



Ministry
of Justice

MINUTES

LEGAL SUPPORT STRATEGY DELIVERY GROUP

10:00-12:00 Thursday 22 May 2025

Members present: Cathryn Hannah (Deputy Director, Legal Support and Dispute Resolution, Ministry of Justice—Chair); Ash Patel (Justice Programme, Nuffield Foundation); Chris Minnoch (Legal Aid Practitioners Group); Clare Carter (Access to Justice Foundation); Dame Clare Moriarty (Citizens Advice); Professor Dame Hazel Glenn (University College London Researcher); Elizabeth Price (Welsh Government); Julie Bishop (Law Centres Network); Lindsey Poole (Advice Services Alliance); Liz Bayram (AdviceUK); Liz Curran (Nottingham Trent University); Paul Neave (Welsh Government); Stephen Mayson (University College London Researcher); Elizabeth Mahoney (Greater London Authority, deputising for Daniel-Drillsma-Milgrom); Ellen Lefley (JUSTICE, deputising for Fiona Rutherford); Ellie Cronin (The Law Society, deputising for Lucy Dennett); James Sandbach (Legal and Advice Sector Roundtable, deputising for Carol Storer); Rebecca Wilkinson (Legal and Advice Sector Roundtable, deputising for Mr Justice Robin Knowles)

Additional Attendees: MoJ Legal Support Policy Team; HMCTS User Insight Team

Apologies: Carol Storer (Legal and Advice Sector Roundtable); Daniel Drillsma-Milgrom (Greater London Authority); Fiona Rutherford (JUSTICE); Lucy Dennett (The Law Society); Natalie Byrom (Independent Policy Researcher); Phil Robertson (Bar Council); Mr Justice Robin Knowles (Legal and Advice Sector Roundtable); Sarah Stephens (University of Sussex / Online Procedure Rule Committee)

1. Welcome and Introductions

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed all attendees to the meeting.
- 1.2 The Chair provided an update on the actions log. The Task & Finish group focused on service delivery would report back to the group at the July meeting.

2. Ministry of Justice Updates

2.1 Additional Funding

- 2.1.1 The Legal Support policy team provided an update on the work undertaken to date to look at the potential to introduce a scheme to secure the interest on lawyer client accounts in England and Wales. This work had included engagement with other jurisdictions with existing Interest on Lawyers' Trust Accounts (IOLTA) schemes and research undertaken to examine how law firms in England and Wales used the interest generated from client accounts. Of the over 600 law firms surveyed, 94% said that losing the interest on client accounts would have little to no impact on them. The amount of money raised from such a scheme would vary depending on underlying interest rates.
- 2.1.2 An expert stakeholder group would be established to help work through key policy questions related to implementing a similar scheme in England and Wales. The group would include experts in legal services and finance. Relevant challenges include considering impacts on regulation, enforcement and the administrative burden on law firms.
- 2.1.3 The Solicitors Regulation Authority (SRA) recently completed a consultation on potential changes to how law firms could handle client money. The Legal Support policy team would engage with the SRA to consider the interaction between their respective work.
- 2.1.4 In discussion, the following points were made:
- Decisions on the allocation of income generated from such a scheme would be for Ministers.
 - The International Legal Aid Group meeting could be a good opportunity to further engage with international colleagues. The additional funding team could engage with their counterparts in Hong Kong to discuss their IOLTA scheme.
 - It would be important to engage with key stakeholders, including banks, at an early stage.
 - Further work would be undertaken to understand the 6% of law firms that may be impacted by losing the interest on their client accounts. The Legal Support policy team were liaising with the Law Society to talk to particular firms to understand the possible impact and mitigations.
 - The Legal Support policy team would also continue to engage with the related work of the Access to Justice Foundation, who were considering ways to generate additional funding for free legal advice.
 - Many group members were supportive of such a scheme in principle. A further update would be provided to the group at the July meeting.

ACTION 1: The Legal Support policy team to provide further detail to the group on what the existing research says about the types of firm that stated they may be more impacted by the loss of the interest on client accounts.

2.2 Local Authority Research

- 2.2.1 The Legal Support policy team provided an update on the research undertaken into Local Authority funding of advice services and the outcomes measured. There had been 62 responses to the survey which was a response rate of c.18%. 80% of respondents were currently collecting outcomes data from the external advice services they commissioned.

ACTION 2: The Legal Support policy team to share findings from the Local Authority research with the group.

3. Outcomes Framework

- 3.1 The Legal Support policy team provided an update on the work undertaken since January. This had included stakeholder engagement with academics, public bodies, and advice service providers. Key themes that had arisen from the engagement included ensuring the framework was: practical, proportionate, flexible and aligned to other work across the sector. An iterative approach would be taken, starting on a small scale. The framework may be piloted through a future grant. The Legal Support policy team provided an overview of the types of outcomes under consideration, including outcomes for users and system outcomes.
- 3.2 In discussion, the following points were made:
- The scope and purpose of the framework required clear articulation to ensure buy-in from funders and advice service providers. Clear articulation of the purpose would also be required to encourage service users to provide the data needed to measure the outcomes.
 - The framework should build on existing work across the sector to attribute outcomes to advice interventions.
 - The administrative burden of requiring organisations to follow-up with users should be considered.
 - Organisations across the sector delivered services in very different ways. This would need to be accounted for to link interventions to outcomes.
 - Systems outcomes should go beyond the justice system.
 - Learning should be taken from the research on health service outcomes and the use of proxy questions.
 - It would be impossible to collect perfect data so consideration should be given to how good the data would need to be, and what could be done with imperfect data.

ACTION 3: Members to share relevant research on health services and other areas of research focused on outcomes measurement.

ACTION 4: Members to provide any additional comments on the approach or outcomes to the legal support policy team via correspondence.

4. Research Priorities

- 4.1 The Chair said the legal support policy team was considering where to focus research projects. Projects should focus on areas that would improve policy making and allow better interventions.
- 4.2 The Legal Support policy team said a strategic approach to research gaps should be taken, to avoid duplication of ongoing work across the sector, and to use collective resource and expertise most effectively. Potential areas of interest included user behaviour, the impact of legal support on offending and reoffending, a literature review on effective advice service delivery, and assessing the scale and nature of legal need in England. Discussion was steered towards collective areas of interest and any plans members had.
- 4.3 In discussion, the following points were made:
- Group members were interested in the areas suggested.
 - Additional areas that members were interested in included: the provision of remote advice, the legal advice workforce, and where and how legal need presents in communities.
 - Professor Dame Hazel Genn was conducting research on advice returners.
 - AdviceUK was conducting research into the workforce.
 - Nuffield were undertaking a review of existing learning in this area, which may link into the MoJ's literature review.

ACTION 5: The Legal Support policy team to engage with Nuffield to get an overview of their research programme.

ACTION 6: Members to update the Legal Support policy team on research they were currently undertaking or were considering undertaking.

5. AOB

- 5.1 The Chair provided an overview of the forward look for upcoming meetings. Members should contact Legal Support policy if they have any topics they would like to add to the forward look or any specific contributions to make to upcoming topics.

ACTION 7: Members with an interest in standards and regulation to contact the Legal Support policy team with information on the issues from their perspective and ideas to resolve them.

**Legal Support Policy Team
May 2025**