

Civil Contracts Consultative Group (CCCG)

V2

Date:	Wednesday, 5 March 2025, 3pm
Where	Microsoft Teams
Chair	David Phillips – Service Development and Commissioning [LAA]
Minutes	Grazia Trivedi – Service Development and Commissioning [LAA]
Present	<p>Avrom Sherr – Peer Review</p> <p>Chris Walton – Shelter</p> <p>Chris Minnoch – Legal Aid Practitioners Group [LAPG]</p> <p>Debbie McLaughlin - Civil Applications [LAA]</p> <p>Deepti Parmar – Mental Health Lawyers Association [MHLA]</p> <p>Eleanor Druker – Service Development [LAA]</p> <p>Ellie Cronin – The Law Society [TLS]</p> <p>Forum Shah – Association of Lawyers for Children [ALC]</p> <p>Jack Chimes – Data protection [MoJ]</p> <p>Jill Waring – Contract Management and Assurance [LAA]</p> <p>Joanne Camps – Legal Merits [LAA]</p> <p>John Redfern - Exceptional and Complex Cases [LAA]</p> <p>Karl Ford – Contract Management and Assurance [LAA]</p> <p>Lauren Mallon – Commissioning [LAA]</p> <p>Louise Cowell –High-Cost Family [LAA]</p> <p>Natasha Stewart – Family legal aid [MoJ]</p> <p>Nicholas Craigen - Head of Civil Legal Aid Policy [MoJ]</p> <p>Nimrod Ben-Cnaan - Law Centres Network [LCN]</p> <p>Richard Miller – The Law Society</p> <p>Robert Damiao – Civil Billing [LAA]</p> <p>Rowan O’Neil – Bar Council</p> <p>Sarah Lister – Legal merits [LAA]</p> <p>Simon Cliff – The Law Society [TLS]</p> <p>Thomas Richardson – Means and Merits [LAA]</p> <p>Tom Fitzgerald – Civil Applications [LAA]</p> <p>Toby Elliott - Legal Support Strategy [MoJ]</p> <p>Tracey Jack - Association of Cost Lawyers [ACL]</p> <p>Vicky Ling – Resolution</p> <p>Vicky Fewkes – Housing Law Practitioners Association [HLPAA]</p>
Apologies	<p>Helen Keith – Exceptional and Complex Cases [LAA]</p> <p>Jasmine Garner – [MoJ]</p> <p>Allan Blake - Family Mediation</p>

David welcomed everyone.

1. [Minutes](#) of the last meeting in December 2024 were approved and would be published. All actions had been completed and closed.

2. Early Family Legal Advice [EFLA] Pilot update

Natasha said that funding had not been allocated to the EFLA pilot for the 2025-26 financial year therefore it would not be possible to launch the pilot in the coming year. The spending review process for the 3 years commencing from 2026/2027 was ongoing with the outcome expected in June 2025; ministers would then make decisions about existing commitments including EFLA. Early intervention remained a priority for legal aid policy and, following publication of the spending review, the team would engage with external advisory groups to find out what could be done in lieu of funding.

3. Domestic Abuse gateway evidence requirements

Natasha said that the team had undertaken a review of the requirements to ensure they were fit for purpose. Following an extensive engagement exercise with external agencies, the team were in the process of putting together a set of options. Stakeholders would be reconvened to discuss proposed options before they went to ministers.

Chris M. asked if solicitors could certify domestic or child abuse, and Natasha confirmed it was one of the options being considered.

4. Domestic Abuse Protection Order/Notices [DAPO]

Natasha provided an update on the DAPO pilot, which launched on 27th November and was currently in use in Manchester, three London boroughs and areas of the British Transport Police; legal aid uptake was monitored closely. In November ministers agreed to expand the pilot to a further two sites in early 2025 and it had been rolled out in Cleveland.

The team had contacted a few stakeholders in relation to legislative gaps in the legal aid provision of DAPO and MoJ planned to pass legislation to close those gaps; representative bodies would be informed of timelines when agreed. Natasha invited CCCG to share views on how the pilot was operating, including challenges providers may be facing and thanked representative bodies for their input before the launch.

Ellie asked how many criminal legal aid applications had been made; Natasha would shortly provide the information to her directly. A date had not yet been agreed for an evaluation of the pilot, but CCCG would be kept informed. **Action 1 [March]**

Online Provision of Early Legal Support: Toby explained that Early Legal Support and Advice (ELSA) no longer existed in its original form. Work in a similar vein was being taken forward by two teams: the Legal Support Policy team and the Digital Justice System team (who could provide an update on their work at a future meeting if helpful). The latter focused on digital solutions for early problem resolution.

He outlined the vision for a more sustainable, efficient, and effective legal support system that enabled early intervention and reduced pressure on the wider justice system. This would be achieved through a shared workplan co-developed with the Legal Support Strategy Delivery group, which included representatives from the legal profession, advice

sector, and academia. The group would help design and drive the strategy, supporting work across the sector.

There were three key themes: delivery models, data and evidence, and funding. Each theme aimed to identify and promote effective early intervention models, improve data practices, and explore alternative funding streams.

Next steps included refining the work plan with the strategy delivery group, progressing the outcomes framework, consideration of future grant pending the outcome of spending review, and conducting research into local authority funding of the advice sector.

5. LAA Civil Operations updates

6.1 Applications. Tom talked about the salient points in the report.

6.2 High-Cost Family. Louise talked about the main points in the report. The team continued to engage with providers through monthly clinics and in March tutorials were planned to cover the right-first-time submissions of One Counsel Hourly Rates cases.

PMN: Link to sign up to next round of clinics; [#HUSY Clinic: High cost family 19 March 2025 | Eventbrite](#)

Link to sign up to hourly rates tutorials; [#HUSY Tutorial: HCF: One Counsel hourly rates | Eventbrite](#)

6.3 Billing. Rob talked about the main points in the report.

6.4 Exceptional and Complex Cases. John talked about the main points in the report.

6. Commissioning update Lauren updated the group on the Civil Tender passporting exercise that closed on 31st January, and on the ongoing always-on tender. She highlighted the positive impact on provider numbers in key categories and the quick turnaround of contract awards.

60 additional contracts under passporting had been awarded, with Immigration gaining 11 additional providers, Welfare Benefits 4 and Housing and Debt 10.

Bids were now opened monthly; in December 58 bids were received although some of these were duplicates with 31 contracts awarded (subject to verification). In January 12 new bids were received and in February 15. Due to the small volume of bids the Commissioning team could process many of them in a matter of weeks rather than months.

David asked Lauren to provide an update on how contract changes could be made during the life of the contract. Lauren explained that as providers could bid or choose to leave the contract at any time in its lifecycle, it was anticipated that the Agency would be able to make more changes through the contract consultation process rather than a tender.

Ellie remarked how positive the new always-on tender process was. Chris M. echoed Ellie's views and added that LAPG had received good feedback from providers about the process. He asked for a breakdown report of providers and offices by category like Tim Colliou used to produce, split year-on-year to show current trends. Simon asked for data on providers that already had a contract and expanded the range of services Action 2 [March].

7.1 Civil legal aid [CLA] telephone advice tender was ongoing and would close on 10th March.

- 7.2 Housing Loss Prevention Advice Service (HLPAS) Tender** for areas where there was no coverage opened two weeks previously and would close on 25 March. As a contingency measure outreach services were in place in most areas without permanent cover.
- 7.3 New Procurement Act** Lauren explained the impact of the 2023 Procurement Act on future tenders, noting that the Agency's major contracts had been awarded before the Act's implementation; this limited the impact on providers until the next main civil tender. The Commissioning team would support providers in registering on the new portal well in advance to ensure a smooth transition over the coming months in preparation for any future tender opportunities.
- 7. Means Test Review [MTR]** El Druker provided a brief update on MTR, stating that ministers were currently considering their preferred approach. Further updates would be provided when available.
- 8. AOB**
- 9.1 Online Provision of Early Legal Support** Vicky Ling requested an update from the Digital Justice System team at a future meeting. Action 3 [March]
- 9.2 Future meetings time change.** Lauren suggested moving CCCG meetings to the morning on Wednesdays to accommodate Kelly Claffey, Commissioning Civil lead. The group agreed to the change.

Actions from this meeting		Owner	Deadline
AP1 [March]	Inform Ellie of how many criminal legal aid applications had been made. Post meeting note: MoJ are currently unable to accurately confirm the number of criminal applications received so far for Domestic Abuse Protection Order/Notices. An update will be provided when the data becomes available.	N Stewart	Closed
AP2 [March]	Produce a breakdown report of providers and offices by categories and providers that already had a contract but added to the range of their services.	L Mallon K Claffey	Closed
AP3 [March]	Invite a representative from the Digital Justice System team at the next meeting	G Trivedi	Postponed to September meeting