



The Law Society



Legal Aid
Agency

Crime Contract Consultative Group (CCCG) meeting

Minutes

06 April 2021

V1.0

When:	Tuesday 06 April 2021 15:00 – 17:00		
Where:	By Microsoft Teams		
Chair Minutes	Richard Atkinson – TLS Lisa Obadan - LAA		
Attendees	Adrian Vincent – BC Alice Mutasa – TLS Andrew Cosma – MMS Avrom Sherr – IALS Carol Storer – TLS A2J Cttee Claire Anderson – LAA Daniel Bonich – CLSA Elaine Annable – LAA Glyn Hardy – LAA Ian Kelcey – CLC	James MacMillan – MoJ Jennifer Johnson – LAA Kathryn Grainger – LAA Matt Doddridge – LAA Mark Troman – LCCSA Martin Secrett – BC Melissa Bennett – LAA Melissa Thompson – LAA Nick Poulter – LAA Oliver Rogers – LAA	Roger Ralph – CILEx Sean Wardale - LAA Stuart Nolan – TLS
Apologies	Aaron Dolan – CBA David Thomas – LAA Elliot Miller – LAA Gerwyn Wise Helen Johnson – LAPG Henry Hills – SAHCA Jelena Lentzos - LAA	Jill Waring – LAA John Heavens – MoJ Jonathan Black – LCCSA Kate Pasfield – LAPG Kathy Hartup Neil Lewis – LAA Nick Ford – LAA	Rakesh Bhasin-LCCSA Richard Miller Will Hayden - LAA

Welcome and introductions. R Atkinson started the meeting and asked if anyone was new to the group and had not been to these meetings. A Vincent introduced M Secrett as the new representative of the Bar Council and confirms he replaces D Sternberg.

R Atkinson confirmed papers and minutes were circulated in advance. R Atkinson mentioned to the group about some outstanding minutes of previous meetings that need to be signed off and he confirmed these will be circulated with a deadline for the group to give their feedback.

1. Minutes from February meeting were reviewed and approved.

Actions were discussed as follows.

Actions from the last meeting and decisions from this meeting			
AP1 [Feb]	J McM to look at increase in interim fees and J McM to get back to A Mutasa by end of the week.	J MacMillan	Closed
	J McM has responded to Alice with an update. Action can be closed		
AP2 [Feb]	M Troman and A Cosma to send in some examples of attendance notes for N Poulter to review as a starting point.	M Troman and A Cosma	Closed
	Closed		
AP3 [Feb]	N Lewis to discuss with internal teams to find right place to feed observations made about Marstons. D Thomas says something will be sent round via email after the meeting and will find a suitable contact point.	N Lewis and D Thomas	Closed
	Closed		
AP4 [Feb]	N Evans keen to have any insights from the group based on the approach they have currently on PSR. DT asked for comments to be sent to NE by email.	All	8 June
	Glyn H to speak to Nancy Evans to check if she has received the required feedback. Keep open #AP1 [Apr]		
AP5 [Feb]	D Thomas asked R Booth to circulate slides setting out the main reasons for rejects in relation to Criminal Applications.	R Booth and N Poulter	Closed
	Slides circulated. Action can be closed		
AP6 [Feb]	H Johnson to email N Poulter details about a case regarding issues of obtaining a P45. M Troman to send details of a similar scenario to N Poulter	H Johnson/M Troman	8 June
	M Troman has sent examples to N Poulter. N Poulter confirmed this is being looked at and N Poulter hopes to come back to the group soon. Keep open #AP2 [Apr]		

AP7 [Feb]	N Poulter to speak to the Digital team and look into whether it is possible for the portal to be amended to get date stamp facilities for indictable offences	N Poulter	8 June
	<p>N Poulter informs the group that this issue was part of a note he sent around to the group some weeks prior to the meeting.</p> <p>N Poulter stated that some information is set out in the note of what is required to satisfy the requirement that the legal aid application is complete. A discussion on date stamps was then conducted by the group.</p> <p>R Atkinson mentioned that the purpose of a date stamp is to ensure you are paid for initial bail applications and it is important that there should be mechanisms in place to guarantee the fee is received.</p> <p>N Poulter states that when a 'completed' application is submitted, then the date stamp is of the date the application is submitted and that is when legal aid will be granted from.</p> <p>A Cosma tells N Poulter that in a lot of cases, the LAA is saying these applications are not complete and that is the problem. A Cosma thinks that they should allow a date stamp from the date like it is done for either-way or summary offences and why is it different for indictable offences.</p> <p>A Mutasa states that issues raised with her, are that applications are being sent back because indictable offences are not ticked on the CRM 14 forms and when this is done, then the date stamp is not given.</p> <p>I Kelcey tells N Poulter that if there is an issue with the profession not completing the forms properly, then they need to understand precisely what the issue is and have some training on it or alternatively, they should have a date stamp and this is actually what they need.</p> <p>N Poulter agrees with I Kelcey and states that it would be useful to know why providers are getting applications that are not suggested as being 'complete' and it seems to be the issue. A Cosma tells N Poulter that they cannot always submit a completed application because they cannot get all the information in time.</p>		

	<p>N Poulter asked if there have any examples, then please send to him, so they can see what is difficult to complete.</p> <p>N Poulter asked if the group can come back with a list of areas that cause them problems, that would be useful for them. #AP3 [Apr]</p> <p>M Troman gave the group some areas that may be the cause of why they cannot get a completed application such as National Insurance, Disclosure of Income, etc.</p> <p>D Bonich also provided some more examples that add to making an application incomplete and would therefore not be processed.</p> <p>R Atkinson states that it would be helpful for the group to continue to provide N Poulter with a few more specific examples but hopes this give N Poulter a flavour of the issues.</p>		
AP8 [Feb]	K Grainger to prepare a brief outlining the work of the Process efficiency team and share in advance of next meeting.	K Grainger	Closed
	On agenda. Action can be closed.		

R Atkinson asked if anyone had any matters to raise that are not on the agenda or comments in relation to the minutes of the meeting.

D Bonich asked a question in relation to sending fee. D Bonich states that some questions have been raised about multiple matters before the court on the first occasion and if some get sent up and some stay where they are and don't go up as linked offences, then, can the sending fee be claimed on the one that went up, as well as the normal fees for the magistrate court for the ones left, as some may fall under the serious offences categorisation and therefore you are stuck with one fee.

D Bonich states if they can get some clarity on this and he can feedback.

G Hardy confirmed that this can be taken away and provide an answer and if D Bonich has a specific example that he can share and send over, then it would be useful. D Bonich says he will send one over. **#AP4 [Apr]**

2. Operational update

N Poulter went through the paper circulated to the group and outlined the report, noting that Applications are being processed within 2 days. N Poulter noted there were some challenges during the Easter period, but they are looking into it.

Overall things remain positive and things are good across the board in terms of operational turnaround times. I Kelcey gave some positive feedback to N Poulter and the team for turning around an application quickly.

3. Process Efficiency Team (PET)

Kathryn Grainger gave an overview of the Process Efficiency Team (PET). The team is currently operating on the Civil CCG and K Grainger wants to talk about what they do and identify whether it can be introduced to the crime processes.

PET is group made up of individuals from LAA and selection of rep bodies and providers, who meet once every 6 weeks. The group looks at internal processes within the LAA that could be improved and work with the rep bodies and providers to identify them. They have a safe group, where feedback is sought when the improvements are introduced, so changes are discussed, and input is received from the right groups of people.

The team have introduced a fixer service, so where things go wrong, it can be identified and improved. They also have a customer service twitter account for people to communicate quickly with the team, and webinars, where people can discuss with caseworkers on specific issues. Also, there are Lunch and learn series where providers are encouraged to speak to caseworkers, and these have been successful.

K Grainger states how it is about creating a common goal and understanding the problems rep bodies have and about being open and transparent of our processes and helping to build that relationship.

K Grainger wanted to get feedback from the group to see if this is something they would welcome from a crime perspective and it can be set up quickly to see what the key issues are and it is about being open and honest about things we cannot change but working with the group to find things that can be changed.

K Grainger wanted to know if this is something the group will be interested in and is glad to share the terms of reference of PET with the group.

I Kelcey stated that he found the proposal helpful and it will enable engagement and help to understand the problems we each face. I Kelcey feels it will be helpful and productive.

C Storer confirms she was involved when PET was set up and it has been helpful for Civil CCG. C Storer feels it was really productive and could transfer over to Crime.

A Vincent stated that if there is a PET group for Crime, then there needs to be a permeable relationship, where if things are being dealt with in PET, it can still be raised in the CCG meetings and fed back into the more detailed work.

K Grainger confirms that the group meet every 6 weeks to do a deep dive to get underneath the problem and make sure they engage with the right people. They depend on PET members to give a steer on who to speak to and if they are aware of other projects to join up together.

K Grainger asked that if people were interested in joining the first meeting, to start thinking about ideas and what would be in scope, and if they could please let her know, K Grainger can look to set something up for the next few weeks, when it is a suitable time for everyone.

4. Crime Provider Webinars

O Rogers gave a brief overview. O Rogers confirmed these webinars are done in the Civil group and they have had some successful online sessions and high attendance. They are keen to roll these webinar sessions to Crime providers with a mixture of live and recorded sessions when they are oversubscribed. A recording of the live session will be made available.

O Rogers stated that he is looking to get input from the group whether they would find the webinars useful and what issues would be useful in the webinars. O Rogers asked the group for their views.

I Kelcey stated that having a webinar on 20 most frequent reasons for rejecting legal aid would be good and also the issue of rejection of litigated fee bills and what can be done to see assist to make sure they are paid, would also be welcome.

M Secrett agreed with I Kelcey and believes these suggestions would be helpful from a chambers and fee clerks' point of view. R Atkinson asked if O Rogers was happy with the suggestions as a starting point. O Rogers agreed and thanked the group for their comments and will come back to the group at a later stage, with proposals in terms of what webinars they are able to offer.

M Troman asked about a webinar encouraging people to use the online system in place regarding CRM 7 claim process, that could improve efficiency and reduce burden on providers to post in during lockdown arrangements.

N Poulter stated that this is something Process Efficiency Team (PET) could look at and admits that there are some issues with the process like a limit on file size and maybe further guidance can be sent to providers about what information not to send, so they can use the CRM7 e-form. N Poulter confirms that there has been an increase in the use of the CRM 7 e-form where it was about 25% before lockdown, and it is now about 40% and those forms are submitted wholly electronically.

N Poulter thinks there may be some non-digital changes that can be made through PET for the CRM 7 e-forms.

5. Customer Service Strategy

Sean Wardale outlined the paper which has been circulated and gave a brief overview of how they developed the strategy, its key components, what they hope to achieve, and S Wardale is looking to get feedback from the group and possible interest and involvement.

S Wardale confirmed they have been working on the versions of customer service strategy for some time but needed to develop a wider strategy about the Agency itself and have been working on this for the past 18 months.

S Wardale stated that workshops have been held across the business to understand what the LAA needed to do to improve customer services and have developed a strong sense of what needs to be looked at in greater depth to make customer service improvements. The things learnt from the sessions, has become the basis for the strategy document and it is to improve customer service across the board.

The core aim of the customer service strategy is to deliver those practical changes that improve the experience for service users and providers, and this year will be about laying the foundation for what the next year's customer service improvements and strategy would be.

S Wardale confirmed that focus on this year is to build up for the future and understand what they need to do, with formal end of year reviews done with the intention to refine and produce regular updates. He stated that updates will be provided through the usual communication channels and it will also be using the @LAA twitter channel to publish frequent informal updates and engage with anyone with an interest in a customer service matter at any given moment.

S Wardale went through the 4 key themes of the strategy which is contained in the circulated paper. S Wardale mentioned that the strategy has been linked to the wider LAA strategy, strategic objectives, team delivery plans, so there will be a strong focus on delivering customer service improvements and a strong challenge for teams to demonstrate how they have delivered improvements for their customers.

S Wardale stated he would appreciate any feedback or questions and asked that if anyone is interested in helping to develop and deliver this work over the year and wants to be involved, then they should please let him know.

A Sherr queried some of the wording used in the paper. S Wardale said he will take this away and look about what can be done about it.

6. Rep Body Queries

R Atkinson confirmed he had not been notified of any queries in advance. A Mutasa asked about a review J McM is leading on and not sure when it starts and what it would cover. J McM proposed that he and A Mutasa can meet and discuss.

A Mutasa asked for J McM to send some potential meeting dates. J McM confirmed he will.

7. AOB

No AOB raised. R Atkinson thanked the group and reminded them about the outstanding minutes of previous meetings that would be circulated, and the group should get their comments in within 2 weeks after receipt.

R Atkinson thanked everyone and ended the meeting.

Actions from this meeting			
AP1 [Apr]	Glyn H to speak to Nancy Evans to check if she has received the required feedback about getting insights from the group based on the approach they have currently on PSR.	G Hardy	8 June
AP2 [Apr]	M Troman has sent examples to N Poulter re: attendance notes, for N Poulter to review. N Poulter confirmed this is being looked at and N Poulter hopes to come back to the group soon.	N Poulter	8 June
AP3 [Apr]	N Poulter asked if the group can come back with a list of areas that cause them problems re: submitting a completed application to get a date stamp.	All	8 June

AP4 [Apr]	D Bonich asked a question in relation to sending fee. G Hardy confirmed that this can be taken away and provide an answer and if D Bonich has a specific example that he can share and send over, then it would be useful. D Bonich says he will send one over.	G Hardy/ D Bonich	8 June
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The next meeting is on Tuesday 8 June 2021 via Teams