



Ministry  
of Justice

# Legal Support Advisory Group meeting

## Wednesday 21 April 2021

### Public note of meeting

#### Members present:

Jo Otterburn (MoJ Legal Support Policy – Deputy Chair); Jenifer Swallow (LawTech UK); Lindsey Poole (Advice Services Alliance); Phil Robertson (The Bar Council); Clare Carter (The Access to Justice Foundation); Richard Miller (The Law Society); Stephanie Boyce (The Law Society); Chris Minnoch (Legal Aid Practitioners’ Group); Natalie Bryrom (Legal Education Foundation); and Stephen Lodge (Equality and Human Rights Commission).

#### Apologies:

Apologies were received from Fiona Rutherford (Chair), Malcolm Cree (Phil Robertson Director of Policy attended for the Bar Council), Christina Blacklaws (Jenifer Swallow attended for LawTech UK) Andrea Coomber (Justice), and Hazel Genn (University College London).

#### Additional Attendees:

Other attendees: Legal Support Policy Team; Legal Aid Policy Team, MoJ Analytical Services, MoJ Digital.

### 1. Welcome & introductions

Jo Otterburn explained that Fiona Rutherford (the Chair) had sent her apologies, and she would be chairing this meeting. She welcomed attendees and introduced I. Stephanie Boyce, who has been invited to join LSAG in her capacity as President of

the Law Society. Jo also explained Lord Wolfson, who had hoped to attend this meeting, gave his apologies as a parliamentary Bill debate now clashed with this meeting. He hoped he could attend a future meeting.

## **2. Update on minutes, and actions, from last meeting**

The previous minutes were agreed. Roshnee Patel went through the actions from the last meeting, all of which were either completed or covered by agenda items. However, it was agreed to keep the action open regarding LSAG feeding into future discussions on strategic views and narrative on the spending review.

## **3. Legal Support Priorities and Allocations**

Legal Support Policy presented an item on legal support priorities in light of the 21/22 internal budget allocation, which had now been confirmed. They explained the process that had occurred and that there were four key factors:

- The impact the pandemic had on legal need and the need to focus on that,
- The impact the pandemic continued to have on the advice sector and how it changed their way of working,
- New ministerial direction moving us on from the Legal Support Action Plan, and
- The allocations for this year in the spending review process.

Legal Support set out the identified projects that would make up their work programme for 2021/22, having considered these key factors.

**Action: Legal Support to share information on the policy development on the broader trusted intermediaries project when it is possible.**

**Action: Legal Support to share information on priorities and strategy for the next spending review in order to draw on contributions from LSAG members when it is available.**

**Action: Legal Support to provide information to Stephen Lodge on Legal Support Litigants In Person grant.**

**Action: Members to contact Legal Support if they would like more information on any of the projects covered.**

## **4. Update on Legal Support Portfolio: Early Legal Support Project**

Legal Support Policy presented an update on the work exploring digital solutions.

Legal Support confirmed that they would not be looking at digital solutions in isolation, but how a blended approach of digital and existing in person legal support solutions interacted and complemented each other to help users resolve their legal issues early.

Legal Support shared an overview of initial findings from some user research on how people try to locate information online. Members were reminded that although the sample size was small, it was interesting to note that regardless of competency, most participants wanted to speak to someone (either by phone or face to face) to provide some reassurance about the information gathered and/or next steps. Further research is planned as part of the discovery phase for this project and the Legal Support team will aim to share overall findings and potential solutions identified with members.

Legal Support confirmed that they were mindful of the demand on the sector, and that all concerns raised by LSAG members were included in advice to ministers for consideration.

**Action: Natalie to send Legal Support information on projects raised at the Litigants in Person Engagement Group (LiPEG ) where there was a risk of possible duplication with the early legal support digital project.**

**Action: LSAG members to get in touch with the Legal Support team if they had any further concerns about the potential effectiveness of projects or their unintended consequences.**

## **5. Community Justice Fund**

Clare Carter from the Access to Justice Foundation (ATJF) presented a shortened item on the Community Justice Fund. Information on this was included in the papers for the meeting; these covered an overview of the work so far on the fund.

Clare Carter updated members on what ATJF had learnt from wave one regarding the data, mapping, need, and plans for wave two and the longer-term planning, including long term ambitions for the fund and collaboration with the sector.

Clare said she welcomed feedback from members on making a case for advice, developing a robust evidence base, reaching people who were excluded through digital, geographical or other types of exclusion.

Jo thanked Clare for her presentation and invited LSAG members to volunteer to present items at future meetings if they wished.

**Action: Any member who wishes to bring an item to a future meeting should let Legal Support know.**

**Action: Members to provide any feedback to Clare Carter on areas she raised.**

## 6. Any other business (AOB)

RP suggested that it would be helpful if members sent in their “tough strategic questions” to help develop the future direction of the policy in this area and bolster arguments for the spending review.

**Action: All to circulate any “tough questions” to assist in developing strategic narrative and spending review plans.**

### Next LSAG meeting

The provisional date of the next meeting was due to take place in mid-July. Legal Support are liaising with Lord Wolfson’s Private Office regarding his availability to attend for part of the meeting, but there was likely to be a meeting fixed at short notice to discover the strategic narrative for the spending review.

Action	Owner(s)	Deadline
Legal Support to share information on the policy development on the broader trusted intermediaries project when it is possible	MoJ	Next meeting
Legal Support to share information on priorities and strategy for the next spending review in order to draw on contributions from LSAG members when it is available.	MoJ	Next meeting
Legal Support to provide information to Stephen Lodge on LSLIP grant.	MoJ	Next meeting
Members to contact Legal Support if they would like more information on any of the projects covered.	LSAG Members	Next meeting
Natalie to send Legal Support information on projects raised at the LiPEG group where there was a risk of possible duplication with the early legal support digital project.	Natalie Byrom	Next meeting

Action	Owner(s)	Deadline
LSAG members to get in touch with the Legal Support team if they had any further concerns about the potential effectiveness of projects or their unintended consequences.	MoJ	Next meeting
Any member who wishes to bring an item to a future meeting should let Legal Support know.	LSAG Members	LSAG Members
Members to provide any feedback to Clare Carter on areas she raised.	LSAG Members	LSAG Members
All to circulate any “tough questions” to assist in developing strategic narrative and spending review plans.	LSAG Members	LSAG Members