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# Expansion of Community Legal Advice services



**Mark Workman, Editor**

## Editorial

Welcome back to Focus. We've been away for a few weeks because of publishing restrictions during the General Election period.

This is the April/May issue. The next edition will be in June.

The new Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice is Ken Clarke. Details of the ministers who will be supporting Ken Clarke are available on the Ministry of Justice website:

[www.justice.gov.uk](http://www.justice.gov.uk)

## We take a look at the expansion of CLA centres and networks on page 12

Our partnership approach to funding is giving increasing numbers of people the choice of seeing an adviser in person.

The passion of people working for the CLA is highlighted in West Sussex. Manager Claire Armstrong is excited to be delivering a full range of services to local people.

Claire is looking forward to playing 'a very active role in the life of the county'. You can find out more on page 13.

## Helping school students switch on to legal aid careers

Working solicitor Erica Ffrench has been helping to promote legal aid careers to young students. See page 6.

## Saving money on case planning and billing

You can check out a new initiative to reduce a lot of the time and expense spent on high cost family cases on page 10. This is achieved

through a pricing model, which is already used by the Special Cases Unit.

## New leader for LSC looks to challenges ahead

An organisation that is strong and credible with sound financial accounting and control – that is the vision new LSC chief executive Carolyn Downs is working towards.

Carolyn sets out her thoughts on the future direction of the LSC on page 5.

## Delivery Transformation workshops

Workshops have been held to test out the new electronic legal aid forms and their impact on the working day of a provider. Read more on page 14.

## Crown Court means testing update

Work on rolling out Crown Court means testing across England and Wales will be completed by the end of June. See page 8.

## Happy Birthday toast to Provider Reference Groups

We're marking the third year of improving communication with solicitors and barristers through Provider Reference Groups across England and Wales. Find out more on page 4.

## Reading focus

Remember that Focus is now only available online. So it's worth checking to make sure you are using 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.

Help with using Acrobat reader is available at [www.legalservices.gov.uk/help/pdf.asp](http://www.legalservices.gov.uk/help/pdf.asp) or by clicking the help button on the top of this page.

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## Contact info

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Communications & Marketing,  
Legal Services Commission,  
4 Abbey Orchard Street, London,  
SW1P 2BS  
dx: 328 London

**editor:** Mark Workman

**☎:** 020 7783 7225

**✉:** [mark.workman@legalservices.gov.uk](mailto:mark.workman@legalservices.gov.uk)

**design:** Martyn Buttivant

## 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)

### Crime News -

News and updates for service providers working within the Criminal Defence Service (CDS)

### LSC Update -

The Legal Services Commission email alert for all service providers

### Focus Magazine -

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



## Birthday toast to Provider Reference Groups

### Feature

*Efforts to improve dialogue with legal aid solicitors and barristers enter third year...*

We've been marking the third year of improving communication with legal aid solicitors and barristers.

quick links and an improved search facility – to help providers quickly find the information they need

Feedback is then collected to help the LSC develop plans going forward. A short briefing is then prepared on how these views will be used and this is fed back to all PRG members at their next meeting.

Minutes and action points from the meetings can be found on the LSC website.

Senior LSC managers also attend PRG meetings. During March, LSC IT director Anil Sharad attended a meeting in Bristol and said: 'I found it very insightful indeed.'

'It's great to hear what the providers have to say and to get a little insight into how they feel about working with the LSC.'

### Getting involved

If you are interested in contributing to PRG meetings and helping us to achieve even more please contact your relationship manager or use the email address below for further information.

### **"PRGs are an excellent way to get provider input and feedback on what we are doing"**

This has been achieved through the 20 Provider Reference Groups (PRGs) we've established around England and Wales.

The meetings provide an opportunity for providers to discuss the issues they are facing and influence the future direction taken by the LSC.

### Provider input

LSC national relationship director John Sirodcar said: 'PRGs are an excellent way to get provider input and feedback on what we are doing. It is vital that we engage with providers and involve them in making sure any changes work in practice.'

Achievements from groups so far:

- developing free online training to help providers develop their businesses
- improved LSC website functionality such as

- developing electronic forms to help the LSC and providers work more efficiently – electronic forms have been piloted by some PRG members
- publishing a brief guide to procurement law and how it applies to LSC contracts
- providers asked for a quick and efficient way to contact the LSC – a national email enquiry service to deal with non-urgent queries on certificated civil cases is now in place.

### How PRGs work

PRGs involve around ten providers meeting with regional and central staff and a Commissioner to discuss LSC practice and procedures. Separate regional meetings are held for crime and civil providers to reflect the different topics they need to discuss.

### Contact & Information

» [lsc](#) > [about us](#) > [improving efficiency](#) > [provider reference groups](#)

# New leader excited by challenges ahead

## Feature

*Carolyn Downs picks up the reins as the new chief executive of the Legal Services Commission...*

A strong organisation with sound financial controls – two key goals for the LSC's new chief executive Carolyn Downs.

Carolyn comes to the LSC from the Ministry of Justice where she was deputy permanent secretary.

Carolyn said: 'This is a role with lots of challenges and I'm excited to be taking them up. The LSC needs to be strong and credible with sound financial accounting and control.'

**"The LSC needs to be strong and credible with sound financial accounting and control"**

### Drive up performance

'Performance is all about how well we deliver our services. My approach will be to work collaboratively with staff, providers, stakeholders and partners.'

Carolyn replaces former chief executive Carolyn Regan, who was with the organisation for three and a half years – a period of significant change as the LSC moved forward with reforms suggested by Lord Carter.

Carolyn Regan stepped down following the Government's announcement that it intended to restructure the LSC as an executive agency of the Ministry of Justice.

### Magee review

The previous Government's decision came after publication of Sir Ian Magee's review of legal aid delivery and governance.

Carolyn Downs said: 'Sir Ian Magee has highlighted options for change and we will obviously move ahead in line with the current Government's intentions.'

'We have an increasingly tight budget. Inevitably, that means we will have to prioritise



**"The spirit of collaboration is important. My overriding priority will be to ensure that we keep working with providers to deliver quality legal aid services for the public"**

what we do. We will be looking for insights into what is driving the rising pressures on the legal aid fund.

### Collaboration

'The spirit of collaboration is important. My overriding priority will be to ensure that we keep working with providers to deliver quality legal aid services for the public.'

'Of course, the public also pay the taxes that fund the legal aid system. In a difficult time for the economy we want the taxpayer to be reassured that we are delivering value for money.

That is vital for our reputation.

'Sound financial control is critical and needs to be at the heart of everything we do together along with the assurance of quality services to the public.'

### Contact & Information

» lsc > about us > newsroom > press releases  
 » moj > publications > policy > 2010 > Magee legal aid review

## Switching school students on to legal aid careers



**Erica Ffrench**  
**Hopkin Murray Beskine**

### Interview

*Newly-qualified solicitor Erica Ffrench has been helping to promote legal aid careers to young students...*

Secondary school students were given an insight into the life of a legal aid solicitor as part of an initiative to encourage students to consider legal aid careers.

Solicitor Erica Ffrench spoke about her work practising housing law when she visited Gladesmore Community School in Tottenham.

The LSC initiative to help secondary school students is reaching out to schools in London and the north east of England.

Erica qualified in August 2009 and works for Hopkin Murray Beskine Solicitors in Islington, north London. The firm provides legal aid services in family, housing and public law.

### Choices

She said: 'At this age young people are thinking about their futures. I explained the career choices I had made.

'They had some fairly fixed ideas about the legal profession. Although a few were already considering law as a possible career, many had not come across legal aid as a career path.

'I talked about some of the skills necessary for legal aid work. I also spoke to several students about how their academic and extra-curricular choices so far might be relevant to studying law in the future.

### Community

'Gladesmore Community School is in Haringey – the neighbouring borough to my firm. We rely on our local reputation, so we welcome opportunities such as this.

'In our practice we work with some clients in great need. This need is reflected at the local county court, which has one of the busiest re-possession lists in the country.

'Some of the students had relatives who had needed legal aid for housing or family problems. So when I talked about my work they were able to recognise its value.

'I experience a high level of job satisfaction as a housing lawyer – partly because the outcome of the legal work is generally positive. It is extremely varied work and constantly challenging.

'This is because of the range of legal issues and the vulnerability of some of the clients we assist.'



### Career path

Erica's career started in book publishing. After becoming an editor she joined an international human rights non-governmental organisation (NGO) called INTERIGHTS – the International Centre for the Legal Protection of Human Rights.

While exploring her interest in human rights working for the NGO Erica spent several years helping to co-ordinate a Commonwealth-wide legal programme.

During this time Erica was inspired to consider a career in legal aid. She said: 'I studied part time on a post-graduate diploma in law course and saved enough money to then study the legal practice course full time.

'At the same time I had the opportunity to carry out a variety of voluntary legal advice work whilst studying.

'I helped to provide legal advice at a homeless persons drop in centre and volunteered at national crime support charity Victim Support.

'It was sometimes hard juggling

### Factfile – Erica Ffrench

Erica qualified as a solicitor in August 2009.

Specialises in housing law

Works for Hopkin, Murray Beskine Solicitors in Islington, North London

Before joining Hopkin Murray Beskine Erica spent several years co-ordinating Commonwealth-wide legal programme at the International Centre for the Protection of Human Rights - INTERIGHTS



**“In our practice we work with some clients in great need. This need is reflected at the local county court, which has one of the busiest re-possession lists in the country”**

commitments. When I eventually secured a training contract at Hopkin Murray Beskine in 2007, I was lucky enough to get an LSC training contract grant, which certainly eased the way financially.’

LSC training contract grant scheme project manager Sarah Brewster said: ‘Having Erica present from Hopkin Murray Beskine Solicitors was hugely beneficial.

#### Engaged

‘She was able to give the students a step-by-step account of her route into the profession. Erica also engaged them all with examples of how dramatically her working life can change from

day to day.

‘After Erica finished lots of students approached us with carefully considered questions about careers in the justice system.

‘The students were full of potential and we look forward to coming into contact with some of them again as future young legal aid lawyers.’

#### Contact & Information

- » hopkin murray beskine solicitors
- » INTERIGHTS – international centre for the legal protection of human rights
- » Gladesmore Community School



## Special ‘Aspire’ project in second year

The LSC’s ‘Aspire’ programme to help teenagers is now in its second year.

It has been expanded since 2009 and we now have 22 members of staff working as mentors – nine in South Tyneside and 13 in London.

The schools we are working with include Gladesmore Community School in Tottenham, Forest Gate Community School, Newham, and Boldon School, South Tyneside.

Students are learning:

- career development
- confidence building
- CV writing
- social skills
- interview skills

#### Award ceremony

At the end of the programme, the students will be given a certificate to mark their achievement at an award ceremony.

This will give the students something they can take away for their ‘Record of Achievement’ and their CV.



## ■ Update on Crown Court means testing

*Rollout of Crown Court means testing began in January 2010. Here's an update on how we're doing...*

Crown Court means testing was introduced in January 2010.

During that time we've processed 4,600 applications, asked 35 defendants to make a contribution and only one defendant has made a hardship application.

The scheme is now being rolled out across England and Wales:

- 12 April - South West
- 26 April - Midlands
- 10 May - North West
- 17 May - North East
- 24 May - Wales
- 14 June - South East
- 28 June - London

### What you said...

Before we rolled the scheme out we ran provider feedback events for solicitors in the five early adopter areas. They were held in Swansea, Manchester and Highbury. We spoke to 17 solicitors and got some really useful feedback.

- 100% of providers found the supporting materials useful

- 76% of providers said the training events were useful.

On the running of the scheme, we discussed experiences to date and the areas solicitors have found most difficult. These are:

- clients complying with evidential requirements
- clients who are foreign nationals or tourists
- digesting all the information on the scheme while doing their day job.

We collated all the comments and made changes to the materials. Examples include:

- a clearer explanation of disposable income and the thresholds
- information on a Crown Court Judge's power to grant legal aid
- new sections on 'self-certification' and 'paying from equity'.

The new materials are currently being printed and digital copies are now available on our website – see right.

### Time to get trained...

The training for national rollout starts this month and is being run by Central Law Training. You can book your place online (see below) through their website and earn four CPD points for attending.

These courses are essential for solicitors who represent clients in the police station and at all courts, as there are changes to the current application process.

### Contact & Information

- » [lsc > cds > criminal legal aid eligibility > crown court means testing](#)  
– CCMT training and communications materials
- » [ccmt@legalservices.gov.uk](mailto:ccmt@legalservices.gov.uk)  
– questions about CCMT
- » CLT Group – book your place





## Funding changes to magistrates' court means testing

*Changes to the magistrates' court means testing scheme...*

A change has been made to the way the magistrates' court means testing scheme works.

This change was made on 6 April 2010 and affects the point at which funding under a Crown Court order starts.

There will also now be a separate payment for committal hearings in the magistrates' court irrespective of whether the applicant passes or fails the means test.

The change with respect to payment for committal hearings has taken effect through amendments to the CDS Funding Orders, which took effect in April.

### **Either way cases funding process**

*For either way offences where an applicant has failed the magistrates' court means test:*

If the case is subsequently committed to the Crown Court, funding will not start until the day after the committal hearing. It will only cover work done in the Crown Court.

*Representation orders for applicants who have failed the magistrates' court means assessment:*

If applicants are facing an either way charge, they will have their order dated from the day after the committal hearing if the case proceeds to the Crown Court.

### **What this means for solicitors?**

Many solicitors have been in the practice of resubmitting applications for applicants who have failed the magistrates' court means test after mode of trial.

If this applies to you it is important to delay your re submission until the date of the committal hearing once it is confirmed the case is going to the Crown Court.

Some cases will not proceed to trial in the Crown Court. In this situation, if an applicant is ineligible for funding in the magistrates' court the solicitor will not be able to claim for any element of work carried out there.

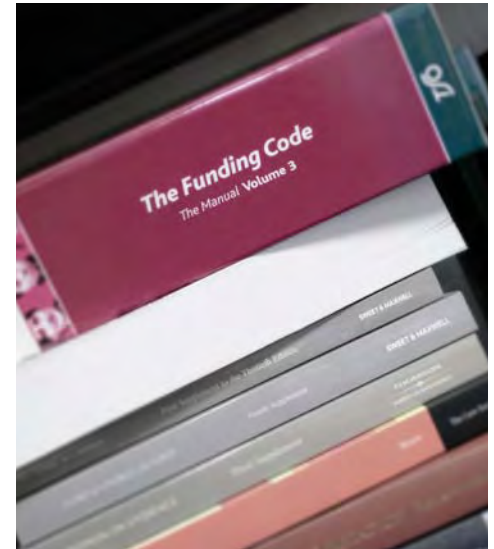
However, where cases do proceed to the Crown Court, solicitors will be able to claim the committal hearing fee under the Litigators Graduated Fee Scheme – even though the Crown Court representation order is dated the day after the committal hearing.

### **The fee is fixed at £318 excluding VAT.**

The fee for the committal hearing will form part of the total costs of the case. It will be recovered from those applicants who have the means to pay all or some of their case costs.

#### **Contact & Information**

» lsc > cds > unified contract (crime) July 2008 – to view contract amendment notice



## Funding code changes

*A package of changes to the Funding Code received Parliamentary approval and came into effect on 1 April 2010*

The changes affect the criteria for judicial review, multi-party actions and claims against public authorities.

The last Government made the changes following a consultation called 'Legal Aid: Refocusing on Priority Cases'. The LSC and MoJ ran the consultation jointly.

A new appeal structure has also been set up for certain high cost and public interest cases. A new special controls review panel replaces the current Public Interest Advisory Panel and Multi-Party Action Committee.

### **Updates to code**

Keep an eye on the funding code page of our website for updates to the code decision making guidance – see below.

A proposal to exclude certain foreign cases from the scope of civil legal aid is not proceeding as part of this package and will await legislation.

#### **Contact & Information**

» lsc > cls > what cases do we fund?

» moj > consultations > legal aid: refocusing on priority cases

## ■ Save money in high cost family cases

*New initiative to cut down on costly case planning and billing in high cost family cases...*



Spending long hours on case planning and billing is costly for solicitors and also means more time-consuming assessments for the LSC in high cost family cases.

One solution being promoted by the LSC is to make greater use of a simplified way of predicting counsel's fees and solicitors' profit costs called the 'events pricing model'.

This model is already used by the Special Cases Unit to analyse bills subject to court assessment. It gives a fixed price for each 'event' e.g. a hearing day for solicitors or counsel.

It is important to note that this model can only be applied to counsel's fees where the main hearing exceeds ten days and the Family Graduated Fee Scheme cannot be applied.

### **Simpler approach**

David Carter from the Special Cases Unit said: 'It's much simpler because the case plan under this model will have a single table dealing with the costs.'

'This contains a chronological list of all the "events", which will eventually be billed to us.

These "events" translate into the names of people attending or who are expected to attend a hearing, advocates meeting or substantive client conference.

'The costs summary is then simply the number of events times the event fee. The table can be updated once proceedings are under way.

'The case plan can then be sent in with the CLAIM1 form for billing purposes without the need for detailed bills'.

### **Dramatic cost reductions**

'This approach for cases with three or four stages can bring dramatic reductions in the time spent on case planning and billing according to our estimates.

'These suggest we could see reductions from 20 hours to five hours on average.'

'Most Chambers are familiar with the model and are used to using it with counsel's fees. But

a new development is that more solicitors are successfully using the pricing model.

'This is a trend we're keen to encourage as it is a big benefit to both ourselves and providers.'

### **When is the model used**

It is used for exceptionally complex care proceedings where authority for Queen's and junior counsel has been given.

The model is applied to both counsel's fees and solicitor's profit costs.

These cases are managed by the Special Cases Unit, which is based in London Docklands and the Cardiff office.

### **Using the model elsewhere**

David Carter said: 'Exceptions can be made allowing a greater number of complex cases to be handled under the "Events" model.

'Anyone interested will need to contact the SCU in Docklands to see what we can do.

'The model is not used by the South Tyneside

high cost family team, which manages single counsel (non-QC) cases.

'But some of these cases are complex. So we could consider them for the "Events" model. Interested practitioners would need to contact SCU in Docklands.

'We would also consider using the model in more complex non-care family proceedings

– especially those following a fact-finding and welfare process.

'However, we wouldn't be able to consider private law, ancillary relief and child abduction cases, which follow a distinctly different process.'

For cases where it is not appropriate to apply this model the current detailed case plan and detailed billing process is applied.

More guidance about the events model and details of what can be classed as a chargeable 'event' is available on the LSC website.



## Events and payments – how figures can add up in one case

Example (all figures ex-VAT)

### Solicitor

Throughout the lifetime of a certificate, the solicitor undertakes:

- nine interim hearings
- two advocates meetings
- one Pre Hearing Review (PHR)
- ten-day fact-finding/threshold hearing
- a five day disposal/welfare hearing

Total: 27 events at £1,230 per event making £33,210 for all work under the certificate.

### Junior counsel

In the same case junior counsel carries out:

- six interim hearings
- one advocates meeting

- one Pre Hearing Review (PHR)
- a ten-day fact-finding/threshold hearing
- a five-day disposal/welfare hearing
- two substantive client conferences

Total 25 events at £1,320 per event making £33,000 for all work under the certificate.

### Queen's Counsel

In the same case, Queen's Counsel carries out:

- one PHR
- one substantive client conference
- a ten-day fact-finding/threshold hearing

Total 12 events at £2,310 per event making £27,720 for all work under the certificate.

## Event price guide

- Solicitor – £1,230
- Junior counsel – £1,320
- Queen's Counsel – £2,310

Figures based on analysis of court assessed bills, broad average hours, rates and enhancements allowed. These cases were all exceptionally complex involving Queen's and junior counsel with main hearings of on average 15 days.

### Contact & Information

» lsc > community legal service (cls) > high cost civil cases

#### Special Cases Unit London

- » DX: 0170 Docklands 2
- » Tel: 020 7718 8002
- » Fax: 020 7718 8088

#### Case Managers

- » David Carter – 020 7718 8072
- » Helen Keith – 020 7718 8638
- » Barry Scott – 020 7718 8051

#### Special Cases Unit Cardiff

- » DX: – 33006 Cardiff
- » Tel: – 0845 608 7070
- » Fax: – 0292 064 7174

#### Case Managers

- » David Gill – 0845 608 7124
- » Hugh Jarrett – 0845 608 7180

# New CLA services to help vulnerable people

*More people will be able to get help with their legal problems thanks to the expansion of Community Legal Advice centres and networks....*

Our partnership approach to advice funding is helping increasing numbers of people gain access to help and advice from Community Legal Advice centres and networks.

The East Riding of Yorkshire CLA Network, jointly commissioned with East Riding of Yorkshire Council, opened its doors in March.

The West Sussex CLA Service, jointly commissioned with the county, district and borough councils in West Sussex, began operation in April.

We are also working with local authorities in Barking and Dagenham, Wakefield and Manchester to jointly commission Community Legal Advice services that will open later this year.

Community Legal Advice centres and networks provide services that reflect the needs of local communities.

Recognising that many people have more than one problem, CLA services offer a full range of legal help, from basic advice to court representation, for people facing problems about:

- community care
- debt
- employment
- housing
- welfare benefits.

In addition some CLA services also provide family advice.

## East Riding of Yorkshire CLA Network

The East Riding of Yorkshire CLA Network opened on 1 March. The East Yorkshire CAB is running the network, with some of the work being carried out by Yorkshire solicitors firm Switalskis.

The network is based at three locations across the region: Goole, Bridlington and Beverley. The network also provides outreach services at ten additional locations for people living in more remote parts of the region.

Residents who find it difficult to travel to one of the network locations will be able to access the service through a video link network provided by the East Riding of Yorkshire Council.



## West Sussex CLA Service

The West Sussex CLA Service opened on 1 April. Three Citizens Advice Bureaux in West Sussex are providing the service in partnership with housing charity, Shelter.

Members of the public will be able to access the service through a county-wide telephone number – 0844 477 1171 – or by dropping into one of the 12 offices located in towns throughout the county.

People living in the more remote parts of the county, or who are unable to travel into town, can visit one of 18 local advice outlets nearer to them.

## Barking and Dagenham CLA Centre

Barking and Dagenham CLA Centre opened its doors on 4 May. The centre is run by Edwards Duthie Solicitors in partnership with Barking and Dagenham Citizens Advice Bureau.

The service will operate from two offices in Barking and Dagenham with advice clinics across the borough for those who find it difficult to travel into town.

## Manchester

A two-stage tendering process is under way for Community Legal Advice Centres in Manchester to cover social welfare and family law.

The first stage of the tendering process was

a Pre-Qualification Questionnaire (PQQ), which providers needed to complete before 20 April 2010. Organisations passing the PQQ stage have now been invited to tender for the service. The tender process will run for three months and the new CLA centres will open on 14 October.

## Wakefield CLA Service

The tender process for a CLA Service in Wakefield opened on 30 March and will close on 18 June. The new service will start in September.

The service will be based in central Wakefield with outreach sessions in areas where need is particularly high.

### Contact & Information

- » CLA website > east riding community legal advice network
- » CLA website > west sussex community legal advice service
- » lsc > barking and dagenham community legal advice centre
- » lsc > manchester community legal advice centres
- » lsc > wakefield community legal advice service
- » Community Legal Advice

# County wakes up to new services

*Claire Armstrong explains why she is excited to be heading up the consortium delivering the new Community Legal Advice Service in West Sussex...*

We're now offering a full range of services to the people of West Sussex and that's a great achievement all round.

The 12 advice centres making up the new Community Legal Advice Service (CLAS) opened for business on 1 April.

There are also 18 outreach locations for those living in the more remote parts of the county.

Three Citizens Advice Bureaux in West Sussex are providing the service together with Shelter.

## Negotiations

It's really exciting for us to be able to get going after the long negotiations that took place. I was the bid manager and there were a lot of twists and turns along the way.

It was a complicated bid because there were so many partners involved. The LSC and the West Sussex County, District and Borough Councils are all joining together to invest more than £7 million over three years to make it happen.

Our aim will be to play a very active role in the life of the county. We won't just be sitting back and waiting to see what problems come our way.

## Identifying trends

Our social policy work will enable us to identify trends and carry out preventative work to help all citizens and not just those who contact the service. The aim is that no-one should suffer through a lack of good advice.

I know that access to good advice can make a huge difference and really change people's lives.

So we'll be working to ensure that the CLAS is able to identify and respond to local needs.

Priority groups have already been identified as the under 25s, those at imminent risk of homelessness and those at risk of domestic violence.

In addition, the CLAS will be seeking feedback from clients by carrying out regular client satisfaction surveys to ensure that the new service is meeting local needs.



## Track record

I have a track record going back 12 years working for West Sussex Citizens Advice Bureaux. Like Shelter we have a lot of experience working with the Legal Services Commission.

The great thing about the new CLAS is that it's fully integrated – it's a real one-stop shop and I'm very proud to be the manager.

Clients will be able to access free, independent, confidential advice at a generalist level. Those who qualify for legal aid will be able to obtain the full range of civil legal help through to court representation.

The new service covers debt, employment, housing, community care and welfare benefits. From July, this will be extended to include family law.

This extension means we'll be able to help people with problems in areas like parental access to children, separation and divorce, and children who may be taken into care.

## Recruitment

We're recruiting solicitors to carry out this work, who will join the permanent 110 staff we have county-wide.

We also have 450 volunteers who are just as passionate and committed as our staff. We're now looking for another 75 volunteer advisers

who can help deliver the new service as well as other volunteers who can help out with reception, administrative or other duties.

Our advisers are trained through a nationally recognised training scheme and the LSC's Specialist Quality Mark (SQM) is held in all subject areas. Trained volunteers, supported by qualified supervisors, will deliver the majority of generalist advice.

All volunteers and staff will have regular training to update their knowledge and skills.

## Accessing the service

Clients can access the service through a county-wide telephone number or by dropping into their local advice centre. They will be offered an initial diagnostic interview to assess their needs.

After this 'gateway' interview clients will be provided with information and then offered an appointment if necessary with a generalist or specialist adviser.

### Contact & Information

» West Sussex CLAS

» 0844 4771171

– county-wide advice for people living or working in West Sussex between 9am and 6pm.

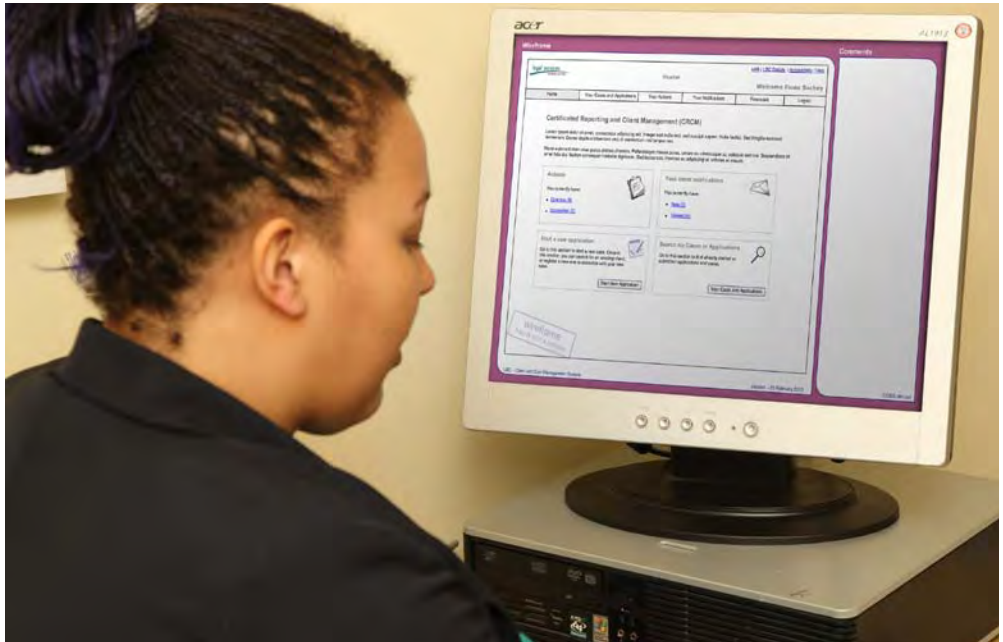
# Rollout of electronic forms steps up a gear

*Electronic forms are to be rolled out to more providers in May and June 2010...*

Trials on electronic legal aid forms are to be expanded to larger numbers of providers during May and June 2010.

This is how the expansion will work in the first two waves of the rollout:

Electronic forms pilot: provider expansion	
<b>May 2010</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• South Tyneside</li> <li>• Birmingham</li> <li>• Leeds</li> <li>• Cambridge</li> <li>• Cardiff</li> <li>• Liverpool</li> </ul>
<b>June 2010</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nottingham</li> <li>• Bristol</li> </ul>



During June the number of providers using the electronic forms will also increase across the regions taking part in the May rollout.

## Expand

Programme manager Stuart Thorpe said: 'The Delivery Transformation team took the decision to expand the pilot after reviewing the feedback we'd received and making some amendments to the system.'

**"It's now clear that the benefits of working with electronic forms are even greater than we first thought."**

'At the moment there are 24 providers taking part in the pilot to test the forms. They represent different regions, sizes and case volumes. They are all submitting civil and criminal claim forms online.'

'It's now clear that the benefits of working with electronic forms are even greater than we first thought.'

'A detailed rollout plan will be released towards the end of May 2010 to show providers in the remaining regions when they will be able to benefit from the new forms.'

## Roadshows

'The team will also be hosting roadshows and local events to meet with providers and answer questions.'

'Information about the rollout and these events will be available through our regular information channels such as the LSC website, LSC Update and Focus.'

## Online

All the electronic forms training material is now available online. It can be found on the Provider Training website – see contact box.

The idea is to give users a taste of what it is like to use the forms and the benefits of the system.

Registration is free and support will be provided by contacting the Delivery Transformation training team – see contact box.

## Three easy steps to register for the pilot

1. Use the email address in the contact box on this page
2. You will be sent a form to complete to work out your access rights
3. Once user rights are defined and signed by a senior partner in your firm you will be sent a username and password

## Contact & Information

- » [deliverytransformation@legalservices.gov.uk](mailto:deliverytransformation@legalservices.gov.uk)
- » [lsc](#) > [about us](#) > [electronic working](#)



## 2010 civil contracts

*Updates on new 2010 civil and criminal legal aid contracts...*

All the 2010 civil contracts tender processes have now closed. We would like to thank all those organisations who submitted tenders.

Tenders are now being assessed and outcomes will be communicated over the next few months.

You can find information on the latest status of each tender process, and when notification can be expected on our website.

### Timetable

This can be found on the main status update table headlined 'timetable' on our Civil Contracts for 2010 tenders page (see link right).

Information will be sent to applicant

organisations through the secure message boards in the eTendering system (see link below).

Alerts will be sent to the email address used by applicants when registering.

Please check the message boards regularly and ensure that the email address you used when registering is the correct one to receive messages.

### Contact & Information

- » lsc > cls > tenders > civil contracts for 2010
- » LSC eTendering system

## 2010 crime contracts

The 2010 crime contracts tender process has closed and the deadline for submitting CDS 12s has passed.

Where applicants have submitted their CDS 12s late, we cannot include their duty solicitor(s) in the rota production process for the July 2010 to January 2011 rota.

Any individual(s) named will be eligible for subsequent rotas, starting with the January 2011 rota.

However, these individuals will be added to the list for back-up work from July 2010. The first rotas under the new contract will be published in mid-June.

Applicants are reminded that the deadline for submission of supervisor standards is 4pm on 15 June 2010.

We will also shortly be in contact with new applicants and applicants that have committed to securing new premises. This is to confirm their readiness to carry out contract work.

### Contact & Information

- » LSC eTendering system
- » lsc > cds > tenders
- » lsc > cds > cds news

## Young legal aid solicitor of the year

*Award for Young Legal Aid Solicitor of the Year to be announced in May 2010...*

The LSC-sponsored Young Legal Aid Solicitor of the Year award will be presented on 26 May 2010.

The presentation is part of the annual Legal Aid Lawyer of the Year awards, which are run by the Legal Aid Practitioners Group.

Cherie Booth QC is the chair of the judges for the awards.

### Celebrate

The idea is to celebrate the work of lawyers who have dedicated their careers to legal aid work and helping clients.

We've sponsored the 'Young Solicitor' award since 2004. The closing date for nominations was 12 April, 2010.

The awards are non-profit making and the Law Society is acting as principal sponsor for the second year running.

### Award categories

The full list of award categories is:

1. Outstanding achievement (sponsored by Manches)
2. Criminal defence lawyer (sponsored by Criminal Law Solicitors Association)
3. Family legal aid lawyer (sponsored by Resolution)
4. Legal aid firm/Not-for-profit agency (sponsored by Matrix)
5. Legal aid barrister (sponsored by Bar Council)
6. Mental health lawyer (sponsored by NatWest)
7. Immigration lawyer (sponsored by Allen & Overy)
8. Social and welfare lawyer (sponsored by Trimega Labs)
9. Young legal aid solicitor (sponsored by Legal Services Commission)
10. Young legal aid barrister (sponsored by Irwin Mitchell)

### Contact & Information

- » Legal Aid Practitioners Group
- » Carol.Storer@lapg.co.uk

## ■ National translation and interpretation service in Wales

*New translation and interpretation service running successfully for providers in Wales...*

A 24-hours interpretation and translation service is now available to legal aid providers across Wales.

The Wales Interpretation and Translation Service (WITS) has been operating successfully since December 2009.

It is available on 02920 857500 or by email to wits@gwent.pnn.police.uk

Face-to-face, telephone and written interpretation services are all provided.

### Partnership working

LSC wider justice system reform manager Hilary Williams said: 'The service was developed

through the joint efforts of Cardiff Council, Gwent Police and Cardiff and Vale University Health Board.

'It shows the value of partnership working and it is a great achievement that it is now up and running.'

### Improve access

The WITS project is designed to improve access to public services for people who may otherwise face communication difficulties.

It provides linguistic services in:

- foreign languages
- Welsh



- British Sign Language (BSL)

There is a minimum charge of £60 for two hours work, which rises to £88 for unsocial hours work.

### Contact & Information

- » Heddlu Gwent Police website: WITS
- » 02920 857500

## ■ Updated CLS financial legal aid eligibility keycard

*New keycard is being used for assessments carried out after 12 April 2010*

New Keycard no. 46 is available on the eligibility pages of our website.

It is to be used for new and further assessments undertaken from 12 April 2010.

This reflects an increase in the standard

dependant allowances assessed for a partner or child living with the applicant – based on income support uprating. Eligibility limits are unchanged.

### Contact & Information

- » lsc > community legal service > civil legal aid eligibility

## ■ Payment dates May and June 2010

*In the table below are proposed payment dates up to June 2010. The payment day is the day it goes into bank accounts (day 3 of BACs). For regularly updated information about payment dates please see the LSC website.*

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
6 May 10	13 May 10	20 May 10	27 May 10
4 June 10	10 June 10	17 June 10	24 June 10

- LSC > Criminal Defence Service (CDS) Pay rates and schemes > Payment dates
- LSC > Community Legal Service (CLS) Pay rates and schemes > Payment dates