

Criminal Legal Aid Advisory Board (CLAAB) Terms of Reference

1. The Criminal Legal Aid Advisory Board (CLAAB) is an advisory body established following the recommendation of Lord Bellamy in his Independent Review of Criminal Legal Aid (CLAIR).
2. The Board's purpose is to provide independent advice to the Lord Chancellor on the operation and structure of the existing and future criminal legal aid fee schemes in England and Wales) and to assess how these schemes should change and modernise as the criminal justice system changes and develops. Its overall objective is to make recommendations that ensure that the criminal legal aid fee schemes across the entire system comprise the right structure and incentives to support a high performing criminal justice system and wider objectives of the legal profession.
3. The CLAAB will focus on the structure and operation of the legal aid fee schemes, utilising data and supporting evidence and will oversee the delivery of recommendations arising from CLAIR.
4. The CLAAB will:
 - a. Discuss issues of common interest, so that the impact of changes to criminal legal aid is fully understood throughout the criminal justice system (including existing and upcoming issues), and vice-versa.
 - b. Provide advice on how to address additional issues as they arise.
 - c. Suggest areas of work where a joint approach may be beneficial.
 - d. Identify ways in which data collection can be improved across the sector, with a view to improving the sector's ability to monitor and evaluate policy.

Overview

5. In reaching its recommendations, the CLAAB is to have regard to the following considerations:
 - The sustainability of the market, including the need to recruit, retain, motivate and, where relevant, progress, suitably able and qualified persons to exercise their different responsibilities in the provision of legal services in the criminal courts of England and Wales.
 - The need to promote and foster a diverse workforce and equality of opportunity.
 - The requirement to consider all available evidence to ensure that the schemes provide the right behaviours and incentives for work done.
 - Differences in remuneration between legally aided work and privately remunerated work in the legal sector.
 - Government policies for delivering an effective and efficient criminal justice system in England and Wales.

- The funds available to the Ministry of Justice as set out in the Government's departmental expenditure limits.
- The Government's obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and the Human Rights Act 1998.
- Representations made to it by the representative bodies for the legal profession – e.g. the Law Society for England and Wales, the Bar Council for England and Wales, the Criminal Bar Association for England and Wales, Criminal Law Solicitors Association, London Criminal Courts Solicitors Association, Trade Unions and any other witness.

Recommendations

The CLAAB may make other recommendations as it sees fit, or in relation to matters upon which it is invited to report by Government, about working conditions in the criminal legal aid sector and in relation to the operation of criminal justice policy in so far as that policy impacts on the criminal legal aid schemes to ensure that criminal legal aid is consistent with and, where appropriate, enables wider reforms.

This should include, but not be limited to, making recommendations on:

- Changes or developments in law and policy that have an impact on the volume and complexity of work for legal aid practitioners in the criminal justice system.
- The re-classification of existing offences within the criminal legal aid fee schemes where:
 - The maximum sentence has changed.
 - There has been a change in societal attitudes towards the seriousness of an offence (e.g. the Sentencing Council issuing a substantial change in the approach to sentencing).
 - The level of preparation required for a particular offence has substantially changed.
- The classification of new offences within the criminal legal aid fee schemes.
- Amendments to criminal legal aid fee schemes to reflect the introduction of new court procedures which substantially change the amount of preparation required to prepare certain types of cases e.g. the introduction of pre-recorded cross-examination.
- Amendments to the criminal legal aid fee scheme to reflect changes in the type and nature of material needed to be considered by legal representatives in conducting cases including changes in technology and reliance upon audio / visual material.
- A focus on the hourly rate fee within the criminal legal aid fee schemes, including for example, special preparation, wasted preparation and written work and for brief fees, refreshers and PTPH fees.

- Ways in which solicitors and barristers can work with the MoJ, CPS and the judiciary to improve the use of court time and support the MoJ and Judiciary on measures to manage the progression of cases.
- Criminal justice wide initiatives to improve performance in the criminal courts and consider areas including (but not limited to):
 - Regional disparity
 - Legal aid uptake at the police station (including local views)
 - Training needs for legal professionals regarding working with vulnerable people
 - Data improvements

Any other changes or developments in law and policy that have an impact on the volume and complexity of work for legal aid practitioners in the criminal justice system. Where a specific issue requires further work or specialisms, sub-groups (with external expertise) may be created with the express permission of Ministers.