

## WALES COMMITTEE FOR THE CLS

### Minutes of the Meeting held on Friday 7<sup>th</sup> March 2008 at the Millennium Stadium, Cardiff

**Present:** Tom Jones - Commissioner for Wales, LSC (Chair)  
Lynne Schofield – Welsh Assembly Government  
Paul Davies - Wales Director, Legal Services Commission,  
Fran Targett – Citizens Advice Cymru (Chair CLS National Forum)  
Catrin Williams, CAFCASS Cymru  
Rhys Evans, Welsh Consumer Council  
Yvonne Thomas – National Offender Management Service  
Dr Caroline Turner – Welsh Assembly Government  
Paul Newell - Head of Civil Policy, Legal Services Commission  
Alexy Buck – Legal Services Research Centre, Legal Services Commission  
Gareth Moss – SOLACE Wales  
Jane Shepherd – Welsh Local Government Association  
Teresa Shackell – Tribunal Service – Cardiff

**Legal Services Commission Wales Staff:**

Tiana Williams - Wales Policy Manager  
Emma Rouse – Policy Developer  
Tracy Scott – Secretariat

**Apologies for Absence:** Graham Benfield – Wales Council for Voluntary Action  
Naomi Alleyne – Welsh Local Government Association  
Crispin Passmore, Legal Services Commission  
Dafydd Ifans, CAFCASS Cymru  
Dr Neil Wooding – Equalities & Human Rights Commission

<b>1.</b>	<p><b>Introductions, Apologies and Welcome</b></p> <p>Tom welcomed everyone to the meeting and apologies were noted on behalf of the above.</p>	
<b>2.</b>	<p><b>Minutes of the meeting held on 14<sup>th</sup> September 2008</b></p> <p>The minutes were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting. It was noted that they would be available bilingually on the Legal Services Commission website along with the minutes of previous meetings.</p>	
<b>3.</b>	<p><b>Matters arising</b></p> <p>An event had been held for Welsh MPs in January 2007 to update them on the latest developments and the Way Ahead reform programme. It had been intended that the event would be repeated in January 2008, but this had not gone ahead as the LSC had organised a central meeting for MPs during</p>	

	<p>December. Paul Davies reported that it was the intention to hold the event in the Summer to provide details of the Commission's future programme of work and the impact in Wales. Turnout at February's event held in the Senedd for Assembly Members had been disappointing, but it was noted that the local authority attendees had found it very useful. The importance of continuing to provide information to both AMs and MPs was agreed.</p> <p>Fran Targett reported that the research being undertaken by Bangor University on behalf of Citizens Advice Cymru had got to a point where there was now a draft report for the first wave of research. It was agreed that this item would be placed on the agenda when there was a published form.</p>	
<p>4.</p>	<p><b>Update on implementation of Making Legal Rights a Reality in Wales</b></p> <p>Tiana Williams reported that there had been a focussed effort on holding discussions with local authorities in Wales regarding joint commissioning. There had been initial discussions with 9 local authorities and a series of follow up meetings. Many local authorities had indicated a preference to have open discussions with existing service providers at an early stage rather than after any formal agreement to work together had been established. An Open Meeting had been held with the Cardiff, Vale of Glamorgan and Bridgend region to communicate what was being explored. A similar event had been held in Neath Port Talbot and whilst there were many questions, the proposals had received positive feedback. The earliest planned date for the first Community Legal Advice Network was April 2009.</p> <p>Gareth Moss provided Bridgend Council's perspective from his involvement to date. The careful and tentative approach was welcomed in addition to the emphasis of getting it right, rather than moving ahead with an April 2009 timeframe. It was noted that across Wales the local elections in May were having an impact on any local decisions being made at this time.</p> <p>Paul Newell reported that there was no expectation for any formal agreement with any local authorities in Wales until after the elections. No firm decisions had been made about how the process would be developed for each area and this was being fed into through local discussions. It was noted that the Community Legal Advice Centre in Leicester, had involved a 3-year development process, and 2 tendering processes in order to get it to a position where the Centre could be ready for service.</p> <p>Alexy Buck reported that the Legal Services Research Centre are undertaking a research project on CLACs and CLANs which will be made available to the Committee.</p> <p>Yvonne Thomas reported that 10% of the offender population were foreign nationals and queried whether this would be a client group that would be targeted when considering the commissioning and delivery of services. The traditional prison model was unlikely to work and telephone services would be very valuable as prisoners are moved around a lot as the prisons become full.</p>	

	<p>Paul Newell confirmed that the client group would be considered, but how highly they ranked would be up for discussion.</p> <p>Paul Davies reported that Community Legal Advice (CLA), which included a telephone advice service, had been in operation for 3 years. It was noted that the majority of advice provided in Wales is done face-to-face, but consideration was being given to how telephone advice may provide an alternative model of advice provision. From April, an appointment making system would be piloted in Wales through Community Legal Advice. The outcome of the pilot would be presented to the Committee once available. Paul Davies agreed to speak to Yvonne regarding the telephone service available and how this may be linked into Prisons in Wales.</p> <p>Tiana Williams reported that an agreement in principle had been reached with Jocelyn Davies AM and Brian Gibbons AM regarding the joint commissioning between the Welsh Assembly Government and the Legal Services Commission for housing legal advice services. Lynne confirmed that discussions were now focussed on working through the detail of how it would be progressed.</p>	
<p><b>5</b></p>	<p><b>Review of Report and Recommendations – Citizen Engagement Meeting, 7<sup>th</sup> December 2007</b></p> <p>Emma Rouse provided an overview of the purpose and remit of the event. It was noted that the event had identified different levels of understanding about legal services and the Legal Services Commission. The Committee agreed that there was a need to develop greater understanding and for increased awareness raising.</p> <p>The report suggested that WCVA networks were possibly the most suitable vehicle for cascading and sharing information. This approach was supported by the Committee, and it was noted that Emma would discuss the suggested actions with Graham Benfield prior to the next meeting. The event was considered successful overall, with the majority of people being happy to participate fully.</p> <p>Lynne Schofield was happy to participate fully from the Welsh Assembly’s point of view and agreed to look into how they could link in with the work that they had undertaken with schools.</p> <p>Tom Jones reported the findings from Public Legal Education and Support Task Force (PLEAS), which reported that good things were being done, but not everywhere. It was noted from Hazel Genn’s report in July that there is a general lack of knowledge about what help is available, as well as there being no clarity in what different organisations are responsible for. Yvonne Thomas reported that Inter-Ministerial Group (IMG) meet quarterly and suggested getting an item on to the agenda.</p> <p>Alexy Buck suggested that information could be posted on the website for primary health care advisors. Paul Davies reported that GPs surgeries had all been written to, to publicise the CLA telephone advice line, but the response had</p>	

	<p>been poor. Each surgery had been sent a poster and other publicity materials, but subsequent visits to some surgeries revealed that they had not been displayed. Fran Targett agreed to speak to Paul about the contacts the CABx had in Wales in primary care settings.</p> <p>The group discussed the different types of audience and agreed that there was a need to look at how people are communicated with. Yvonne Thomas commented that a high percentage of offenders had a limited ability to read and there would be a need to develop suitable literature.</p> <p>Tom Jones reported that he would like a consultation specifically involving young people in Wales and would welcome the Committee's support. Lynne Schofield reported that the European Social Fund's project investing in young people might be able to nominate people who had already been prepared for engagement. Fran Targett commented that some local authorities in Wales are doing some excellent work and it would be worth talking to the WLGA about which ones are involved. Paul Newell queried how realistic and at what point would they be involved in the design, as it would be difficult to be specific about how service should be delivered. Paul commented that it may be best left to the suppliers and the local community; allowing them to have active participation with the people who are providing the service.</p> <p>Tom Jones commented that there was a need to have some mechanism in place to measure the impact of the advice being delivered.</p> <p>The Committee noted that once the paper was finalised it would be sent out to all who indicated an interest in the event and posted on the Legal Services Commission's website.</p>	
<p><b>6</b></p>	<p><b>CLS Independent Advice Services National Forum Update</b></p> <p>Fran Targett reported that a meeting of the Forum had taken place at the end of January and provided an overview of what had been discussed. There were still concerns regarding the movement towards a CLAN in Wales and small non-contracted providers who were potentially only funded by the local authority. There was a lot of uncertainty amongst the sector around the Law Society's dispute with the Legal Services Commission around the unified contract. Not For Profit organisations were facing a difficult funding round due to reduced funding from the local authorities. Fran was pleased with the citizen engagement event and with the number of attendees.</p> <p>Fran and Tiana Williams agreed to liaise and produce an agenda for the provider focus meeting in June.</p> <p>Paul Newell commented that before Christmas the Commission had made known its intention to terminate all of the Unified Contracts and there had been discussions with the Law Society subsequently. These discussions remained ongoing and it was hoped there would be an outcome over the forthcoming weeks.</p>	

<p>7</p>	<p><b>Welsh Assembly Government – update on Financial Inclusion Strategy</b></p> <p>Lynne Schofield reported that the Steering Group for the Financial Inclusion Strategy was set up during August. The Minister was keen to see an action plan. A meeting took place with the FSA and work was being undertaken to look at informed responsible lending. The strategy would target priority groups; children, older people, ex-offenders, lone parents etc. Work was in progress to implement a Child Trust Welsh premium where the fund will pay £50 per child, and £100 per child in deprived areas in addition to looking at access in schools in Wales Credit Union's. The strategy would include addressing the need for comprehensive benefit advice in every area. The council tax benefit take-up for pensioners and families with disabled children had been launched and £1 million per year was now available for the next 3 years. The Welsh Assembly Government would be working with the banking sector to enable everyone to access mainstream financial services, and with LINK to increase access to free cash machines. There were plans to recruit a secondee to work on the Strategy shortly.</p> <p>Lynne reported that the FSA had held an event at the Assembly offices and she had taken some CLA leaflets, which had been received very positively.</p>	
<p>8</p>	<p><b>National Offender Management Service – Update on Finance, Benefits &amp; Debt Pathway</b></p> <p>Yvonne Thomas reported that the Ministry of Justice had announced a major restructure, which had resulted in the prison and probation service being brought together under the umbrella of NOMS. NOMS would have operational and commissioning responsibilities as of 1<sup>st</sup> April. Yvonne reported that following consultation, four sites had been identified for new prison facilities within Wales. The issue of bringing Welsh prisoners back into Wales was on the Children and Family pathway agenda.</p> <p>Paul Newell reported that the Finance, Benefit and Debt pathway was one of the seven pathways for reducing re-offending. The work on this pathway was being taken forward in Wales between NOMS, The Legal Services Commission and the Welsh Assembly Government. Part of the work of the pathway had been to devise a service specification for a debt advice service to prisoners. £2.5 million had been secured for face-to-face debt advice in England and Wales from the Financial Inclusion Fund (FIF) and the Legal Services Commission had agreed to put in another £2.5 million. The tender document for a three-year contract was currently being worked on and would be published shortly. Alexy Buck reported that the LSRC was responsible for initial evaluation of FIF and further research was due to be published during the summer and would be available on the LSRC website.</p> <p>Yvonne Thomas reported that they were working on a European Social Fund bid to address the employability of offenders. It is anticipated that 15,000 offenders would be dealt with during the first year. It was also noted that there was a</p>	

	<p>recognised gap in the length of time between a prisoner being released and entitled to benefits, and work was being undertaken in order to bridge that gap.</p>	
9	<p><b>Framework for reporting on 1<sup>st</sup> year of Wales Committee</b></p> <p>The group held a discussion around communicating the Committee's objectives. It was agreed that future activity would be discussed and agreed at the meeting in September and would include a review of the current Terms of Reference. It was suggested that a separate document be produced to define the Committee's role over the forthcoming twelve months. The document would state that the terms of reference would be reviewed at the time of the Committee's annual review.</p> <p>Tom Jones proposed that Ruth Marks, the newly appointed Commissioner for Older People in Wales be invited to become a member or address a future meeting.</p>	
10	<p><b>Any Other Business</b></p> <p>Tiana Williams reported that Clare Pillman from the Court Service had been unable to attend today's meeting but HMCS had provided information packs for the Merthyr Tydfil Community Justice Court for each of the Committee members.</p>	
	<p><b>Close of Meeting</b></p> <p>Tom thanked everyone for their attendance at the meeting and looked forward to welcoming them at the next meeting in North Wales on 6<sup>th</sup> June.</p> <p>The dates for meetings in 2008 were:          6<sup>th</sup> June – North Wales (business meeting and provider focus meeting)          14<sup>th</sup> September – Cardiff (business meeting)          December – venue tbc (citizen focus (young people) meeting)</p>	