

## **Introduction**

The inaugural year of the Wales Committee for the CLS passed in early March 2008. This short report has been produced in order to record the developments and to share the experiences of the past twelve months. It captures the core activities and discussion points from each of the meetings and events held to date.

## **Setting up the Committee**

The plans for establishing the Wales Committee for the CLS were set out in the Community Legal Service (CLS) Strategy – Making Legal Rights A Reality, published in March 2006. In the following year, the Legal Services Commission and Welsh Assembly Government, in conjunction with the Welsh Local Government Association, developed a policy framework for Wales, in order to facilitate the implementation of the CLS Strategy. This joint working enabled the vision for the CLS to be considered taking full account of devolution, geography, language and culture in Wales.

Making Legal Rights a Reality in Wales, was published following full consultation and with the endorsement of the Minister for Legal Aid at the Ministry of Justice and the Minister for Social Justice and Local Government at the Welsh Assembly Government, in September 2007. The published paper provided support for building upon the initial plans for the Wales Committee and made provision for key additions to the membership of the Wales Committee for the CLS.

Key objectives in Making Legal Rights a Reality in Wales included:

1. Establishing a clear governance structure to ensure joint policy and funding approaches, together with mechanisms to understand the advice needs of the citizens of Wales;
2. An expanded telephone service that will provide an effective gateway to a wide range of advice provision for all the citizens of Wales;
3. Joint commissioning of advice services, through Community Legal Advice Services (centres or networks), to ensure co-ordination of funding and easy local access to a wide range of complementary advice services;
4. To raise awareness amongst citizens of their legal rights and responsibilities through increased legal education;
5. To identify the root cause of problems that require a legal remedy, and undertake relevant research and strategic action to eliminate problems at their source.

## **Principles for establishing the Committee**

### Justice Family

The primary purpose for establishing the Wales Committee was to enable the effective development of the CLS in Wales. The Legal Services Commission whilst leading on the development of the CLS, continues to be acutely aware that it is unable to fulfil its full potential, without working collaboratively with key stakeholders.

In seeking to realise the vision for the CLS, key organisations from within the Justice Family in Wales were invited to come together through the Wales Committee. These organisations, both devolved and non-devolved have a keen interest, regarding the way that civil legal advice services will be developed over future years.

Collaborative working is required on a number of levels. The sharing of information, policies and priorities, provides the Committee's member organisations with the opportunity to be proactive in identifying shared goals and when joint working is of benefit.

The proposals set out in the CLS Strategy for joint commissioning legal advice services, sought to take steps in breaking down some of the barriers that citizens currently face in accessing advice. The silo approach to funding legal advice, often as a result of discreet or limited funding streams and priorities, is now challenged through the joint commissioning proposals. Joint commissioning services enables funding organisations to put the citizen at the heart of service design and delivery.

In essence, the themes set out in Sir Jeremy Beecham's review for public services – Delivering Across Boundaries, and the Welsh Assembly Government's response through its Making the Connections agenda, is what underpins the very purpose and focus for the Wales Committee for the CLS. Increased joint working across public services could enable our shared objectives to be met - citizen focused, quality assured, legal advice services, offering good value for public money.

### Membership

The early proposals for the Wales Committee had envisaged funding organisations being facilitated to work collaboratively to enable the best possible service to be delivered for citizens. During the development and consultation on Making Legal Rights a Reality in Wales, it became clear to the Legal Services Commission, that in addition to existing funders of legal advice, there were many other key stakeholders in making such improvements. These included organisations that had a key role in policy development, service delivery and in facilitating citizen voice, which would add significant value to the work of the Wales Committee.

Through the development and consultation process, there was full endorsement for a wider membership, which would ultimately provide increased opportunities for an informed joint commissioning programme for legal advice in Wales. In addition, it would present a more strategic approach to addressing the needs of Wales in respect of the coverage of legal education for its citizens, and through identifying and taking action to address the root causes of problems that Wales' citizens face and which ultimately cause them to seek legal advice.

Since the Committee first met in March 2007, the membership of the Wales Committee has grown to incorporate key representatives.

**Current membership of the Wales Committee for the CLS includes:**

CAFCASS Cymru
CLS Independent Advice Providers Forum
Commission for Equalities and Human Rights
Her Majesty's Courts Service (HMCS)
Legal Services Commission
Legal Services Research Centre (LSRC)
National Offender Management Service (NOMS)
Office of the Children's Commissioner for Wales
SOLACE Wales
Tribunals Service
Wales Council for Voluntary Action
Welsh Assembly Government
Welsh Consumer Council
Welsh Local Government Association

Tom Jones OBE is the Chair of the Wales Committee and is the Legal Services Commission's Commissioner for Wales and the South of England. The Committee's Terms of Reference and its membership are subject to an annual review. The current Terms of Reference can be found as an annex to this report.

**Schedule of Meetings**

The Wales Committee meets on a minimum of four occasions each year. Two of these meetings have been reserved for specific themes. One meeting is dedicated to engaging with citizens and/or their representative bodies, and the other to engaging with service providers and/or their representative bodies. Views from both citizens and service providers can be filtered into the Committee for consideration at any point during the year, but the set meetings provide an opportunity for focus, and a vehicle for voices to be heard.

Committee members continue to engage with citizens and service providers outside of the Committee structure as per their own organisational policies and procedures.

**Meetings**

**2<sup>nd</sup> March 2007 - Wales Millennium Centre, Cardiff Bay**

The Wales Committee was formally launched by Sir Michael Bichard, Chair of the Legal Services Commission. Sir Michael outlined the important role that the Committee would ultimately have in facilitating the effective delivery of the Community Legal Service in Wales for the benefit of Wales' citizens. Each of the member organisations provided an insight to their roles and priorities.

Presentations

- The Welsh Assembly Government's, Making the Connection's Unit provided a presentation outlining the policy framework for the delivery of Public Services in

Wales. This framework was established as a response to Sir Jeremy Beecham's review of Public Service delivery - Delivering Beyond Boundaries.

- The Legal Services Research Centre provided details of its research – Causes of Action, particularly focussing on small area modelling that had been undertaken.

### **8<sup>th</sup> June 2007 – Provider focussed meeting, City Hall, Cardiff**

Legal advice provider representative organisations from across the sectors were invited to a meeting with the Committee in June. These representative bodies were asked to issue invitations to individual service providers from the voluntary and private sectors across Wales, and to seek to gain a diverse representation from organisations operating across the legal categories and geography of Wales.

#### Presentations

- The Legal Services Commission provided an outline of the Legal Services Commission's plans for procuring integrated social welfare law services across England and Wales, through Community Legal Advice Centres and Networks. This was followed by an update on the progress that had been made in developing the joint policy framework – Making Legal Rights A Reality in Wales, with the Welsh Assembly Government.
- A presentation was received from the National Offender Management Service (NOMS) regarding its Strategy to Reduce Re-offending in Wales and its seven intervention Pathways.

### **14<sup>th</sup> September 2007 – Park Inn, Cardiff**

The Wales Committee welcomed four new members to its Autumn meeting. These were representatives that had been identified over previous months, as those, which now or in the future would have an interest in the development of the civil justice system in Wales. These included Wales Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA), the CLS Independent Advice Providers Forum, SOLACE Wales and the Tribunal Service.

The WCVA outlined the key role that it would have in providing a mechanism for the voice of citizens across Wales to be heard at the Wales Committee. In addition, key suggestions were provided to the Committee to inform the occasions where it would seek to undertake direct engagement with citizens. The CLS Independent Advice Providers Forum provided an outline of its role, and highlighted its ability to capture and channel views from clients that currently access advice services in Wales.

#### Presentations

- The Wales Consumer Direct Team provided a presentation detailing the operational details of the Consumer Advice Telephone helpline in Wales.
- The National Offender Management Service provided an overview of each of the NOMS projects that were in place to reduce re-offending.
- Professor Richard Moorhead, a guest speaker at the Committee, introduced his research 'A Trouble Shared – legal problems clusters in solicitors' and advice agencies'.

### **5<sup>th</sup> December 2007 – Citizen focussed meeting, Holiday Inn, Cardiff**

Crispin Passmore, Director of the CLS in the Legal Services Commission, opened the Wales Committee's first citizen engagement meeting in December 2007.

The meeting's primary objective was to generate ideas on how the most vulnerable people in society can have a voice in the provision, development and evaluation of legal services. Citizen representative organisations and groups were invited to take part in the event and to help shape future plans for citizen engagement. As part of the event the Legal Services Research Centre ran workshops with a specific focus on legal education. Citizen representatives were asked to consider and to take a proactive role in providing legal education materials to those that they represent. The report from the meeting can be found at Annex B.

### **7<sup>th</sup> March 2008 – Millennium Stadium, Cardiff**

The Committee marked its first full year, at a meeting at the Millennium Stadium in early March.

It was approaching six months since the publication of Making Legal Rights a Reality in Wales, and the Committee took the opportunity to reflect on the progress that had been made towards its implementation.

The draft report from the Citizen Engagement Meeting was reviewed and the proposed recommendations were considered. Committee members committed to considering how the recommendations could be incorporated into current or future relevant work programmes.

A Welsh Assembly Government representative provided an update on the developments towards a Welsh Assembly Government Financial Inclusion Strategy for Wales. In addition, an update report was received on the restructuring arrangements for the National Offender Management Service (NOMS) and the progress of the Finance, Benefits and Debt Pathway that was in place for Wales.

### **What have we achieved?**

Over the past twelve months, through the Wales Committee and its member organisations, a solid foundation has been established for improving access to justice in Wales. These achievements include:

1. A shared understanding of funding, policy and key partner objectives and priorities;
2. A basis for solid engagement with citizens and service providers;
3. Advanced discussions towards establishing a first Community Legal Advice Network in Wales on a regional basis, pooling resources across multiple local authorities;
4. Agreement between the Legal Services Commission and Welsh Assembly Government to jointly commission legal advice services, in line with plans for regional Community Legal Advice Networks across Wales;
5. A developing relationship with local government through the Welsh Local Government Association's facilitation and regional structures;
6. Joint working to improve advice services for offenders and their families through the National Offender Management Service (NOMS) framework.

### **Future Meetings**

The Wales Committee is scheduled to meet on three further occasions during 2008.

These meetings will take place as follows:

Friday, 6<sup>th</sup> June 2008 in Caernarfon – provider focus meeting

Friday 12<sup>th</sup> September in Cardiff

Friday 5<sup>th</sup> December – citizen focus meeting (young people).

### **Minutes of Meetings**

All minutes of meetings can be found on the Wales pages of the Legal Services Commission's website at [www.legalservices.gov.uk](http://www.legalservices.gov.uk). All minutes once published are available in Welsh. Minutes of meetings are published following approval at the next meeting.

For any queries regarding the Wales Committee for the CLS, please contact:

Tiana Williams  
Wales Policy Manager  
Civil Policy Team  
Legal Services Commission  
4<sup>th</sup> Floor, Marland House  
Central Square  
Cardiff  
CF10 1PF  
02920 647162  
[Tiana.Williams@legalservices.gov.uk](mailto:Tiana.Williams@legalservices.gov.uk)

## **Wales Committee for the CLS - Terms of Reference**

### **Terms of Reference**

#### **Purpose**

1. To strengthen and improve the delivery of the Community Legal Service in Wales by bringing together funders of legal and advice services.
2. To identify how changes in political structures, the law and social policy in Wales will impact on the delivery of legal advice services and plan for these impacts.
3. To identify issues arising in Wales of which the National Consultative Committee for England and Wales needs to be aware of in its discussions.
4. To facilitate the sharing of knowledge and information about:
  - a. the need for legal advice services in Wales, identifying ongoing and future programmes in this area and considering how these can be enhanced and better outcomes and value achieved by co-ordinating these activities more effectively
  - b. the current delivery of legal advice services in Wales
  - c. the providers of legal advice services in Wales.
5. To facilitate joint planning of other public services which impact on clients' legal advice needs.
6. To develop ways of addressing systemic or "root cause" issues in the delivery of public (and private) services which give rise to legal problems for clients.
7. To give the Welsh people a voice in the development of the Community Legal Service.

#### **Indicative Membership**

Representatives of:

Legal Services Commission

Welsh Assembly Government (appropriate representatives from Units within WAG)

CAFCASS Cymru

Children's Commissioner for Wales

Welsh Local Government Association

Welsh Consumer Council

Commission for Equalities and Human Rights in Wales

Her Majesty's Courts Service (HMCS)

National Offender Management Service (NOMS)

Legal Services Research Centre (LSRC)

Wales Council for Voluntary Action

CLS Independent Advice Providers Forum

Tom Jones, a member of the Legal Services Commission, will chair the Committee. The Commission will also be represented by the Director of the Community Legal Service, representative from the LSC Civil Policy Team and by the LSC Wales Director.

### **Secretariat**

The Commission will undertake secretariat duties for the Committee, but papers and agenda items will be sought from all represented organisations and bodies.

### **Meetings**

The Committee will meet a minimum of four times a year at venues convenient to members. One meeting a year will include a meeting with representing providers of legal and advice services in Wales. It is proposed that this will take place through the CLS Independent Advice Providers Forum. One meeting will include a meeting with a client consultation group, which is to be established. No attendance fees will be paid to members as they will be attending as representatives of their particular organisations.

### **Review**

Terms of Reference for the Wales Committee for the CLS will be reviewed annually.

## **Wales Committee for the CLS - Summary of Citizen Engagement meeting 7<sup>th</sup> December 2007, Holiday Inn, Castle Street, Cardiff**

### Making Legal Rights a Reality in Wales

Making Legal Rights a Reality in Wales was published in September 2007 and outlines a framework for the CLS in Wales. It sets out clear governance structures for the CLS in addition to plans for jointly commissioning legal advice services in Wales, with a primary focus on procuring the full range of legal advice services in packages that meet all the needs of its citizens. The strategy sets out the Commission's vision for a civil legal aid system, which is more focused on those who are in greatest need by developing a more coordinated and cost effective system. It also facilitates greater engagement with citizen representative groups and citizens in order to understand the legal advice needs of people in Wales.

### **Wales Committee for the CLS**

The Wales Committee for the CLS held its inaugural meeting in March 2007. The purpose and remit of the committee is to:

- Strengthen and improve the delivery of the CLS in Wales by bringing together funders of legal and advice providers.
- Identify how changes in political structures, the law and social policy in Wales will impact on the delivery of legal advice services and plan for these impacts.
- To facilitate joint planning of other public services which impact on clients' legal advice needs.
- Develop ways of addressing systematic or "root cause" issues in the delivery of public and private services which give rise to legal problems for clients.
- To give the Welsh people a voice in the development of the Community Legal Service.

Current membership of the Wales Committee can be found in 'Making Legal Rights a Reality in Wales'. The document can be found on the Legal Services Commission website – [www.legalservices.gov.uk](http://www.legalservices.gov.uk) and the Welsh Assembly Government website – [www.wales.gov.uk](http://www.wales.gov.uk)

### Background and Overview

During December 2007, the Wales Committee for the Community Legal Service (CLS) held its first citizen engagement meeting as part of its programme of meetings as set out in the joint Legal Services Commission and Welsh Assembly Government policy paper, Making Legal Rights a Reality in Wales.

### **Outline of event**

The objective of the event was to generate ideas on how the most vulnerable people in society can have a voice in the provision, development and evaluation of legal advice services.

It is recognised that vulnerable and socially excluded people are more likely to face 'clusters' of problems, and are less likely to do anything about them. It may be that they are unaware of the help that is available or if they are aware, they may not feel confident enough to seek help.

As a first step, the Wales Committee sought to engage with organisations that represent citizens in Wales. A diverse list of organisations was with significant input from the Wales Council for Voluntary Action. The WCVA sit on the Committee with a specific 'citizen' focused responsibility, and played a key role in obtaining details from its many networks of community based organisations and in encouraging attendance at the event.

There was a positive response to the invitation and the event was fully subscribed. To ensure there was representation from across the wide range of community organisations, in most circumstances places were limited to one representative per organisation.

There was wide representation from across the Third Sector organisations in Wales and there was mixed levels of awareness of the work of the Legal Services Commission. It was therefore an opportunity for information sharing, networking and for highlighting the wide range of services provided by each of the organisations attending.

Tom Jones, the Wales Commissioner for the Legal Services Commission and the Chair of the Wales Committee for the CLS opened the event and welcomed all present. Crispin Passmore, Director of CLS, provided the background to 'Making Legal Rights a Reality in Wales' and the future policy direction for the Legal Services Commission.

During the course of the day delegates were split into three groups and a series of workshops were held.

## **Focus of the Workshops**

### **Workshop 1**

The LSRC is the independent research arm of the Legal Services Commission. It was set up in 1996 to inform legal aid policy and the implementation of reform. It has a broad remit to conduct strategic research in the civil and criminal justice fields.

The Legal Services Research Centre (LSRC) ran the first workshop with a specific focus on Legal Education and Information. The workshop incorporated a discussion regarding the practical role that the citizen representatives can play in legal education.

The questions posed to the groups for discussion were:

- To what extent can the most vulnerable be reached through education initiatives?
- Does putting money into education initiatives produce better outcomes for people than investing public funds into a range of different advice services, including outreach advice?

For further information on research that has been published by the LSRC and current research projects, can be found at [www.lsrc.org.uk](http://www.lsrc.org.uk)

The presentations from the LSRC were described as “extremely informative”, “eye opening” and “humbling”.

- It was unanimously agreed that legal education is imperative if we wish to reach the most vulnerable people in society. The research by the LSRC provides evidence to this view. The differences in the outcome of an individual faced with problems when they were aware of their rights, as a contrast against those who were not aware was quite significant.
- The need for appropriate and timely education was considered essential. The majority of citizens do not recognise when they have a legal problem and there is a challenge to educate communities to know their rights and responsibilities and to empower them to access services.
- Legal education in schools was considered a priority and any initiatives to support this activity should be given significant support.
- Primary and secondary care health outlets were also identified as places that should be targeted for holding a wide range of legal information.
- Offenders and those at risk of re-offending were also identified as a group to target to legal education and advice.
- It was considered important for details of Community Legal Advice Services to be cascaded throughout the WCVA networks
- Shelter Cymru’s Information Matters project was highlighted as a successful way to increase knowledge amongst ‘problem noticers’. It was considered to be high impact and should be rolled out across all of Wales.
- It was agreed that whilst information was crucial, people still needed to have the confidence and support to take the next steps. The existence of advocacy and support groups were highlighted as essential for those people who require additional support. It was agreed that they should be made higher profile within communities due to their key role in supporting vulnerable people.

- The DWP was identified for a specific focus as they had a significant impact on individuals and their need for advice, due to common and repetitive problems in accessing benefits.
- Each of the workshops concluded that it would be effective use of funds to focus more on preventative education to have a long-term impact.

## **Workshop 2**

The aim of the second workshop was to generate ideas on how citizens can be engaged in the future development of legal advice services. The citizen representative groups were able to highlight those communities that we need to target to ensure that the hard to reach and most vulnerable in society are able, and know how to access advice services. There was open discussion on how citizens currently access services, and what could be done to further improve access. In particular there was discussion about how to engage citizens in the development of future legal advice services. Specific questions were put to the group to obtain their views:

1. What services are there that currently meet the need of vulnerable groups and how can we build on any examples of good practice?
2. **(a)** What voice does the citizen have in the development of commissioned services?  
**(b)** To identify and agree a process for gaining the views of the communities in Wales in relation to legal advice services

Feedback from both workshops showed there are many existing advice agencies providing an excellent service. Difficulties can often arise due to a lack of awareness of what is available, not only amongst citizens, but also citizen representative groups and community support organisations. This can result in an individual being referred to a few different agencies before they are put in touch with the right one, causing referral fatigue and double handling of client diagnosis.

The workshops and feedback forms all put forward the idea of having a Citizen Engagement Panel in each of the eight procurement areas. The panel should be made up of citizens and citizen representative groups to ensure that the needs of the citizens are addressed when scoping the future design and monitoring of advice services. The panel could then be used to get an informed view of the need in the areas they represent and ensure the effective commissioning of legal advice services. This was considered vital when looking at the differences in urban Wales and rural Wales. Existing community links such as Communities First Co-ordinators and local Councils for Voluntary Services were considered as key stakeholders for these panels.

In addition there was considerable feedback highlighting the need for increased cross-referring across the WCVA networks. It was suggested that WCVA might be able to address this issue through its communication activity. It is anticipated this would help raise awareness of organisations with members of different networks. Many examples of good practice were shared within the workshops.

In these examples it demonstrated that increasing awareness of services amongst smaller community based organisations would have a high impact for the citizens of Wales.

At the end of the workshop sessions, each of the groups came together to report back on the main themes in their discussions. It was clear that there were considerable similarities in suggestions across the workshops.

### **General feedback**

The evaluation forms provided positive views of the event.

- There was a strong indication that a further event would be beneficial and any activity to map and raise awareness of existing services would be gratefully received. Future meetings should be client group specific to gather more detailed feedback from specific groups about their needs and experiences of legal advice services.
- The opportunity to network was highlighted as being a valuable part of the event.
- The Internet and telephone should not be underestimated. Each of these was a growing resource with more and more people accessing information and advice in this way every day.
  - The Legal Services Commission website was reported to be difficult to navigate around and felt impossible to find what you wanted. Information about this event should be made available on the website and links to other organisations to assist in the points raised about raising the profile of other support organisations.

Recommendations from Event

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Key links to be developed</b>
Legal education in schools to be prioritised and any activities to deliver such initiatives should be given support	Welsh Assembly Government – Financial Literacy scheme in PSE Curriculum  Welsh Consumer Council – Consumer Education Website
Primary and Secondary care health outlets should be targeted for promoting a wide range of legal information	Legal Services Commission – Community Legal Advice
Offenders and those at risk of re-offending should be targeted for legal education and advice	National Offender Management Service – Pathways to reduce re-offending  Legal Services Commission - Community Legal Advice, access to Specialist Legal Advice
Community Legal Advice Services details to be cascaded throughout the Wales Council for Voluntary Action networks and Communities First Partnerships	Wales Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA)
An increase in support for effective legal education initiatives across Wales.	All
Advocacy and support groups should have their profile raised within communities.	Wales Council for Voluntary Action
Work with DWP to reduce impact on individuals and their need for advice, due to common and repetitive problems in accessing benefits.	Welsh Assembly Government Legal Services Commission
Engage with local CVS and key stakeholders on a Regional basis for each of the eight procurement areas when designing and evaluating services.	Wales Council for Voluntary Action Legal Services Commission
Enable increased cross-referring with WCVA networks to raise awareness and profile of services available.	Wales Council for Voluntary Action