



Ministry
of Justice

Terms of Reference

Legal Support Strategy Delivery Group

January 2025

Context

This Government is committed to rebuilding our justice system to ensure access to justice for all. The legal support system is a vital part of this, and being able to access the appropriate support at an early stage is beneficial in helping people to resolve their legal problems more effectively and efficiently and prevent them from escalating.

The Ministry of Justice¹ has focused on building an evidence base about what works in helping people resolve their problems effectively and efficiently by testing different approaches to improve the availability of early legal support through a range of pilots, grants, and research on co-locating advice in healthcare settings. We now want to use the evidence gathered and our strong relationships with the sector to develop a joint long-term strategy for legal support provision. Our vision is for a legal support system that is more effective, efficient and sustainable, which enables individuals with legal problems to resolve them as early and effectively as possible, understand their outcomes, and increase their confidence, via services that are designed around their needs.

It is vital that the Ministry of Justice works in partnership with the advice sector to deliver this vision. The Legal Support Strategy Delivery Group has been set up to ensure collaborative working and to enable us jointly to develop and implement this strategy, to collectively identify and implement key initiatives to improve the legal support system and address the challenges facing the advice sector.

¹ Responsibility for Legal Support policy sits with the Legal Support Policy Team of the Ministry of Justice. The team will work across the department and its arms length bodies to ensure that work aligns with and takes account of other workstreams, projects and governance structures.

Purpose of the Legal Support Strategy Delivery Group

The Legal Support Strategy Delivery Group will be action focused and act as the central vehicle for the Ministry of Justice and the advice sector to work collaboratively to develop and implement a strategy to improve the legal support system over the course of this Parliament.

The Group will develop and drive forward a programme of work to make the legal support system more effective, efficient and sustainable so that it delivers better outcomes for users. Key to this will be determining the roles and responsibilities of the Ministry of Justice, other funders of legal support services, and the wider advice sector in delivering this vision.

The Group presents an opportunity to utilise the wealth of expertise of a diverse range of stakeholders from the legal support system. The Group's work will feed into policy development, and help shape the advice provided to Ministers. The Group is not being asked to directly advise Ministers or make recommendations to them.

Objectives of the Legal Support Strategy Delivery Group

1. To develop and drive forward the strategy and programme of work for legal support to ensure there is a more effective, efficient and sustainable system by identifying and taking forward actions to:
 - Improve coordination of the funding and delivery of advice services so that they better meet people's needs, address their problems earlier and prevent them from escalating.
 - Improve the quality of advice and support provision, which is provided in a more cost effective and efficient way.
 - Ensure more sustainable and effective funding for the advice sector that enables better legal support provision.²
 - Improve consistency of the data collected on the outcomes and impact of advice services and what intervention works best, to help build the case for investment in legal support and to reduce the burden on the frontline
2. To use collaborative and open engagement between government and a diverse group of key stakeholders to collectively identify and implement key initiatives to improve the legal support system and overcome the challenges it is facing.

² The ability to progress proposals with cost implications will be dependent on wider government funding decisions, including spending reviews, which the work of this group will inform.

3. To provide expert and confidential views on government policy on legal support, providing constructive challenge and support.

Group members will:

- Be action focused and committed to working together and with the Ministry of Justice to identify and take forward actions to deliver the shared vision of the Group.
- Provide expertise and sector insights to inform the strategy and programme of work to make the legal support system more effective, efficient and sustainable.
- Subject to resources, commit to taking forward relevant actions which arise during group meetings.
- Contribute to meeting content including bringing agenda items and sharing ideas on opportunities for collaboration.
- Advise on and share evidence and research, feeding into evaluation and specifically addressing gaps in the Ministry of Justice’s legal support data and information, as well as advising on potential new avenues for evaluation.
- Use milestones and other plans to monitor progress and ensure there is accountability for delivery.
- Work to develop ideas or options that could feed into policy recommendations to enable better legal support provision.
- Improve consistency of the data collected on the outcomes and impact of advice services and what intervention works best, to help build the case for investment in legal support and to reduce the burden on the frontline

Scope of the Legal Support Strategy Delivery Group

The Group will cover a range of legal support workstreams that centre on identifying and taking forward legal support initiatives to make the system more effective, efficient, and sustainable. Areas that we anticipate the Group will focus on include but are not limited to:

- Developing an outcomes framework for the sector
- Improving partnership working across the sector
- Improving funder collaboration
- Identifying and promoting best practice delivery models

- Further improving our evidence base and data collection through collaboration
- Exploring how funding can best be used across the sector, including any additional funding that is generated for access to justice work
- Improving the quality of advice and support provision

The Group will have the ability to create other sub-groups that can work in more detail on any specific projects, or other cross-cutting issues, as needed. These sub-groups will engage more broadly with the sector but have a role to feedback work to this strategy delivery group when there are relevant updates.

Out of scope

The Group acknowledges that legal aid is an important part of the legal support ecosystem, however the group will focus on other forms of legal support. Issues relating to legal aid, including the scope of legal aid and fees are out of scope of the Group. Crucially, work on the legal support strategy will account for and be interlinked with the Government's broader thinking on legal aid.

Membership of the Legal Support Strategy Delivery Group

The Group will be chaired by the Deputy Director (DD) of Legal Support and Dispute Resolution policy. The Group will have 'core' members, who will be invited to every Group meeting. These are:

- Ash Patel, Justice Programme, Nuffield Foundation
- Chris Minnoch, Legal Aid Practitioners Group
- Clare Carter, Access to Justice Foundation
- Clare Moriarty, Citizens Advice
- Fiona Rutherford, JUSTICE
- Julie Bishop, Law Centres Network
- Liz Bayram, AdviceUK
- Liz Curran – Nottingham Trent University
- Lucy Dennett, The Law Society
- Natalie Byrom, Independent Policy Researcher
- Phil Jew, Advice Services Alliance

- Phil Robertson, Bar Council
- Professor Dame Hazel Genn, UCL Researcher
- Sarah Stephens – University of Sussex / Online Procedure Rule Committee
- Stephen Mayson, UCL Researcher
- x2 Attendees, Legal and Advice Sector Roundtable
- x1 Attendee, Greater London Authority
- x2 Attendees, Welsh Government

Alongside the Deputy Director of Legal Support and Dispute Resolution in their role as Chair, Legal Support Policy officials will provide the Group’s secretariat function, and there will be regular representation from other teams across the Ministry of Justice where relevant e.g., Digital Justice System, Legal Services, HMCTS User Strategy, Inclusion and Engagement and Analysis.

Other attendees will be invited on an ad hoc basis, based on the topic of the meeting, to ensure the relevant external expertise is present. The topics will be agreed by the Chair in advance and be in line with areas that members have raised in previous meetings.

If a core member is unable to attend a meeting, they may nominate a deputy to cover on their behalf. Please inform the secretariat in advance of the meeting.

Ways of Working

The Group will meet every 2 months (reviewed as necessary) in person at 102 Petty France or an appropriate alternate venue. Where members are unable to attend, hybrid meetings using MS Teams will be used in addition to in person attendance. Reasonable travel expenses may be paid and will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis – if you would like further information on this policy, please contact the Secretariat for more detail.

The Ministry of Justice will circulate the papers for each meeting at least a week before the meeting. Where possible the Ministry of Justice will also circulate an email update to members to keep them informed of developments in between meetings.

Group members will be encouraged to dedicate further time to taking on specific assignments subject to capacity. For example, certain attendees may prepare short papers of relevance to then be brought back for consideration. Whilst the Ministry of Justice lead and facilitate the group, it is a forum for the sector that is built on collaborative principles. Members are, therefore, encouraged to help shape work by proposing agenda items, sharing ideas and research and opportunities for collaboration.

The group will be working to develop and implement a legal support strategy. Outputs to help achieve this aim will vary depending on the workstream and its objectives. The work of the group will routinely help to inform advice to Ministers. As an early action the group will seek to agree and prioritise key areas and actions to focus on.

Group members must declare any conflict of interest where appropriate in advance of meetings. For example, if discussion were to be about bidding processes for future funding/ grants where some members organisations already receive Ministry of Justice funding. Those that do declare such an interest, will not be permitted to participate in Group meetings where the letting of such contracts is discussed.

Where appropriate, documents relating to the work of the Group will be added to the Ministry of Justice Legal Support pages on the internet.

The Secretariat will be responsible for drafting high quality and accurate minutes. Members will be asked for corrections before they are finalised on our records.