

Legal Support Strategy Delivery Group

11 March 2025

Note of meeting

Members present

Cathryn Hannah (CH) – MoJ Legal Support; (Chair); Clare Carter (CC) - Access to Justice Foundation; Liz Bayram (LB) - AdviceUK ; Julie Bishop (JB) - Law Centres Network; Richard Miller (RM) - The Law Society; Professor Dame Hazel Genn (HG) – UCL; Sir Robin Knowles (RK) – Legal and Advice Sector Roundtable; Phil Jew (PJ) - Advice Services Alliance; Stephen Mayson (SM) - UCL Researcher; Chris Minnoch (CMi) - Legal Aid Practitioners Group; Dame Clare Moriarty (CMo) - Citizens Advice; Phil Robertson (PR) - Bar Council; Fiona Rutherford (FR) – JUSTICE; Amanda Finlay (AF) – Legal and Advice Sector Roundtable; Liz Curran (LC) – Nottingham Trent University; Sarah Stephens (SS) – University of Sussex; Welsh Government

Apologies:

Ash Patel – Nuffield Foundation

Additional attendees

MoJ Legal Support Policy Team (LS)

MoJ Legal Aid Strategy Team

HMCTS User Insight Team

MoJ Directors for Legal Aid, Legal Support and Dispute Resolution Policy

Welcome and update on previous actions

1. CH welcomed attendees, including new members attending this meeting and noted the apologies.

Overview of the shared Legal Support workplan

2. LS introduced a paper on the draft shared workplan for improving the legal support system and welcomed the views of the LSSDG members. The vision of the work is “A more sustainable, efficient, and effective legal support system that enables people to resolve their legal problems at an early stage, which reduces pressure on the wider justice system and realises wider societal benefits.”

3. The workplan covers three thematic areas with associated work strands underneath; the themes are Delivery Models, Data and Evidence, and Funding. The workplan forms the basis of what the MoJ wishes to collectively deliver over the next few years.
4. LS confirmed resources are going to continue to be tight and that even after the spending review it is unlikely there will be more funding to spend on legal support than there is now. Accordingly, the workplan will look at where the MoJ can work collaboratively with the sector to make the biggest difference for users. LS also spoke about the development of a future grant, some of the things it may seek to deliver and a desire to engage with the sector during this development.
5. LS confirmed Minister Sackman is broadly content with the draft workplan, and that the MoJ will work with the sector to develop the workplan further before going back to the Minister.
6. LSSDG members provided feedback and discussed the paper. Discussion focused on the importance of collaboration and ensuring the MoJ works with the sector to demonstrate the value of legal support and advice provision and the wider benefits it has cross-government and on other parts of society. Members also discussed advice quality, the importance of preventing things from becoming legal problems, and legal support being effectively linked up to other solutions for those eventualities when early intervention is unsuccessful.
7. LSSDG members acknowledged the tight resources and agreed that having a collaborative approach to deliverables and making better use of existing resources and evidence were key areas to focus on going forward.

ACTION: LSSDG members to share their own relevant planned activities in order to feed into workplan and identify opportunities for collaboration. Members may also share any further reflections or input on the workplan by writing to the LS team.

Developing our understanding of what works best in advice service delivery – Clare Carter, Access to Justice Foundation

8. CC delivered a breakout workshop session focusing on what works best in advice service delivery. LSSDG members were split into groups to discuss different questions on effective advice delivery models. Groups fed back and members discussed existing models of delivery, what does best look like, what do we know about what works, and how can models be used in the future.
9. CC to form a task and finish group to take forward this programme of work and report back at the May meeting.

ACTION: CC to set up delivery models task and finish group with a small number of volunteers from the LSSDG. The group will meet several times to help drive forward their work ahead of the next meeting.

Call to action – exciting research happening in the sector

10. LSSDG identified other topics to focus on in future meetings. This included future agenda items on models and funding, data and evidence, and other research priority areas.

ACTION: LSSDG members to share research and evidence which will support the groups programme of work and any suggested future agenda items for the group.

AOB

11. N/A