



Ministry
of Justice

MINUTES

LEGAL SUPPORT STRATEGY DELIVERY GROUP

Conference Room 3, 102 Petty France and MS Teams

10:00-12:00 Tuesday 28 July 2026

Members present: Cathryn Hannah (Deputy Director, Legal Support and Additional Funding, Ministry of Justice—Chair); Amanda Finlay (Legal and Advice Sector Roundtable); Ash Patel (Justice Programme, Nuffield Foundation); Claire Driffield (Citizens Advice); Daniel Drillsma-Milgrom (Greater London Authority); Fiona Rutherford (JUSTICE); Lindsey Poole (Advice Services Alliance); Dr Liz Curran (Nottingham Trent University); Paul Neave (Welsh Government); Phil Robertson (Bar Council); Richard Miller (The Law Society); Dr Sarah Stephens (University of Sussex / Online Procedure Rule Committee); Stephanie Smith (Welsh Government—Items 2-4); Martha de la Roche (Access to Justice Foundation, deputising for Clare Carter); Rohini Jana (Legal Aid Practitioners Group, deputising for Chris Minnoch)

Additional Attendees: Farah Ziaulla (Director, Legal Aid and Legal Support, Ministry of Justice—Items 1-2); Ministry of Justice Legal Support Policy Team; Ministry of Justice Legal Aid Strategy Team; Welsh Government; James Organ (University of Liverpool); Nezahat Cihan (London Legal Support Trust –Items 2-4)

Apologies: Chris Minnoch (Legal Aid Practitioners Group); Clare Carter (Access to Justice Foundation); Professor Dame Hazel Genn (University College London Researcher); Julie Bishop (Law Centres Network); Liz Bayram (AdviceUK); Dr Natalie Byrom (Independent Policy Researcher); Mr Justice Robin Knowles (Legal and Advice Sector Roundtable); Professor 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 Head of Legal Support Policy provide an update on the Ministry of Justice's (MoJ) recent work:
 - The MoJ published a package of research and evaluation reports at the end of May.
 - The Access to Justice Foundation were managing the process for the new

legal support grant, which would launch on 01 October 2026. Following a competitive process, Ipsos and its consortium partners Ecorys, the UCL Centre for Access to Justice and Kicktag had been appointed as the grant evaluator. The new grant would pilot the outcomes framework, which was continuing to be developed.

- Cross-government work had been focusing on how the MoJ could bring together key partners and decision makers to facilitate the co-location of advice in different settings, with a focus on health to align with the momentum of DHSC's 10-year plan and Neighbourhood Health Agenda. The MoJ was working with Professor Dame Hazel Genn and NHS London colleagues to organise a roundtable to support the integration of health justice partnerships (HJPs) in London's Neighbourhood Health Programme. This would explore an approach in London first, capitalising on existing momentum in the area, which could provide usable learning for other regions. Work was also ongoing to scope whether legal support provision could be included in the Post Office Plus pilot.

1.4 In discussion, the following points were made:

- Members welcomed the progress made on cross-government engagement.
- Social welfare advice was essential to delivery of the Neighbourhood Health model. The health service could derive economic and other benefits from users receiving social welfare advice when appropriate. Evidence should be summarised for engagement with key stakeholders.
- Any plan to scale or replicate regional approaches to HJPs nationally would need to be careful to consider local needs and infrastructure. Homogenising approaches may interfere with the organic development of partnerships.
- Further development of HJPs would require additional funding for the advice sector. Without new funding, a focus on HJPs may displace funding for existing services provided by the sector. It was noted that available MoJ legal support funding had already been allocated to the new Legal Support Grant and its evaluation, so there was no additional MoJ funding available for HJPs.
- There was anecdotal evidence that the emergence of new funding streams could lead to local authorities pulling existing funding streams. It was therefore important for local commissioners to take a strategic approach to advice commissioning.
- The Legal Support Policy team reassured that they would remain cognisant of the risks raised as work progressed.
- It was important to consider co-location in other settings (beyond healthcare settings) to maximise the reach of the services.
- The Access to Justice Foundation encouraged members to respond to the Department for Business, Innovation, Science and Trade consultation on undistributed damages for optout collective action cases. The Access to Justice Foundation was the current recipient and used this funding to support access to justice.

ACTION 1: The Legal Support Policy team to collate evidence on the benefits of health justice partnerships to the health system.

2. MoJ Research Package: Building the Evidence Base

- 2.1 The MoJ Legal Support team said that the package of nine reports published in May explored areas including: the effectiveness and impact of legal support; delivery models; value for money; and methodological learnings. The MoJ's research priorities had evolved over time. Moving forward it was important to pursue projects with realistic goals but that contributed to furthering the evidence base (not just reinforcing existing evidence).
- 2.2 The MoJ Legal Support team provided an overview of the key themes emerging from the research package, together with areas where further evidence may be required. Learning from the research undertaken to date had informed the design of the new Legal Support Grant 26-29 evaluation; however, the evaluation would not be able to address all the gaps.
- 2.3 In discussion, the following points were made:
- It was encouraging to see from the research on HJPs that receiving legal support can lead to improved advice seeking behaviour in the future.
 - The literature review reiterated that there was no 'best' model of legal support and that blended delivery models were essential to meet people's needs.
 - Further evidence on digital support and its place in a blended delivery model would be beneficial. Legal needs surveys may offer a better opportunity to further this evidence than longitudinal studies. Further exploration of outcomes for digital services would be beneficial.
 - It had proved challenging to successfully use counterfactuals to demonstrate the value of advice to the public purse. Research questions should therefore focus on areas where the research would add value to the evidence base.
 - Services should be evaluated in their totality. The system should not be compartmentalised into support, advice and representation. It was important to understand pathways and how people moved in and out of different services at different points when seeking to resolve their issue.
 - Case studies were also valuable and persuasive evidence.
 - Opportunities to link with administrative datasets to demonstrate the value of legal support should be explored.

ACTION 2: The Legal Support Policy team to meet with Sarah Stephens to discuss outcomes for digital support.

ACTION 3: The Legal Support Policy team to meet with Rohini Jana to discuss measuring the value of legal support.

3. Local and Regional Advice Strategies

- 3.1 James Organ, Nezahat Cihan and Paul Neave provided overviews of the local and regional strategies in / being developed in Liverpool (Liverpool Access to Advice Network), London (pan-London strategy being developed by the Advice Workforce Development Fund) and Wales (Regional Advice Networks) respectively.
- 3.2 In discussion, the following points were made:
- Local strategies had cycled in and out of fashion for decades. Some form of regional coordination was probably the preferred state for the legal support system. However, funding for this kind of infrastructure was difficult to obtain.
 - Networks improved outcomes for users, the local advice system, and engagement with national authorities.
 - Partnership sustainability was reliant on funding.
 - The way local authorities commissioned services could drive competition which could hinder partnership working.
 - Partnerships worked best when they had grown organically, which could take time to happen.

4. AOB

- 4.1 Members should contact Nezahat Cihan with comments on the below the line paper entitled *Building the Workforce Capacity of London's Advice Sector*.

Legal Support Strategy Team
July 2026