



Legal Aid
Agency

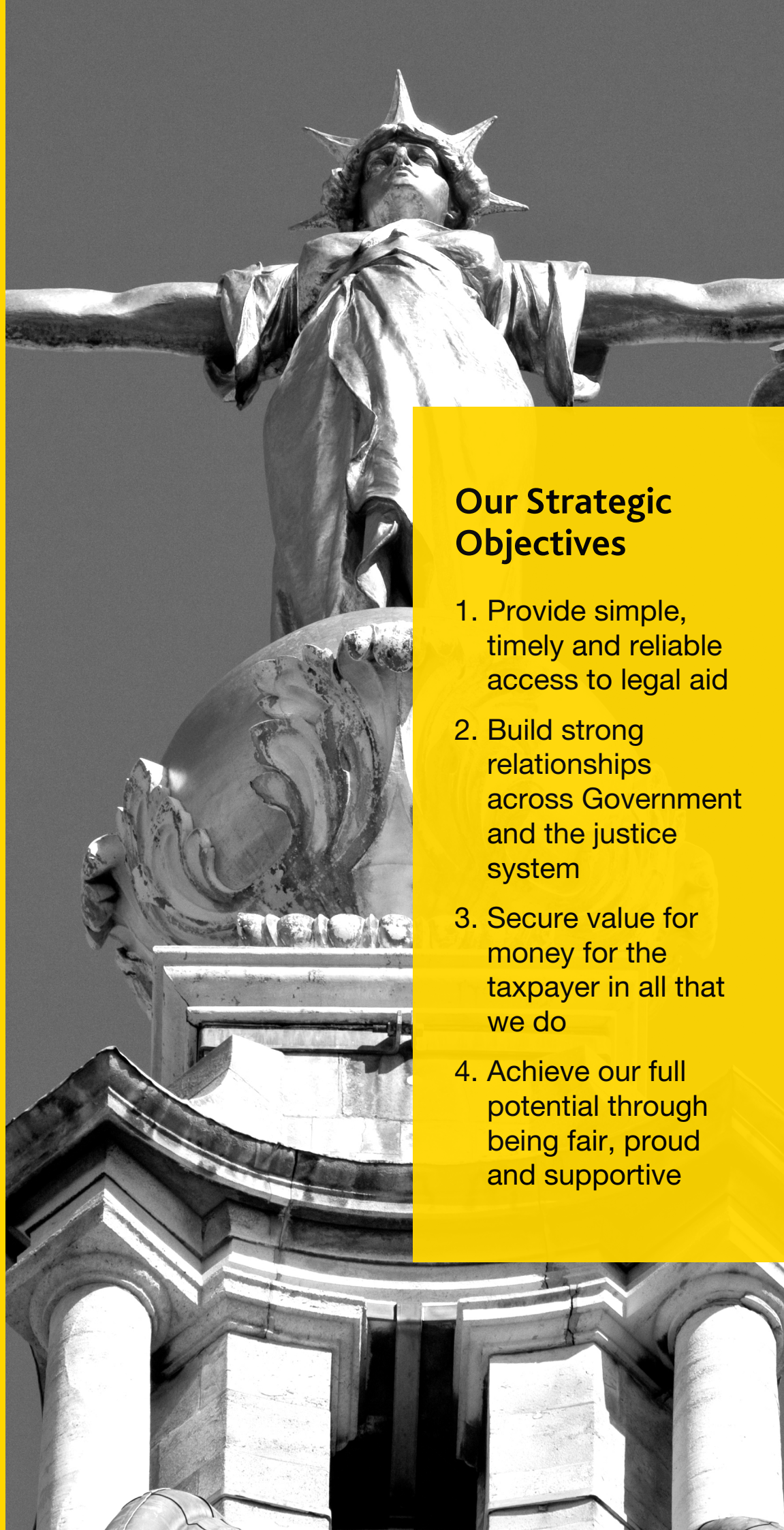
Legal Aid Agency

Our Business Plan 2019/20

Working with others to achieve
excellence in the delivery of legal aid



Introduction



Our Strategic Objectives

1. Provide simple, timely and reliable access to legal aid
2. Build strong relationships across Government and the justice system
3. Secure value for money for the taxpayer in all that we do
4. Achieve our full potential through being fair, proud and supportive

Our vision for the Legal Aid Agency by 2020

Shaun McNally CBE



I am delighted to introduce the 2019/20 business plan which sets out our plans for the coming year. Our business plan also highlights the excellent results that teams across the LAA have

continued to deliver over the past year. We have successfully commissioned and implemented over 1580 new contracts for civil legal aid services. This has been a large and complex process and we have identified lessons learned to act upon during this year. I want to recognise the continued contribution of our Public Defender Service which provides independent, client-centred advice and representation in all types of criminal cases from the police station to higher courts.

For the fourth year running our people survey results place us as a high performing organisation. We take pride in the environment we create and in being a great place to work, and I am proud that our collective efforts mean that the LAA are placed in the top 10 of 102 participating Government organisations. I am committed to ensuring that we continue to provide every opportunity for our staff to be at their best, to realise their potential and utilise their many talents. I am passionate about social mobility. I want the LAA to lead the way across Government, to ensure that we are an inclusive employer representing society at every level.

The Agency also plays a pivotal role within the MoJ and across the justice system helping to protect and advance the principles of justice. We will continue to work with our partners across the justice system providing trusted expertise and effectively turning ideas into reality. We will consider the Legal Aid Sentencing and Punishment Offenders (LASPO) Post-Implementation Review (PIR), support the delivery of the Legal Support Action Plan and continue to work closely with Government colleagues to improve our data sharing.

This year we will enter the third year of our Agency Transformation Programme. A year when we will continue striving to deliver efficient and effective services. Our programme is ambitious and is already changing the way we work.

As we continue our journey to become a simpler, smarter organisation, embracing the MoJ values will serve us well. It is essential that we all stay close to our **humanity**, taking care of our own wellbeing and supporting colleagues. We must communicate effectively and be **open** with everyone across the Agency, providing opportunities for challenge and to suggest ways that we can do things better. Working **together** has never been more important and we will continue to embed smarter working, using new technology to support us. Providing simple, timely and reliable access to legal aid remains our core **purpose** and I am proud to lead the Agency that is making a difference for the public we serve and that is fair, proud and supportive. I look forward to the year ahead.

Shaun McNally CBE

Our achievements in the Legal Aid Agency 2018/19



Strategic Objective 1 Provide simple, timely and reliable access to legal aid



We processed over **100,000** civil applications for legal aid with more than **90%** processed in **20 days**



We processed over **350,000** criminal applications for legal aid with over **90%** being processed in **2 working days**



More than **80%** of our calls were answered **within 5 minutes**



We oversaw the delivery of new contracts to deliver telephone based civil legal advice and over **1580** new face to face contracts providing services to the public



During 2018/19 **99%** of civil and criminal bills were processed **within 20 days**



Strategic Objective 2 Build strong relationships across Government and the justice system

To improve the efficiency and effectiveness of our digital changes and improvements we've made progress in joining up our approach with teams across MoJ and wider government



Our Public Defender Service shares its day-to-day experience of the criminal justice system to inform policy makers and court reform



In response to legislative changes we have implemented changes to our Litigator and Advocate Graduated Fee Schemes



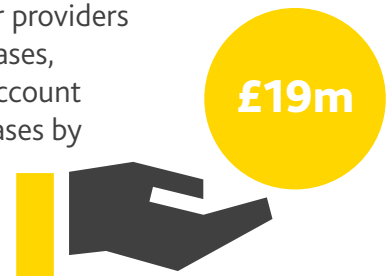
Strategic Objective 3 Secure value for money for the taxpayer in all that we do

We remain committed to minimising error. **Our net error rate remains below 1%**



Over the last year the LAA has reduced operational expenditure on running the agency by £2.1m. We have made various improvements to our digital systems, and consequently depreciation expenditure has increased total expenditure by £0.3m since 17/18.

Focused use of management information and proactive communication with our providers has enabled closure of cases, reducing payments on account values on outstanding cases by over £19 million



Strategic Objective 4 Achieve our full potential through being fair, proud and supportive

We maintained our staff engagement score at

71%

top 10



Amongst participating Civil Service organisations, the LAA are in the top 10 for engagement



Apprenticeships, career development, mentoring, volunteering and professional qualification are just some of the opportunities available to our staff

Strategic Objective 1 – Provide simple, timely and reliable access to legal aid

In 2019/20 we will:

- Maintain our focus on providing simple, timely and reliable access to legal aid whilst supporting the work of our Agency Transformation Programme
- Provide high quality, responsive, accessible customer services to our users of, and partners in the justice system, utilising digital opportunities where appropriate
- Continue to deliver a high quality Public Defender Service



We will measure this by:

- Processing end-to-end 80% of applications for civil legal aid within 20 working days, except in the most complex cases; processing 90% of applications for criminal legal aid within 2 working days; paying 90% of complete, accurate, eligible bills within 20 working days
- Continuing our Data Driven Strategy, enabling us to improve services to providers and draw on a broader evidence base when assessing performance
- Delivering 2019 Central Legal Advice Operator Service and Duty Solicitor Call Centre contract
- Meeting rigorous targets for customer service and timeliness of response to correspondence
- Maintaining the Public Defender Service's Lexcel accreditation for excellence in legal practice management

Strategic Objective 2 – Build strong relationships across Government and the justice system

In 2019/20 we will:

- Support delivery of the Secretary of State's priority for an effective and fair justice system which will serve all users, whenever they need it
- Work with our partners across the justice system to respond to the findings of the LASPO Post-Implementation Review and associated Legal Support Action Plan
- Continue to embed the public sector equality duty in our design and delivery of legal aid



We will measure this by:

- Progressing with our Agency Transformation Programme, which will simplify the delivery of legal aid by 2020 through simplification, automation and organisational design
- Responding to the findings of the Lammy Review, the LASPO Post-Implementation Review and work with Legal Aid Policy to take forward recommendations from the Legal Support Action Plan and implement any changes as required
- Improving our data sharing across the justice system and wider Government

Strategic Objective 3 – Secure value for money for the taxpayer in all that we do

In 2019/20 we will:

- Maintain financial stewardship of the Legal Aid Fund, ensuring we prioritise identification of efficiencies in business processes and a focus on fraud prevention
- Undertake the effective commissioning of services and contract management
- Continued delivery of change, particularly across our digital services, whilst retaining a tight grip of our departmental finances



We will measure this by:

- Closely monitoring Fund and Admin spend
- Minimising net errors with a focus on reducing any error
- Working with MoJ colleagues to maintain our IT infrastructure and prioritising improvements to the security, stability and reliability of our digital services



Strategic Objective 4 – Achieve our full potential through being fair, proud and supportive

In 2019/20 we will:

- Build on our strengths and capabilities to attract and retain our people whilst being fair and inclusive
- Develop inspiring, confident and empowering leaders at all levels by building capability and nurturing their diverse talents
- Engage with our people on being a future-ready organisation, transforming and embracing smarter working
- Provide an appropriate mix of learning and development that offers opportunities for everyone
- Continue to build an inclusive culture empowering our people to look after their wellbeing wherever they work



We will measure this by:

- Delivery of LAA development schemes and promoting take-up of wider MoJ and Civil Service development opportunities including apprenticeships
- Embedding new performance management and recruitment approaches which focus on identifying individual strengths, future potential and building capability
- Achieving a fully mature Smarter Working Organisation status
- Maintaining our Staff Engagement, Wellbeing and Fairness & Inclusion scores in the annual Civil Service People Survey and regular Pulse Surveys

LAA: Agency Transformation Programme

Through the Agency Transformation Programme (ATP) we are committed to delivering more efficient, smarter services to users of legal aid and our legal aid providers, and ensuring that the LAA remains a great place to work. ATP's vision is to simplify the delivery of legal aid by 2020. We will achieve this by providing a service that is easy to access and simple to administer, establishing a modern, digital service, and being a flexible, valued part of the justice system that adapts to meet future demands.

In 2019/20 we will continue implementing our plans to:

- Identify and implement changes to automate or simplify processes
- Develop a new digital service, Apply, to handle legal aid applications, streamlining the process to reduce the administrative burden on our caseworkers and providers
- Develop and implement a new operating model

We will measure this by:

- Delivering reductions to the LAA administrative budget by April 2020
- Releasing the Apply service into private beta (so it can be used and tested on real cases) in summer 2019
- Implement our new operating model by March 2020



Appendices

Director of Legal Aid Casework

The LASPO Act 2012 ensured that the decision making process for legal aid applications remained independent from Ministers. The Director of Legal Aid Casework (DLAC), a role created by the Act, has responsibility for making decisions on individual applications for legal aid. The LAA's Chief Executive currently undertakes this role, in practice delegating decision making to LAA caseworkers and providers. The LAA Board supports the Director to ensure that robust practices are in place to maintain the independence of the decision making process. The DLAC Report is published annually alongside the Annual Report and Accounts.

Living within our means

As part of MoJ we will contribute to the overall required reduction in spend at departmental level.

Our Fiscal Resource Departmental Expenditure Limit outturn for 2018/19 and budget for 2019/20 are set out below:

	Actuals 2018/19	Budget 2019/20
Fund	£1,639m	£1,667m
LAA Operations	£60.6m	£62.6m

Managing our risks

The Agency's approach to risk management is supported by its Assurance Framework which follows HM Treasury best practice. The framework identifies three lines of defence to provide sufficient, continuous and reliable assurance on our organisational stewardship and management of the major risks to our organisational success and delivery of improved, cost effective legal aid services.

The three lines are:

1. Front line operational arrangements to manage risk
2. Second line assurance activities involving expert guidance, monitoring and compliance reviews to assure the effectiveness of front line arrangements on risk and control
3. Independent assurance of LAA's control processes, both from within MoJ (Internal Audit), and also outside (National Audit Office)

Further detail on our risks and our financial performance can be found in the Annual Governance Statement which will be published as part of the LAA Annual Report and Accounts.



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