



Ministry
of Justice

MINUTES

LEGAL SUPPORT STRATEGY DELIVERY GROUP

MS Teams

10:00-11:30 Wednesday 20 May 2026

Members present: Cathryn Hannah (Deputy Director, Legal Support and Additional Funding, Ministry of Justice—Chair); Amanda Finlay (Legal and Advice Sector Roundtable); Chris Minnoch (Legal Aid Practitioners Group); Fiona Rutherford (JUSTICE); Lindsey Poole (Advice Services Alliance); Liz Bayram (AdviceUK); Dr Liz Curran (Nottingham Trent University); Paul Neave (Welsh Government); Mark Davison (Citizens Advice, deputising for Claire Driffield); Martha de la Roche (Access to Justice Foundation, deputising for Clare Carter); Richard Miller (The Law Society, deputising for Lucy Dennett); Shiva Riahi (University College London, deputising for Professor Dame Hazel Genn)

Additional Attendees: Ministry of Justice Legal Support Policy Team; Ministry of Justice Legal Aid Strategy Team; Lou Withers Green (AdviceUK)

Apologies: Ash Patel (Justice Programme, Nuffield Foundation); Clare Carter (Access to Justice Foundation); Claire Driffield (Citizens Advice); Daniel Drillsma-Milgrom (Greater London Authority); Professor Dame Hazel Genn (University College London Researcher); Julie Bishop (Law Centres Network); Lucy Dennett OBE (The Law Society); Dr Natalie Byrom (Independent Policy Researcher); Phil Robertson (Bar Council); Dr Sarah Stephens (University of Sussex / Online Procedure Rule Committee); Stephen Mayson (University College London Researcher)

1. Welcome and Introductions

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed all attendees to the meeting.
- 1.2 There were no declarations of interest.

- 1.3 The Chair provided an update on the work of the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) Legal Support Policy team:
- The team continued to work with the Access to Justice Foundation (ATJF) to develop the new Legal Support Grant. The new grant would pilot the outcomes framework. The latest iteration of the outcomes framework would be shared with the Group shortly.
 - The MoJ would be publishing a package of research before the end of the month. Members were asked to help identify any outstanding evidence gaps that the Group could help to collectively address.

2. Next steps on cross-government engagement

- 2.1 The MoJ Legal Support Policy Team provided an update on the cross-government engagement undertaken to date and opportunities for further co-ordination.
- 2.2 In conjunction with UCL and ATJF, the MoJ would convene a roundtable of relevant stakeholders including officials from the health space to co-develop how the advice sector could support implementation of the neighbourhood health agenda and identify practical opportunities for the advice sector to engage with local commissioners.
- 2.3 The Department for Business and Trade was working with the Post Office on co-developing the Post Office Plus initiative which would transform larger post office branches into multi-use spaces. The pilot would run for 6 months. It would be free for pilot organisations to use the space during the pilot, however there would be a fee beyond the pilot.
- 2.4 Members were asked to share case studies and learning from co-location to support this work; any key contacts that may be interested in supporting this work; and examples of the barriers to successful partnership working or engagement with local commissioners.
- 2.5 In discussion, the following points were made:
- Local commissioning was a barrier to engagement as processes varied or could be opaque. A push from the top down to raise awareness about the value of social welfare advice would help with local level engagement.
 - Members, including Welsh Government, AdviceUK, ATJF, and Citizens Advice, would share relevant case studies on co-location.
 - It would be important for case studies to include complex partnerships because they could provide useful learning on challenging issues such as data and assigning liability. A good example could be the Money and Pension Service debt advice programme.
 - Data expertise should be brought into the roundtable at an early stage.
 - The Kings Fund White Hawk Health Hub approached health justice partnership from the health perspective. This may be a good example as the language used may be more aligned to existing practice in the health space.

- Other examples to explore and stakeholders to engage could include: Central England Law Centre, Southwark Law Centre, Marie Curie, AdviceNI, and Marmot Places.
- The advice sector had limited capacity to undertake new co-location projects without additional funding. It would be important to manage expectations of what could be achieved, if no funding was available.

ACTION 1: Members, including Welsh Government, AdviceUK, ATJF, and Citizens Advice, to share case studies that could be used to promote co-location of advice services in healthcare settings.

ACTION 2: Members to connect MoJ Legal Support Policy with key stakeholders who could inform the approach to the roundtable. These may include, *inter alia*: Central England Law Centre, Southwark Law Centre, Marie Curie, AdviceNI, Michael Bell and Sir Michael Marmot.

- Citizens Advice and the Advice Services Alliance would be interested in being involved in the Post Office Plus initiative.
- The initiative may provide an opportunity for legal aid providers in the context of potential easing of Legal Aid Agency office requirements for civil contracts, as it could offer suitable space from which to deliver in-person services, which could help improve the network of services.
- A six-month pilot may not be long enough for organisations to establish themselves as a trusted service in a community. A longer pilot would be preferable.
- A clear and sustainable plan for any fees beyond the end of the pilot would need to be in place. This could be a barrier to the involvement of advice services in the long term.
- Members would share learning on how to effectively establish co-location pilots and any barriers.

ACTION 3: Members to share best practice on piloting co-location of services and examples of barriers to success.

- Citizens Advice had been doing exploratory work with the Department for Work and Pensions on co-location in JobCentres.
- It would be beneficial to discuss social investment models.

ACTION 4: Liz Bayram (AdviceUK) to put the MoJ Legal Support Team in touch with advice organisations who had experience with social investment models.

ACTION 5: The MoJ Legal Support Team to set up a call on social investment models with Fiona Rutherford (JUSTICE), DHSC and other interested parties.

2.6 Summing up, the Chair asked members to share co-location case studies, learning and barriers. The Chair recognised that the advice sector would need to be funded to undertake additional projects, such as new co-location, however the MoJ's funding was limited to the new grant.

3. Vision statement and theory of change

- 3.1 The Chair introduced the item and said that the statements and theory of change had been updated following the feedback from April's meeting. The theory of change would be a strategic tool rather than an evaluative tool and a more detailed description of activities would be included in the Group's workplan.
- 3.2 In discussion, the following points were made:
- Members were generally supportive of the updates that had been made.
 - When reading the statements and theory of change as a whole, it implied that co-ordination of funding was the primary issue affecting the sustainability of the sector, however this was not the case. The statements and theory of change should explicitly reference the level of funding as well, however it was acknowledged that finding additional funding could not be guaranteed and this should be reflected in the assumptions accompanying the theory of change.
 - The theory of change could include highlighting systemic barriers facing the advice sector.
 - The problem statement could be read to suggest part of the problem lay with users. Therefore, part of the statement should be re-written so the emphasis was on systemic issues affecting individuals.
 - The assumptions and external factors would be refined and shared with the Group.

ACTION 6: The MoJ Legal Support Policy Team to update the problem statement, vision statement and theory of change to reflect feedback and re-circulate them to the Group.

4. AOB

- 4.1 UCL were hosting "The Future of Social Justice Education" even on 03 June which members may be interested in attending.

**Legal Support Strategy Team
May 2026**