

known only by the researchers at Cardiff Law School.

#### Will participants receive any feedback?

The QAA pilot is testing the different assessment options and methods rather than the individual advocate so you will not be provided with any feedback on your performance following the pilot.

It is possible that a good performance may act as a passport directly into the relevant level in any final scheme. While we cannot guarantee this, if, following full evaluation of the pilot, it is deemed possible, relevant participants will be notified of their grading.

#### Can I get help with my expenses?

The project will meet the cost of assessment. Additional reasonable expenses may also be recoverable, for example to cover childcare expenses and some travel costs. Expenses will need to be agreed with each advocate prior to participation.

#### How can I get involved?

If you are interested in participating in the pilot, please email [qaa@legalservices.gov.uk](mailto:qaa@legalservices.gov.uk) or contact Sinead Reynolds.

#### Contact & Information

- » LSC website > CDS > Quality and Performance > QAA
- » [sinead.reynolds@legalservices.gov.uk](mailto:sinead.reynolds@legalservices.gov.uk)
- » 020 7783 7421.

## Improving the defence witness experience

*HMCS is looking to improve the court experience of all witnesses – including the defence.*

HMCS have produced a DVD called 'Going to Court - a step by step guide to being a witness'. The DVD is interactive, multilingual and animated. It follows the journey of a defence witness from making a statement right through the criminal court process and after the trial. HMCS would like defence solicitors to give copies of this free DVD to any adult or teenage civilian witness.

#### How to order

Further information including how to order copies of the DVD – and a link to an on-line preview are available from the HMCS website (see below).

#### Leaflet guides

In addition to the DVD, HMCS has produced local leaflets (available electronically on the HMCS website under 'CourtFinder') for defence witnesses (see below). This provides information on the services and facilities available at individual local courts for witnesses.

This includes who to contact at the court, what to expect on arrival and what happens after they have given their evidence. They are available in a range of languages to assist those witnesses who do not speak English as a first language.

Research has shown that better informed witnesses are more confident. So we hope you will take advantage of this opportunity to improve the court experience for defence witnesses.

#### Contact & Information

- » [www.hmcourts-service.gov.uk](http://www.hmcourts-service.gov.uk)  
(Information about > Being a witness – then select 'DVD' in the 'Further Information' panel)
- » [www.hmcourts-service.gov.uk/HMCSCourtFinder](http://www.hmcourts-service.gov.uk/HMCSCourtFinder) – for leaflets to help defence witnesses you simply need to select the court you are interested in and then go to the information panels on the right of the relevant page.

# ■ Designing a new scheme for Very High Cost Criminal Cases

*A consultation on a sustainable scheme for Very High Cost Criminal Cases (VHCC) steps up a gear in February with events in London, Manchester and Birmingham.*

The events are an opportunity for interested parties to find out more about the policy detail and share their views with the LSC. Full details of venues, timings and booking arrangements are available below.

The consultation is running until 18 February and outlines proposals for the new scheme that will be introduced in July 2009.

LSC Chief Executive Carolyn Regan said: 'The proposed new Very High Cost Case scheme is designed to ensure clients have access to high quality legal representation in the most expensive criminal legal aid cases.

'At the same time it will also ensure litigators and advocates are fairly paid and are encouraged to work efficiently.

'I welcome responses to this consultation from both the wider legal profession and the public. We want the new scheme to have the full support of criminal justice system partners and the public.'

The new scheme - presented as one of two options in the consultation paper - is designed to replace the current VHCC Panel that pays litigators

and advocates hourly rates for their work. The LSC believes the new scheme will produce benefits for clients, lawyers and the taxpayer.

The consultation paper was developed after extensive cooperation with representative bodies to deliver value for money and encourage team working while giving careful consideration to the quality of VHCC litigators and advocates.

The paper sets out a possible new structure for the VHCC scheme, which is as follows:

## Panel of litigators

A panel of litigators would be established. The selection criteria would focus on the quality and experience of the firms and supervisors engaged on the work.

The new scheme proposes that litigators would have full flexibility to negotiate the contract work they carry out. This approach reflects the fact that individual VHCCs undertaken vary significantly. Cases will be structured around a series of litigation tasks, which occur in VHCCs. Litigator teams will be paid according to tasks they carry out.

## Advocates

It is proposed that there would be a list of advocates approved to work on VHCCs.

Advocates on the list would be accredited through a quality-based process. The LSC's preferred choice, as set out in the paper, would be for advocates to enter into contracts for individual cases and would be paid a combination of graduated fees for core advocacy tasks and negotiated rates for case specific tasks.

Copies of the full consultation paper and the initial impact assessment are available from the LSC website.

## Contact & Information

» LSC website > CDS > Consultations > The Future of Very High Cost Cases (December 2008)

» [matthew.shelley@legalservices.gov.uk](mailto:matthew.shelley@legalservices.gov.uk)

» [cris@scotter@legalservices.gov.uk](mailto:cris@scotter@legalservices.gov.uk)

## Book your place

If you would like to attend one of the consultation events send an email to [vhccproject@legalservices.gov.uk](mailto:vhccproject@legalservices.gov.uk)

Alternatively, you can telephone Claire McNamara on 020 7783 7486

### Dates, times and venues are:

Tuesday, 3 February 5pm to 8pm  
Midland Hotel, Peter Street,  
Manchester, M60 2DS

Wednesday, 4 February 5pm to 8pm  
Jury's Inn, Broad Street, Birmingham, B1 2HQ

Thursday, 5 February 5.30pm to 8.30pm  
The Law Society, 113 Chancery Lane, London,  
WC2A 1PL

## £118m spent on VHCC cases

1. Last year there were about 350 defendants funded by legal aid in 100 VHCC criminal cases. Defence teams are typically paid around £400,000 for such cases but costs in some, such as the Jubilee Line Fraud case, have run into several millions.
2. To put this in context, last year the LSC funded advice and representation for nearly 1.6m defendants. About 120,000 of these were in Crown Court cases.
3. The cost of VHCC cases was approximately 10% of the criminal legal aid budget. VHCC crime expenditure was £118m out of total legal aid expenditure of £1.2bn for criminal representation.
4. Last year the LSC established a VHCC Panel to ensure best quality and best value for the most expensive criminal legal aid cases. This Panel is due to run until July 2009 and is expected to produce a cost saving of approximately 7% on the previous year.
5. The LSC, the Bar Council, the Law Society, and the Ministry of Justice have agreed that the proposed new scheme will ensure that the LSC is able to deliver VHCC legal services within the same financial resources as would have been delivered under the 2007 tender process.

## ■ Key research into domestic abuse injunctions

*Research findings from an investigation into the use of domestic violence injunctions have been published by the LSC.*

In recent months, a variety of organisations have expressed concern about a decline in the number of applications for injunctions in domestic abuse cases.

Anecdotal evidence from senior judges and the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) has suggested that applications are falling and LSC statistics are also reflecting this drop.

In August, the Ministry of Justice published 'An early evaluation of the Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004' and this report also identified a decline in applications.

A variety of reasons have been put forward for this decline. In particular, there is concern that new provisions implemented by the Domestic Violence Crime and Victims Act 2004 (DVCV) are causing the fall.

### Deterring women

The introduction of the DVCV Act in July 2007 made breach of a non-molestation order a criminal offence. Some theorists argue that this is deterring women from seeking non-molestation orders, as they are unwilling for their partner to face criminal charges.

Following the introduction of the DVCV Act a misconception has also arisen that legal aid will no longer be available for civil remedies where criminal remedies exist – this is not the case.

In response to these concerns the LSC commissioned an exploratory literature review to establish to what extent the numbers of applications are declining, and the factors that may be influencing the fall.

### Key findings

Following a competitive tendering exercise, Dr Mandy Burton, an academic researcher based at the School of Law, University of Leicester was selected. The key findings of Dr Burton's research are as follows:

- The decline in applications for non-molestation orders is not recent and applications have, in fact, been declining since 2002.

- There seems to have been a sharper drop in applications since the implementation of the DVCV Act, but it is too early to fully assess its impact.
- Victims of domestic abuse are currently more likely to seek help from outside the legal system than within it.
- One of the key factors influencing the accessibility of civil remedies is the quality of advice received from family law solicitors.

Dr Burton made several recommendations for the LSC including ensuring that efforts to improve the civil justice response to domestic violence should be focused upon those most in need of support and protection, including 'hard to reach' groups.

The full literature review is available at:  
» LSC website > CLS > Civil areas of work > Family > Domestic abuse.

### Next steps

We are currently working to improve access to legal advice for women living in refuge accommodation and accessing refuge support services. Traditional face-to-face services are not always appropriate for this group – the unfamiliar environment of a solicitor's office can be threatening and distressing and may prevent them from accessing advice.

To address this we are running a project to set up effective relationships between domestic abuse services and providers so that solicitors can make visits to refuges or attend outreach sessions in order to give advice.

We have been working with Women's Aid, Refuge and Welsh Women's Aid to identify the services that would benefit from better relationships with local advice providers. The organisations we will be working with include culturally specific services catering to the most vulnerable groups of women.

## ■ A new debt remedy for 2009

*Debt Relief Orders, an alternative to personal bankruptcy targeted at debtors with low incomes and assets are expected to come into force on 6 April 2009. This follows the Tribunals, Courts and Enforcement Act 2007...*

Debt Relief Orders (DROs) are designed to help people with low income and assets, no other access to debt relief such as bankruptcy and no prospect of the situation improving.

The remedy was introduced for people in England and Wales under the Tribunals, Courts and Enforcement Act 2007. It will only be accessible online and via an approved trained debt adviser or 'intermediary' who will check that people meet the necessary criteria.

### Intermediaries

Intermediaries are competent advisers able to ensure good advice. They need to be authorised by 'Competent Authorities' – a body designated by the Secretary of State to carry out this role.

Detailed information about DROs and the names of all Competent Authorities can be found on the Debt Relief Orders page of the Insolvency Service website (see below).

The majority of Competent Authorities will only receive applications from staff employed within their own organisation or network. However, the Institute of Money Advisers (IMA) will consider applications from anyone who is, or chooses to become a member of the IMA. More details can be found on the IMA website.

The Money Advice Trust (MAT) has received some specific project funding to develop training materials on DROs and to provide face-to-face workshops to train approved intermediaries.

### Contact & Information

- » [www.wiseradviser.org](http://www.wiseradviser.org)
- » [www.insolvency.gov.uk](http://www.insolvency.gov.uk)
- » [www.i-m-a.org.uk](http://www.i-m-a.org.uk)

## What next for the publicly funded Bar?



**David Anderson, St John's Buildings**

*David Anderson is development manager for one of the leading Chambers in England and Wales – St John's Buildings, which has offices in Manchester, Preston and Chester. He was named in The Lawyer Magazine's Hot 100 for 2008. Here he gives his views on the commercial environment and the future for the publicly funded Bar...*

### 'Is there a future for the publicly funded Bar?'

That is the question most asked by members of Chambers with publicly funded practices.

It is a question that has been raised ever since solicitors received Higher Courts Rights of Audience in the Courts and Legal Services Act 1990. It is one that, as yet, has no definitive answer.

The problems are well known, but warrant repeating. From the time Richard Slowe became the first solicitor advocate in 1994, there has been a move into advocacy by solicitors who at first sought the career advancement and variety offered by advocacy rather than financial gain.

The majority of solicitors had neither the desire nor the time to take on advocacy. But over time the market has become more competitive and advocacy more attractive. At the same time, more barristers have entered the profession. The budget remained constant and a small increase in volume of cases became stretched across more and more people.

As a result, less work comes to the independent Bar and more individuals want the work that does come. Solicitors now have an appetite for the work and are continuing to drive programmes of expansion into advocacy.

### So what can Chambers do to guarantee its future?

St John's Buildings is one of many Chambers already looking at how the future can be secured for its practitioners and a number of solutions have been identified.

The first step is to accept the position that we are in and discard a return to the golden age of the Bar. What has happened cannot be undone. The Bar must look at its strengths and unique selling points and its marketing, administration and business awareness.

Chambers with publicly funded practitioners must grasp new working methods and accept that block contracting is the most obvious future for this work – at least for the lower end cases.

They should embrace tendering and reform and make the Bar fit for the future. Chambers should have no fear of applying to the Legal Services Commission for control of cases and fees



if there is to be best value tendering or one case, one fee.

The Legal Services Act 2007 presents opportunity, but brings with it problems. There is a clash between the vision of Lord Carter and the Alternative Business Structures (ABS) provisions of the Legal Services Act.

Lord Carter calls for fewer, bigger suppliers of advocacy services, benefiting from economies of scale – with the LSC benefiting by reducing administration by dealing with fewer providers.

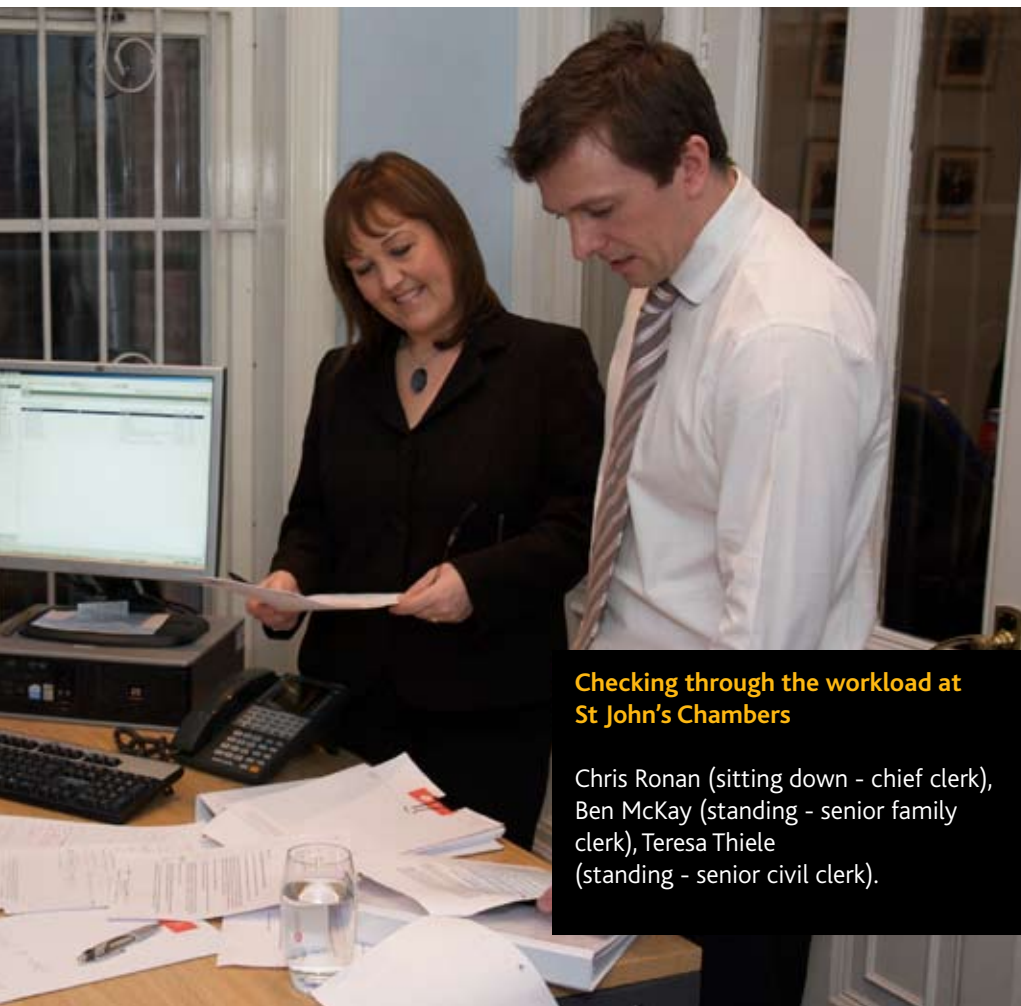
But an ABS would conflict all of those advocates out of appearing against each other in a case. Many sets thrive on the back of multi-handed criminal cases, prosecution and defence work, representing several parties in a childcare case and a number of other areas of work that an ABS could not take on. This is because members of the ABS would be unable to appear against each other in the case.

This would result in a drastic reduction in work available to that ABS and the larger the ABS the more likely this would be. This position must

### Factfile – St John's Buildings

- One of the largest Chambers in the country
- Five practice groups covering Personal Injury and Professional Negligence, Crime, Commercial, Employment, Family and Mental Health
- Chambers in Manchester, Preston and Chester
- Criminal team with 74 counsel
- Family team with 45 counsel





### Checking through the workload at St John's Chambers

Chris Ronan (sitting down - chief clerk), Ben McKay (standing - senior family clerk), Teresa Thiele (standing - senior civil clerk).

be resolved if the LSC is to be able to contract with fewer larger suppliers in line with the Carter recommendations to obtain large savings in administration costs.

### Solutions to preserve independence of advocates

There are potential solutions, short of entering into ABS, that could preserve the independence of the advocates and yet permit block contracting or best value tendering. Some solutions are not popular with the Bar, but are already familiar to a number of Chambers. Possible solutions are:

1. An advocates' panel for publicly funded work. Some banks and insurers already operate advocates' panels, with insurers compelling the panel solicitors to use those advocates and ensuring that service level agreements are in place and must be observed.  
There is no reason why the same system cannot work for LSC cases, with advocates being identified as preferred suppliers and

being allocated a volume of cases at pre-agreed prices.

The volume of work would drive efficiency and a closer working relationship between advocate and solicitor while avoiding the problems created by entering an ABS.

2. Open competition for contracts between the Bar and Solicitors, with the Bar paying solicitors for litigation work and itself for advocacy.  
Chambers are already administering the substitute advocate system of payments created by the new Advocates' Graduated Fee Scheme and there is no reason why they cannot make the same payments to solicitors on the cases that they have prepared before coming to the Bar.
3. Working more closely with solicitors to be able to tender together for work and to take on blocks of work at fixed prices. Available options include clerking solicitor Higher Court

Advocates (HCAs) to ensure that advocacy is efficiently dealt with on all cases – saving court time and cost and ensuring that clients are not let down.

Also, sharing administration costs in order to ensure that there is no duplication of this cost, and that cases, where HCAs are involved, are efficiently listed. Additionally, that wherever possible the client has an advocate of choice rather than the next available advocate.

### Difficult options

Currently, the Bar's regulatory regime makes some of the options difficult; Rule 307(e) of the Bar's Code of Conduct, coupled with Paragraph 11 of the Funding Order, makes it an offence to work at rates less than those in the Funding Order for criminal advocacy in Graduated Fee Scheme cases.

Rule 403.1 prohibits the sharing of administration so as to allow clerks to clerk solicitor HCAs or so as to allow our barristers to work from the offices of a solicitor.

These rules were conceived in order to retain the independence of the Bar and to protect the public interest by ensuring that solicitors use advocate of choice. However, they are now proving restrictive. The rules are making it difficult for Chambers to adopt an entrepreneurial approach and work closely with solicitors.

This leads, in extreme cases, to cases being retained by inexperienced advocates taking on work above their threshold rather than retaining an appropriately qualified advocate.

### Chambers must look forwards

These rules are being considered by the Bar Standards Board as it reviews the Code of Conduct and are bound to be coming under the watchful gaze of the newly established Legal Services Board. Will the changes come too late?

In the meantime, Chambers must look forwards. They have to transform their working practices and work more closely with solicitors than they have in the past.

They must deliver a quality product, which solicitors will respect. In the current economic climate, only by reflecting the provisions of Lord Carter's Report will the publicly funded Bar survive. Commercial reality is upon us.

**Opinions in this article are personal to the author and may not reflect LSC policy.**

# Difficulties and solutions for people seeking advice



*Finding and getting to an advice centre can be a critical issue for many people. Using new techniques the Legal Services Research Centre (LSRC) has been investigating how people cope when they need help. Researcher Ash Patel from the LSRC presents some key findings.*

The Legal Services Research Centre (LSRC) is the independent research division of the LSC.

LSRC researchers are writing regular columns highlighting key findings from their research projects.

## Putting advice on the map

Data from the 2004 English and Welsh Civil and Social Justice Survey (CSJS), was used to carry out this research. The CSJS provide detailed information on the nature, pattern and impact of civil justice problems, and the use of resolution strategies.

More than 5,000 adults were interviewed. They were asked if they had experienced a civil justice problem in the previous three and a half years. If so they were questioned in more detail about the nature of the problems, actions taken to resolve them, their conclusion and their impact. Geographic Information Systems (GIS), enabled the mapping of all participants.

Additionally, the locations of a number of advice providers were mapped. Address information for Citizens Advice Bureaux (CABx), Law Centres and solicitors firms with a Community Legal Services (CLS) civil contract were used to pinpoint the locations of advice throughout England and Wales. The locations of CLS Quality Mark organisations were also mapped. Measuring distances (as a straight line) between a survey participant's home and their surrounding advice provider's enabled researchers to identify an individual's nearest advice provider.

## Difficulties and solutions for people seeking advice

It is often assumed the further away a person lives from an advice provider, the harder it becomes to access advice when it is needed.

Overcoming difficulties caused by growing distances between advice suppliers and their potential clients has been a key task for advice sector organisations and stakeholders.

Using new techniques to analyse a large scale, nationally representative survey, the LSRC has been investigating the problems caused by distance and how they are often overcome.

### Distance to advice

Overall results showed that nearly three quarters of survey participants had a CLS contract-holder within two miles and 93% within five miles of their residence.

In areas classified as rural, 19% of the population had one within two miles and 70% within five miles compared to 88% and 99% respectively in urban areas.

The research shows that the national distribution of advice suppliers is far from equal. People living in rural settings are further away than people in urban settings. The same pattern occurred when looking at CABs, Law Centres and solicitors as distinct types of provider.

Participants were asked whether they knew of a supplier within two miles of their home. 35% of people with advisers within two miles did not know where they could be found. Law Centres were the least commonly identified (83% were unaware compared with 46% unaware of a CAB and 43% of a solicitor). In contrast, respondents often incorrectly identified having a CAB close to where they live, even though there were none within two miles.

## Social and demographic characteristics

Only ethnicity and family type revealed any significant differences in awareness of advisers. With regards to ethnicity, black respondents were significantly more likely than white respondents to lack awareness of advisers (56% and 33% respectively).

White respondents were more likely to correctly identify a CAB (56% being able to do so, compared with only 38% of black and 36% of Asian respondents). For solicitor awareness, white and Asian responses were comparable. However, among black respondents awareness was low. In relation to family type, cohabiters with children were most likely to lack awareness.

People receiving benefits were particularly sensitive to the presence of Law Centres within two miles. Research showed that 29% of benefits claimants were able to identify one compared with 10% of non-claimants. Those in receipt of welfare benefits were also more likely to be aware of a CAB within two miles. The increase in awareness of Law Centres among benefits claimants may reflect the services' target group.

Access to personal transport had a slightly positive effect on awareness of advice provision. Interestingly, having personal transport also increased the likelihood of incorrectly believing a supplier was within two miles, when in reality there was not one there.

Despite the differences in awareness, there was little variation in people going on to obtain advice. There was a slight increase in people doing nothing to resolve a problem among those who were unaware of a nearby advice provider. However, some of this could be attributable to different problem types, and the seriousness of the problem.



### Key points include

1. Distance from a mainstream advice provider has little impact on whether people go on to find advice
2. Most people have advice providers within two miles of their home
3. More than half of all advice is delivered face-to-face (52%)
4. 40% of respondents received advice by telephone
5. Respondents more likely to favour telephone advice the further away they lived from advice providers
6. Internet use is increasing to locate advisers
7. Urban areas have more service provision than rural areas
8. People on benefits can more easily locate a Law Centre
9. White respondents better able to identify a CAB
10. People without transport more likely to do nothing to resolve problems

### Distance as a barrier to getting advice

Overall, being further away from a mainstream advice provider (such as any CLS civil contract or Quality Marked organisation) had little impact on whether someone went on to find advice. The research looked at people within varying distances of an advice provider. This included:

- within two miles
- between two and five miles
- more than five miles.

Motorised transport was an important factor in overcoming distance. People with access to a household/family car or other motor vehicle tended to respond to problems in broadly the same way, with similar proportions of people doing nothing, handling alone i.e sorting out the problem themselves, or obtaining advice as distance from their closest adviser increased.

The further people lived from an adviser the more important their ability to travel was in deciding whether they obtained advice. This was

particularly noticeable for respondents without access to personal transport. When they lived more than five miles from their closest adviser they were more likely to do nothing to resolve a problem.

### Mode of contact

Other methods of advice-giving have been identified. For example, over the telephone and the internet. There is evidence that internet use is increasing. However, it is used mainly for locating advisers as opposed to obtaining substantive advice. More people who had used the internet when faced with a civil justice problem in the first instance, went on to obtain advice either in person or over the telephone.

Internet based services are still in their infancy – particularly within the advice sector. However, there is a lot of potential for their development as access and familiarity increases among the general population.

Focusing on the actual delivery of advice

itself, around 52% of respondents received advice in person, 40% over the telephone and the remainder by both telephone and in person.

The way advice is given changed in a predictable trend as distance between advice providers and respondents increased. So there was more telephone advice and less face-to-face advice as distances increased. This suggests that telephone advice provides an increasingly invaluable resource for isolated individuals.

### Contact & Information

» More detailed analysis on this work can be found in Patel, A; Balmer, N.J. and Pleasence, P (2008) Geography of advice seeking 39(6) Geoforum, 2084-2096. Work on this project is continuing under the "Spatial Dimensions of 'Legal Need' and advice" stream of work.

» For more detail visit the LSRC at [www.lsrc.org.uk/projects](http://www.lsrc.org.uk/projects)

# ■ Consultation on family legal aid funding from 2010

*A 13-week consultation is taking place on the future of family legal aid funding*

Family Legal Aid Funding from 2010: A Consultation run jointly by the LSC and Ministry of Justice aims to obtain views on the structure of two new proposed standard fee payment schemes:

### **The Private Family Law Representation Scheme:**

Covering family private certificated work (levels 3 & 4) – from the issue of proceedings until the end of the final hearing. This will cover all Private Law Family cases with a few exceptions such as child abduction cases.

### **The Family Advocacy Scheme:**

Covering advocacy for both public and private family cases for all advocacy whether undertaken by self-employed or in-house advocates. The scheme proposes:

- Different fees for care and supervision proceedings, other public law children, private law children, finance and domestic abuse cases
- Different fees for different items of work e.g. interim hearings and final hearings
- Additional fees for specific work undertaken by self-employed advocates such as opinions and attendance at conferences.

... In addition, the consultation proposes changes

to the scope of funding for some experts such as independent social work in Rule 9.5 cases as well as the capping of rates for certain types of experts.

The consultation builds on Phase I of the Family Fee Scheme, which was implemented in October 2007. The LSC will be publishing a review of the Phase I fee scheme in spring 2009 and consulting on any changes to the scheme.

The final fee schemes will take into account the feedback to both this consultation and the consultation on the Phase I scheme.

Consultation workshops are due to take place in England and Wales during February. These workshops will soon be listed on our consultation pages.

The consultation will finish on 18 March 2009.

### **Contact & Information**

» The consultation paper, together with annexes and a Q & A can be found on our website. The Q&A will be updated on a regular basis. If you have any questions please contact [family@legalservices.gov.uk](mailto:family@legalservices.gov.uk)

» LSC website > CLS > Consultations > Family Legal Aid Funding from 2010

# ■ Help us retrace legal aid's first steps in the era of Suez

*Legal aid was enacted on 30 July 1949. This year the LSC will celebrate 60 years of success stories, but we need your help.*

The LSC's Communications Team would like to find the longest serving legal aid firm and legal aid solicitor – is that you?

We'd also like to talk to solicitors who were legal aid practitioners in the 1950s – a landmark decade for legal aid that also included events like the Coronation, the Suez Crisis and the controversial execution of Ruth Ellis, the last British woman to be hanged.

Do you know a solicitor who delivered advice on divorce, the first area of legally aided law?

We want to promote how legal aid has helped clients, past and present, to resolve their problems.

Do you know any past and present clients that would be comfortable taking part in anniversary celebrations? We'd like to hear their story and how you helped them.

### **Contact & Information**

» To take part in the 60th anniversary of legal aid, email [joanne.white@legalservices.gov.uk](mailto:joanne.white@legalservices.gov.uk).

# ■ Payment dates February and March 2009

Below are proposed payment dates up to March 09.

The payment date is the day it goes into bank accounts (day 3 of BACS).

Contract payments	1 <sup>st</sup> settlement of the month	2 <sup>nd</sup> settlement of the month	3 <sup>rd</sup> settlement of the month	4 <sup>th</sup> settlement of the month
5 Feb 09	12 Feb 09	19 Feb 09	26 Feb 09	
5 Mar 09	12 Mar 09	19 Mar 09	26 Mar 09	02 Apr 09

For regularly updated information about payment dates please see the LSC website:

■ LSC > Criminal Defence Service (CDS) Pay rates and schemes > Payment dates

■ LSC > Community Legal Service (CLS) Pay rates and schemes > Payment dates