



Legal Support Advisory Group – 24 June 2019: Meeting Summary

The second meeting of the Legal Support Advisory Group took place on the 24 June 2019, opened by the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State Paul Maynard MP, and chaired by Fiona Rutherford (MoJ Director for Access to Justice Policy).

Members present: Fiona Rutherford (MoJ Director, Access to Justice – Chair); Carol Storer OBE (Chair of the Law Society’s Access to Justice Committee – *attended on behalf of Christina Blacklaws*); Andrea Coomber (JUSTICE); Rebecca Wilkie (Litigants in Person Support Strategy); Prof. Dame Hazel Genn (University College London); Dr Natalie Byrom (The Legal Education Foundation); Phil Robertson (The Bar Council – *attended on behalf of Malcolm Cree CBE*); Alexy Buck (MoJ Chief Social Researcher); Louise Eynington (MoJ Deputy Director Legal Services – *attended on behalf of Naomi Mallick*).

Apologies: Christina Blacklaws (The Law Society); Malcolm Cree CBE (The Bar Council); Tom Read (MoJ Chief Digital and Information Officer); Adrian Richards (MoJ Director, Data and Analytical Services); Naomi Mallick (MoJ Director Legal Services).

Additional attendees: Matt Greet (Legal Support Policy); Christopher Owens (Legal Support Policy); Lauren Metalle (Legal Support Policy), Jessie Stanbrook (Legal Support Policy) Alex Schofield (Head of Legal Aid Strategy).

Key Points:

- The Minister opened the meeting and thanked members for engaging so openly and with the department and the group so far. He expressed his enthusiasm for the Legal Support Action Plan, stating that it is a necessary and welcome development in this important area of the Justice System.
- The Minister set out that the delivery of the Legal Support Action Plan is one of his key priorities and that he looked forward to working with those in the room to achieve it.
- Members gave feedback on topics discussed in the first meeting, relaying views and information from their wider networks. There was a discussion on how best to engage and communicate with these wider networks in future and collate feedback, and the Legal Support Policy Team will be working with members to establish best practice in this area.
- Key areas of discussion at this meeting were an update on the Legal Support Innovation Fund, the status of the Evaluation Sub-Group (as agreed in the first meeting), and an introduction to the proposed methods of evaluation for the seven projects and pilots set out in the Legal Support Action Plan.
- The Legal Support Policy Team will be reviewing the membership of the group as an ongoing action, reaching out to other possible representatives from the sector.

Summary:

The Minister opened the meeting with an introduction to members, and an update on his first six weeks since taking over as Minister from Lucy Frazer. He stated his enthusiasm for both his new role and for the work being undertaken by the Legal Support Policy Team and the Legal Support Advisory Group on the projects and pilots set out in the Action Plan. Minister Maynard emphasised the importance of the shared knowledge and expertise held by the group in shaping Legal Support Policy moving forwards. The Minister reflected on the issues experienced by his constituents when accessing advice services, stating that supporting citizens to find solutions to their legal problems at the earliest opportunity is a top priority.



The Group then reviewed actions from the last meeting and updated members on their status. We are taking forward discussion to add advice sector and additional legal professional representation and members will be updated in due course. The Group was updated on the Policy Team's planned visit to the Welsh Government on 11 July to update them on the legal support projects and pilots.

Members then gave feedback from their wider networks regarding the seven projects and pilots in the Action Plan that were discussed in the last meeting on 29 April. There was a discussion around how to best engage with members and their wider networks outside of these quarterly meetings to collate their feedback to bring back to the Policy Team, and the Policy Team updated members with their proposal to design an engagement plan, with members' input, with an update of this plan at the next meeting in September. The Policy Team will continue to review the membership of the group, contacting other representatives within the sector.

Alex Schofield gave an overview of our approach to evaluation, outlining the sequence that we will be following. This included the development of logic models, programme outcomes and outcome indicators before the projects and pilots begin. We are basing this on an early model of the Theory of Change, which is in its early stages, and we are continuing to develop this for the seven projects and pilots. Alex invited views from the group, and will consider how best to incorporate the feedback into the development of the evaluation framework, reporting back to the group in due course.

Following the agreement in the first meeting that an Evaluation Sub-Group would be created to discuss and advise on the evaluation framework for legal support projects and pilots in more detail. It was confirmed that the first meeting of this Sub-Group would be organised before summer recess. The Policy Team are currently organising an appropriate chairperson for this Sub-Group, and after this has been confirmed, invitations to relevant parties will be sent out, including to some members of the Advisory Group. This Sub-Group will support the Policy and Analytical Services Teams in designing the evaluation of the seven Legal Support projects and pilots, as well as other areas set out in the action plan. Throughout this discussion there was an emphasis on the need for the Evaluation Sub-Group to discuss the best methods of evaluation that are possible within the timeframe of the Action Plan's projects and pilots. It was agreed that the evaluation of some of the projects and pilots might be on a longer-term basis than their scope; monitoring and evaluation may need to continue past the timeframe to accurately capture the true long-term impact(s) that they intend to have.

The main discussion for this meeting was an update on the Legal Support Innovation Fund, and the Policy Team updated the Group on the workshop held at Barclays Eagle Labs on the 10 June. This event was to test several problem statements, prior to the launch of the Innovation Fund, to ensure the Policy Team is focusing efforts and resources on the right issues. It also ensured that the MoJ continues to work collaboratively with representatives from the academic, legal, advice and tech sectors to explore new ways of delivering legal support services. Feedback on the workshop has been positive and the open approach welcomed. The general consensus from the workshop is that problem statements capture the main issues that need addressing, subject to the suggestions that were made. There was a discussion on how the Innovation Fund should be targeted, with recommendations that some of the funding should be targeted at smaller organisations who have the most contact with individuals and groups who need the most support to solve their legal issues (e.g. food banks and libraries). The Policy Team emphasised that they wanted to encourage consortium bids from smaller charities and Law Tech organisations who have developed innovative solutions to problems within the sector together. Concerns were raised by Group members regarding the impact of awareness raising given the limited capacity in the third sector. It was agreed that it was important to define a specific scope or outcomes for the bids for the Innovation fund, and that a high priority should be placed on the sustainability of approaches.

The problem statements were also put to members to discuss further and offer their views. The Group discussed the Government's unique position to facilitate access to its own data which was crucial for innovation to take place. There was further discussion on the value of running an innovation fund, given the view by some that unlocking data was the more pressing issue stifling innovation.

While there was agreement for the need for MoJ to consider the data issue, and agreement of its importance, it was noted that much of that work is outside of Legal Support Policy team’s remit and, moving forward, would require collaboration from a number of MoJ policy teams, HMCTS, the Judiciary, and other government departments.

The Policy Team were encouraged to consider how best to facilitate a data eco-system as this would underpin other endeavours and innovation aimed at supported individuals to resolve their legal issues.

The Group agreed that it would be useful to map out what innovation is already taking place to ensure the Innovation Fund doesn’t duplicate other work and, as far as possible, as assessment should be made on whether those projects have seen positive outcomes. Natalie Byrom suggested that the Legal Education Fund (LEF) may be able to fund a “Rapid Review” of this kind. This could be published by the LEF, and used by the wider sector. Natalie said she would discuss with colleagues at the LEF to see if this was possible and will update the group accordingly.

The Policy Team intends to be inviting applications for the Innovation Fund later in the year, and is planning a conference in September.

The meeting was concluded by Fiona Rutherford thanking members for their attendance and all members agreed they are looking forward to the next meeting, as well as the first session of the Evaluation Sub-Group and the further workshop regarding the Innovation Fund.

Actions log:

| Action | Owners |
|---|---------------------------|
| Summarise papers from the Barclays Eagle Labs event to include further feedback from the Advisory Group | Legal Support Policy Team |
| Policy Team to take forward internal and external meetings regarding point 9.V in the Legal Support Innovation Fund hand-out | Legal Support Policy Team |
| Look into the possibility of the Legal Education Foundation funding a rapid review of innovation projects currently in the sector to be completed by September (or as soon as possible) | Dr Natalie Byrom |
| Invite provider and advice sector representatives to join the Advisory Group using recommendations from current members | Legal Support Policy Team |
| Scope and design an engagement plan with Advisory Group members input to update wider networks and collate their feedback | Legal Support Policy Team |
| Share evaluation from the Legal Services Commission Innovation Fund with Chris Owens | Alexy Buck |
| Natalie Byrom to share thoughts with Policy Team on what strides can be made on use of data within the innovation fund, including sharing the case study mentioned regarding access to case law | Dr Natalie Byrom |
| Policy Team to discuss membership for Evaluation Sub-Group with members of the Advisory Group that will sit on both groups | Legal Support Policy Team |

| Action | Owners |
|---|---------------------------|
| Re-circulate forward plan to all members and schedule dates in members' diaries for future meetings. | Legal Support Policy Team |
| Alexy Buck will produce short briefing note for Advisory Group members on lessons learned from Community Legal Advice Centres (CLACs) and Community Legal Advice Networks (CLANs) to bring to the Evaluation Sub-Group for discussion | Alexy Buck |