



## Legal Support Advisory Group – 29 April 2019

### Meeting summary

The first meeting of the Legal Support Advisory Group took place on the 29<sup>th</sup> April 2019, opened by Minister Frazer and chaired by Nick Goodwin (MoJ Director for Access to Justice Policy).

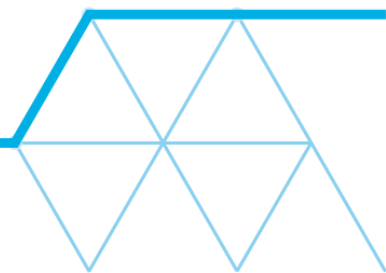
**Members present:** Nick Goodwin (MoJ Director, Access to Justice – Chair); Christina Blacklaws (The Law Society); Phil Robertson (The Bar Council – *attended on behalf of Malcolm Cree CBE*); Andrea Coomber (JUSTICE); Rebecca Wilkie (Litigant in Person Support Strategy); Prof. Dame Hazel Genn DBE (University College London); Dr Natalie Byrom (The Legal Education Foundation); Alexy Buck (MoJ Chief Social Researcher);

**Additional attendees:** Matt Shelley (MoJ Deputy Director, Legal Support Policy); Fiona Rutherford (MoJ Deputy Director, Legal Aid Policy); Louise Eyeington (Deputy Director MoJ Legal – *attended on behalf of Naomi Mallick*); Alex Scott (Head of Legal Support Policy); Matt Greet (Legal Support Policy); Christopher Owens (Legal Support Policy); Lauren Metalle (Legal Support Policy).

**Apologies:** Nick Campsie (MoJ Non-Executive Director); Adrian Richards (MoJ Director, Data and Analytical Services); Tom Read (MoJ Chief Digital and Information Officer).

#### Key takeaways:

- Minister Frazer opened the meeting and thanked members for their work with the department to date, as well as stating her ambitions for how the Legal Support Advisory Group will contribute to the delivery of the Legal Support Action Plan.
- It was agreed that the Advisory Group would focus on seven of the projects (see below) set out in the Action Plan. The goal is for the Group to sit at the centre of a broader network of the forums and boards already in existence within the judiciary, advice sector and profession.
- Advisory Group members agreed that sub-groups and working parties would be created as it progresses. The first such group will be created specifically to advise on the evaluation and data collection framework to be used across the seven projects.
- Key areas of discussion were the framework for evaluating legal support projects, and better understanding of the data collection already being undertaken by advice sector organisations.
- The aims and objectives of the group were well received by members.



## Summary:

Minister Lucy Frazer opened the meeting with her thanks to the members for both their support on the Post-Implementation Review (PIR) of Part 1 of the Legal Aid Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders (LASPO) Act 2012 (Part 1), and for agreeing to take part of the Legal Support Advisory Group. Minister Frazer underlined to Advisory Group members the importance of their expertise in shaping future legal support policy, and shared her desire to continue a spirit of openness and collaboration.

The Group then moved on to a high-level discussion of the status and future plans for the projects and pilots laid out in the Action Plan. Due to time constraints, the two projects covered in more detail were Legal Support for Litigants in Person, and the Legal Support Innovation Fund. A summary of each of the seven projects and pilots that the Group will focus on is below:

- Wider research and expertise: We are keen to build on the level of engagement we found throughout the LASPO Post-Implementation Review process. The Legal Support Action Plan commits to maintaining this engagement to make use of external expertise, evaluation proposals, and potentially explore new research opportunities and collaborations.
- Co-location of support services pilot(s): Within the Legal Support Action Plan, we committed to work collaboratively with the sector to pilot, test and evaluate the provision of holistic legal support hubs to more effectively support earlier resolution of a person's legal problems.
- Effective signposting pilot(s): The Legal Support Action Plan commits us to undertaking a pilot to explore how we can better co-ordinate and signpost legal support. We have also committed to test a series of changes and enhancements to triage and signposting support offered as part of the Civil Legal Advice telephone advice service by Summer 2019.
- Enhancing support for litigants in person: The Legal Support Action Plan commits to working over a two-year period to enhance support for litigants in person by increasing certainty for providers to help them make even more of a difference, do more to help people navigate the justice system when they come into contact with it, and improve our evidence base. These goals will primarily be achieved by providing additional funding to the Litigants in Person Support Strategy (LIPSS).
- Fostering a culture of innovation: We will invest £5m in innovative new technologies to help people access legal support wherever they are in England and Wales. We will work with the sector to focus the fund in the right places, avoiding duplication of other programmes and funds.
- Legal Support awareness campaign: In the Legal Support Action Plan, we committed to launching a new campaign to improve awareness of how people can access support to help them resolve their issues (ideally before they become complex legal problems) including how to access legal aid.
- Face-to-face support pilot for social welfare: In the Legal Support Action Plan, we committed to test the impact of early legal advice in promoting early resolution by piloting face-to-face legal advice in a specific area of social welfare law. We will evaluate this against technological solutions, bearing in mind costs.

Another key discussion that took place during the meeting was the creation of a common data and evaluation framework that can be applied across these seven projects and pilots. It was raised that there is a wealth of data already being collected by the advice sector that could, if accessed and used more extensively, comprehensively show the journey of individuals accessing this section justice system. The Group raised the need for this data to be collated and shared, to support both the MoJ and the sector itself in informing future policy and service delivery. This is something the MoJ would like the Advisory Group and their networks' support with.

The alignment of MoJ with HMCTS reform evaluation frameworks was also discussed. The Legal Support Policy Team are currently working with HMCTS colleagues to learn from their metrics and models. Advisory Group members discussed how outcomes can be assessed at each stage to provide an answer to the prime question of '*are people getting the resolution to their problems?*'. It was agreed that the Legal Support Policy Team would work with Advisory Group members to identify elements of this and other evaluation frameworks, that could further inform the model being designed for legal support projects.

It was also agreed that there was a need for a sub-group to be created to discuss and advise on the evaluation framework for legal support projects in more detail. This group will cover lessons learnt from previous projects, as well as inputting on the design of a framework of outcomes that can be applied across all projects moving forwards.

The meeting was closed by Nick Goodwin thanking members for their attendance, and the feedback from members was that the meeting was a positive one. All agreed that they are looking forward to the next full meeting, as well as the first session of the sub-group for evaluation and data frameworks.

## Summary of actions

Action	Owner(s)
<p>Amend terms of reference to make scope of Advisory Group clearer.</p> <p>Group members to submit any further suggestions regarding terms of reference ahead of the next meeting so that they can be formally agreed.</p>	<p>Legal Support Team and Advisory Group Members</p>
<p>Create conflict of interests log and circulate to Advisory Group members.</p>	<p>Legal Support Policy Team</p>
<p>Establish a sub-group for evaluation, to meet ahead of the next full session of the Advisory Group, and begin to scope this work stream.</p>	<p>Legal Aid/Legal Support Policy Team</p>
<p>Members to put forward views on other required sub-groups, as well as suggested additional attendees.</p>	<p>All attendees</p>
<p>Produce a map of the networks and organisations the Legal Support Policy Team are currently working with.</p>	<p>Legal Support Policy Team</p>
<p>Organise a wider, informal event to reach out to further partners/stakeholders.</p>	<p>Legal Support Policy Team</p>
<p>Set next meeting dates for the rest of 2019/20 and distribute to Advisory Group members alongside forward plan.</p>	<p>Legal Support Policy Team</p>
<p>Distribute a handout covering the key challenges and opportunities in each legal support project to the Advisory Group for wider distribution, and include a list of key MoJ contacts.</p>	<p>Legal Support Policy Team and Advisory Group Members</p>
<p>Discuss the Advisory Group's work with other interested parties that may consider supporting the Group, through providing resource to sub-groups, as and when they are created.</p>	<p>Christina Blacklaws and Dr Natalie Byrom</p>
<p>Take forward a review of the evaluation framework from the HMCTS Reform Programme, to identify elements that can be applied to legal support projects.</p>	<p>Dr Natalie Byrom/Legal Support Policy Team</p>
<p>Produce short briefing note for Advisory Group members on lessons learned from Community Legal Advice Centres (CLACs) and Community Legal Advice Networks (CLANs).</p>	<p>Alexy Buck</p>
<p>Update devolved administrations on the progress of the Programme, including the creation of the Advisory Group.</p>	<p>Legal Support Policy Team</p>