



Ministry
of Justice

Legal Support Advisory Group meeting

Wednesday 20 October 2021

Note of meeting

Members present:

Fiona Rutherford (MoJ Access to Justice, Chair); Robert Bancroft (Equalities & Human Rights Commission); Richard Miller (The Law Society – attending for Stephanie Boyce); Natalie Byrom (Legal Education Foundation); Clare Carter (The Access to Justice Foundation); Emma Dearnaley (Lawtech UK – attending for Christina Blacklaws); Chris Minnoch (Legal Aid Practitioners' Group); Lindsey Poole (Advice Services Alliance); Phil Robertson (Bar Council).

Apologies:

Apologies were received from Hazel Genn (UCL); Christina Blacklaws (Lawtech UK); Stephen Lodge (Equality and Human Rights Commission), Stephanie Boyce (Law Society).

Additional Attendees:

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

1. Welcome & introductions

Fiona welcomed attendees and explained that Robert Bancroft of the Equalities & Human Rights Commission would be replacing Stephen Lodge, and Stephanie Needleman of JUSTICE would be replacing Andrea Coomber at future meetings.

Fiona also confirmed that following the recent reshuffle Lord Wolfson remained responsible for legal support, which helped provide some continuity.

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

The previous minutes were agreed. MoJ went through the actions from the last meeting, all of which were either completed or covered by agenda items.

3. Early Legal Support Project

MoJ demonstrated a prototype webpage for www.gov.uk that could be used by those requiring legal support and talked through the latest developments on the early legal support project exploring digital interventions. This work looked at the different stages of the user journey, identifying opportunities where people could resolve issues early on via self-serving; building insight about types of user and their needs; and how best to empower those people to act and resolve their issue after the advice was given.

MoJ explained that the aim of producing prototype software early was to allow testing with users to ensure the resources were as helpful as possible and that testing had occurred with users who matched the profile of those likely to make use of the service when launched. It also links to other areas of related work, for example, pages on housing and homelessness provided links to evictions, benefits, neighbour disputes etc.

MoJ hoped to start publishing the pages in the next couple of months.

Action: Natalie to share information with MoJ on online referral services.

Action: Natalie to provide links to MoJ Digital on Pew's Google analytics.

4. Trusted Intermediaries

MoJ led a discussion on a recent report from Law for Life and Advice Now on trusted intermediaries.

MoJ funded Law for Life to provide a housing training course for trusted intermediaries in certain areas of England. Evaluation was based on a mixed method of pre and post course participant surveys augmented with semi-structured interviews three months after completing the course. Participants demonstrated improved legal capability in the relevant areas of law and reported an increase in

confidence to help clients with housing related issues. The limitations of the evaluation were that the sample size was quite small, there was a relatively short follow up period and no control group.

Action: All to share examples of other relevant evaluation reports.

Action: Clare to share links to Access to Justice Foundation workshops

Action: MoJ to consider the best way to cover the concerns about legal support strategy and share this before the next meeting

5. Early Legal Advice Pilot

MoJ provided an update on the project for the Early Legal Advice Pilot in a specific area of social welfare law on housing outcomes.

MoJ explained that the pilot was paused for a while during the pandemic and they had tried to make the proposals wider and more holistic to consider housing and welfare issues to test the impact in the medium and long term to see how situations improve. The aim was to test it in one urban and one rural area, and the evaluation was still being considered. The legislation would be introduced to amend LASPO early in 2022, with the pilot likely to start in Spring and would last for about a year.

MoJ offered to come back with a further update once the pilot plans were more developed.

Action: MoJ to provide more information on the advice pilot once it is known.

6. Any other business (AOB)

Spending Review

MoJ provided an update on the latest position on the anticipated Spending Review exercise. They explained that the reshuffle had meant the new Secretary of State had needed to consider the department's bid himself and that it was hoped to have information confirmed by Treasury over the coming months.

MoJ confirmed that the intended timetable was for the Autumn Statement to be the following week, but that the detail would take longer to confirm due to the allocation and internal departmental prioritisation process

Next LSAG meeting

The provisional date of the next meeting was 26 January 2022.

Action	Owner(s)	Deadline
Natalie to share information with MoJ on online referral services.	Natalie Byrom	Next meeting
Natalie to provide links to MoJ Digital on Pew's Google analytics.	Natalie Byrom	Next meeting
All to share examples of other relevant evaluation reports.	All	Next meeting
Clare to share links to Access to Justice Foundation workshops	Clare Carter	Next meeting
MoJ to consider the best way to cover the concerns about legal support strategy and share this before the next meeting	MoJ	Next meeting
MoJ to provide more information on the advice pilot once it is known	MoJ	When details are available