Safeguarding Access to Justice: The Future of Legal Aid
A Public Policy Exchange Symposium

Wednesday 2\textsuperscript{nd} March 2016
10:15am – 4:30pm
Park Plaza Westminster Bridge, London

Public Policy Exchange holds regular interactive seminars which provide an invaluable interface for policy discussion, debate and networking. These special events offer local practitioners, civil servants and other stakeholders not only an insight into current policy thinking, but also the opportunity to feed into future development across all areas of public policy.
Safeguarding Access to Justice: The Future of Legal Aid

Overview

The UK has one of the most comprehensive and expensive legal aid provisions in the world. Whilst legal aid helps thousands of people a year to access justice and ensure fair outcomes, the cost to the taxpayer increased dramatically. The Government has therefore taken steps in recent years to reduce the £1.7bn cost of legal aid and ensure that it is used to help those who need it most.

Major reforms to legal aid were introduced in the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012. The Government aimed to make legal aid more effective through:

- reforming the administration of legal aid so as to target the highest priority cases and those who need it most
- encouraging the use of mediation to resolve disputes
- introducing price competition in criminal legal aid, to ensure value for money and long-term sustainability

In March 2015 the Justice Select Committee published their eighth report on the Impact of changes to civil legal aid under Part 1 of the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012, concluding that while the Government had achieved its aim of substantially reducing the civil legal aid budget, it had failed to target legal aid to those who need it most and had not discouraged unnecessary litigation at public expense and could not show it was delivering better overall value for money for the taxpayer.

With an independent review of the new arrangements due to begin in July 2016, this special symposium provides an opportunity for legal aid providers, CABS, local authorities, charities, law centres and other stakeholders to explore the future of legal aid, the impact of the Government’s reforms and the long-term sustainability of legal aid practice. Delegates will also discuss how to support vulnerable groups and safeguard access to justice for all.

Why Attend?

- Gain an overview of the reforms to legal aid, the Government’s priorities for the future, and the wider reforms to the justice system
- Analyse the effect of reforms on legal aid markets, providers of publicly-funded legal services, and pro bono organisations
- Explore how to protect the rights of vulnerable groups and the marginalised, and ensure adequate access to justice and fair trials for all
- Assess how to encourage proper management of the Exceptional Cases Funding Scheme, and better support self-represented litigants, separated and trafficked children, and victims of domestic violence
- Discuss how to improve public information and awareness of legal aid and enhance the geographical distribution of legal advice

Who Should Attend?

- Legal Aid Advisers
- Crown Prosecution Service
- Legal Advisers
- Criminal Justice Practitioners
- Courts and Tribunal Service
- Appeals Courts
- Police Services and Police and Crime Commissioners
- Probation Officers
- Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships
- Local Authority Officers and Councillors
- Central Government and Agencies
- Local Criminal Justice Boards
- Prison and Probation Services
- Family Justice Teams
- Mediators
- Regulatory Bodies and Electoral Commission
- Citizen’s Advice Bureau
- Anti-Social Behaviour Coordinators
- Youth Offending Teams
- Youth Justice Boards
- Offender Management Services
- Fraud Prevention Teams
- Benefits Advisers
- Community Cohesion Officers
- Community Engagement Officers
- Community Relations Advisers
- Revenue and Customs Prosecutions Teams
- Hate Crime Units
- Neighbourhood Renewal Teams
- Social Inclusion Officers
- Citizen’s Advice Bureau
- Equality, Diversity and Human Rights Practitioners
- Charities, Social Enterprises and Cooperatives
- Third Sector Practitioners
- Academics, Analysts and Researchers

Accommodation

Through our partnership with HotelMap, we are able to offer our delegates heavily discounted hotel rates at a wide range of London hotels. To view hotel availability and rates and to book online, visit www.HotelMap.com/MSNUZ/

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The urgency of the financial situation in which this country found itself in 2010 meant that the MoJ was faced with difficult decisions: making £2 billion of savings from a budget of £9.8 billion was clearly a very challenging target and it was successfully achieved.

But this has limited access to justice for some of those who need legal aid the most and in some instances has failed to prevent cases becoming more serious and creating further claims on the legal aid budget.

Many of the problems which we have identified could have been avoided with better research, a better evidence base to work from, and better public information about the reforms. It is vitally important that the MoJ work to remedy this from now on, so that a review of the policy can be undertaken.

- Chair, Justice Select Committee, March 2015
Safeguarding Access to Justice:
The Future of Legal Aid

Programme

09:30  Registration and Morning Refreshments

10:15  Chair’s Welcome and Introduction

10:30  Panel Session One: Reforming the Justice System – The Future of Legal Aid
      • Understanding the Reforms to Legal Aid; the Government’s Priorities for the Future, and the Wider Reforms to the Justice System
      • The Sustainability of Legal Aid Practice in the Future – Assessing the Effect of Reforms on Legal Aid Markets and Providers of Publicly-Funded Legal Services, Along with those Providing Pro Bono Work
      • Delivering a More Credible and Efficient System; Reviewing the Legal Aid Duty Contract Procurement Process and the Impact of Increases to Court and Tribunal Fees
      • Promoting Family Mediation as an Alternative to Courts – Analysing the Impact of Ending Compulsory Mediation Assessments and the Work of the Family Mediation Taskforce
      • Demonstrating 'Value for Money' in the Legal Aid Scheme and Measuring Knock on Costs to the Rest of the Justice System and Other Public Services

11:15  Morning Refreshments

11:30  Open Floor Discussion and Debate with Panel One

12:30  Networking Lunch

13:30  Panel Session Two: Safeguarding Access to Justice and Supporting those Most in Need
      • Protecting the Rights of Vulnerable Groups and the Marginalised, Ensuring Adequate Access to Justice and Fair Trials, and Assessing the Future of the Proposed ‘Residence Test’
      • Improving Public Information and Awareness of Legal Aid Support, and Promoting Use of the Civil Legal Advice Telephone Gateway for Advice on Debt and Other Areas of Law
      • Reviewing the Geographical Distribution of Legal Aid Providers Across the Country, and Possible ‘Advice Deserts’
      • Encouraging Better Management of the Exceptional Cases Funding Scheme and Assessing the Evidence Procedure for Victims of Domestic Violence
      • Analysing the Impact of Changes in Legal Aid on Children’s Rights and How to Ensure Separated and Trafficked Children are Able to Access Legal Assistance

14:15  Afternoon Refreshments

14:30  Open Floor Discussion and Debate with Panel Two

15:30  Chair’s Summary and Closing Comments

16:30  Close

* Please note that the programme is subject to change without notice *

Event Details

Date: Wednesday 2nd March 2016
Time: 10:15am – 4:30pm
Venue: Park Plaza Westminster Bridge, London

Forthcoming Events

The Future of Local Government and Public Sector Communications: Expanding the Use of Digital and Social Media
24th February 2016
Surveillance by Consent: After the Code of Practice for CCTV and Other Camera Surveillance Systems
25th February 2016
Fulfilling our Commitment to the Armed Services Community: The Challenge for Local Authorities
1st March 2016
Improving Public Health: The Role of Local Authorities in Reducing Smoking
3rd March 2016
Promoting a Circular Economy on Waste Material: The Way Forward
8th March 2016
Tackling Serious and Organised Crime: The Role of Local Authorities
9th March 2016
Mental Health and Young People: A Coordinated Approach to Eating Disorders
10th March 2016
Prevention and Early Intervention for Children 0-5: Exploring the New Public Health Role of Local Authorities
15th March 2016
Pandemics and Infection Control: Meeting Tomorrow’s Threats and Challenges Today
16th March 2016
Social Cohesion and Inclusion: Strengthening the Partnership Between Communities, Local Government and the Third Sector
17th March 2016
Promoting Cycling and Improving Road Safety for Cyclists: Challenges and Next Steps
5th April 2016
Better Skills, Better Careers: The Future of Apprenticeships and Traineeships
6th April 2016
Empowering Citizens through Community Energy
7th April 2016
Improving Support for Young Carers: The Next Steps for Local Services
12th April 2016

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