

**Crime Contract Consultative Group (CCCG) Meeting
Tuesday 10 March 2026
Minutes**

When	Tuesday 10 March 2026
Where	Via Teams
Chair	David Phillips
Minutes	Lisa Obadan
Present	<p>Alice Mutasa – TLS Andrew Bishop – Avrom Sherr – IALS Fadi Daoud – LCCSA Glyn Hardy – LAA Karl Ford – LAA Kate Pasfield – LAPG Kath Burdett – LAA Matt Doddridge – LAA Mark Newby – TLS Melissa Thompson – LAA Neil Lewis – LAA Nick Ford – LAA Nick Poulter – LAA Patrick Wernham – MoJ</p>
Apologies	<p>Adrian Vincent – BC Amy Shaw – LAA Anna Bevilacqua – LAA Andrew Cosma – MMA Arron Dolan – CBA Carol Storer – LAPG Casey Jenkins - MKLAW Chris Minnoch - LAPG Chandni Brown – CiEx Daniel Bonich – CLSA Dave Scothern - SAH</p>

Edward Jones – LCCSA
Elaine Annable – LAA
Elliot Miller – LAA
Emma Prise – LAA
Fleur McQuade - LAA
Gerwyn Wise – GCLAW
Harry Slade - LAA
Helen Johnson - LAPG
Henry Hills – SAHCA
Janet Land – LAA
Jason Lartey – L&C
Jerome Lucey – LAA
Jill Waring – LAA
Kathryn Grainger – LAA
Katy Hanson – WLAW
Rakesh Bhasin – LAPG
Rebecca Booth – LAA
Richard Miller – TLS
Richard Owen – TLS A2J Cttee
Sean Wardale - LAA
Stuart Nolan – TLS
Will Hayden – LAA

D Phillips welcomed attendees to the meeting

1. Introductions, minutes, and actions from previous meeting.

Minutes and actions were agreed from the last meeting.

D Phillips asked LO to go through the Action Points from the previous meeting to get updates.

LO led the review of open actions:

- N Poulter provided an update on the action to coordinate a visit for interested practitioners to the Nottingham office to observe the processing of prison law escape cases and discuss potential improvements. NP confirmed this is a standing invite for anyone interested and regular meetings with the Association of Prison Lawyers are ongoing to discuss process improvements. It was agreed to close this action as a standing offer, with interested parties to contact NP directly.
- P Wernham taken over from J MacMillian reported no new updates on the status of means test changes for legal aid explaining that the position remains unchanged due to ongoing ministerial considerations following a change in government. AM pressed for clarity on the promised funding and implementation, expressing frustration at the lack of progress, while PW reiterated the absence of a timeline for updates under the current administration. KP sought confirmation on the expected summer update, which PW clarified was a legacy of the previous government and could not be confirmed.

- G Hardy standing in for N Lewis, gave an update on interim payments and restated that no progress could be made on additional interim payment options due to the ongoing system fragility and resource prioritisation. GH and DP explained that ongoing system instability, exacerbated by the cyber incident, prevents the implementation of additional interim payment options without deprioritising other critical recovery, policy and transformation work. The focus remains on stabilising systems and fulfilling ministerial commitments. KP questioned whether any workstream was addressing this issue and GH responded that it could be considered within the LAA's wider transformation programme. KP pointed out that interim payments were successfully introduced for inquest cases during COVID-19, suggesting that similar manual workarounds could be considered for other areas. DP and GH agreed to review again and provide feedback. DP proposed to feedback the request for flexibility in interim payments and provide an update outside the meeting, acknowledging the financial pressures reported by providers.

APMAR01 – NL – Feedback the request for flexibility to allow interim payments and provide an update.

2. Operational update – Nick Poulter.

NP reported that they continue to make progress towards full recovery following the cyber incident. NP reported that 99.9% of criminal legal aid applications were processed within the 48-hour target in February, indicating a return to pre-incident performance levels. The team continues to maintain high processing speeds, with most workstreams operating within four working days, except for more complex written reasons applications which are at six days.

NP also stated that the Magistrates Court billing team, which was most affected by the cyber incident, has made substantial progress in reducing backlogs, with CRM 4s and CRM 5s are now processed within two days, CRM 7s within five days (down from 20), and CRM 7 appeals within seven days (down from 115).

Processing times for CRM 18A claims have improved from 51 to 28 working days, with ongoing efforts to reduce this further. Regular meetings with the Association of Prison Lawyers continue to address issues in this area. FD expressed his admiration for how quickly the legal aid applications were being processed.

FD then raised concerns about refusals of legal aid applications, particularly in motoring and breach of community order cases, leading to additional administrative work and court explanations. NP invited FD to submit specific examples for review by subject matter experts, aiming to identify lessons and improve guidance for providers.

FD queried the impact of upcoming Sentencing Act changes on legal aid application assessments, particularly regarding the consideration of custodial and non-custodial outcomes. NP acknowledged the need to review this and requested relevant case examples from FD for further examination.

3. Rep body ongoing topics & Queries

KP raised a query regarding the electronic submission of associated prison law files to the civil team for assessment, with MT confirming recent process changes and plans for provider communication, and GH offering to coordinate further clarification.

MT confirmed that certain prison law cases previously handled by the magistrate billing team have been transferred to a civil team, with plans to communicate the new submission process to providers. KP agreed to forward the relevant e-mail for further clarification, and Melissa provided her contact details for follow-up.

APMAR02 – MT – Confirm and communicate to providers the process for submitting prison law associated files electronically to the civil team for assessment, ensuring all relevant firms are informed of the correct procedure.

GH, AB, and AM discussed ongoing issues with prisoner transport delays (PECS), highlighting potential flaws with data collection methods and the need for improved multi-agency reporting and contract design, with NL tasked to summarise actions and next steps.

AB explained that PECS reported 99.8% on-time delivery rate is based on legal advisors' reports, which may be incomplete due to workload, resulting in possible underreporting of late arrivals.

Examples were provided where late prisoner arrivals necessitated the appointment of additional duty solicitors and caused delays, increasing costs and administrative burdens. FD added that staff shortages and logistical issues with Serco and other providers exacerbate the problem.

GH emphasised the need for a multi-agency approach involving HMCTS, PECS, and defence representatives to improve data accuracy and contract design. NL will circulate a summary of the recent meeting and outline proposed actions, with plans for ongoing engagement and reporting back to the group.

APMAR03 – NL – Summarise the recent meeting on PECS late arrivals, outline proposed next steps.

4. AOB

FD advocated for early provider involvement in the development of new digital systems. FD described how the lack of provider input in the design of systems like Common Platform has led to significant inefficiencies, reducing the number of cases that can be handled in a day and increasing administrative burdens. FD requested that practitioners be involved early in the development of new systems to ensure they meet operational needs.

DP agreed and said that the intention was to do exactly this. He encouraged FD to drop Hannah Payne, Head of Transformation, a line and offer his services.

FD raised concerns about shifting criteria for claims, particularly regarding page counts and unused material, and the administrative complexity of per-hour claims. FD explained that changes in how material is categorised (e.g., moving documents to unused material) complicate claims and increase administrative costs, making it difficult for providers to receive fair compensation.

NF requested that FD submit specific examples to help inform future guidance and discussions with the CPS.

APMAR04 – NF – Request and review specific examples from FD regarding issues with unused material and page count claims and consider incorporating feedback into guidance or wider conversations to ensure fair remuneration and process consistency.

KP requested an extension for submitting feedback on the CBAM accommodation rates consultation. GH confirmed an extension for consultation responses, and NF explained that the proposed changes

are intended to address regional disparities resulting from previous increases, with updated guidance to be published after considering any additional feedback.

DP thanked members for attending and ended the meeting.

End of meeting.

The next meeting is Tuesday 5 May 2026