

WALES COMMITTEE FOR THE CLS

Minutes of the 3rd Meeting held on 14th September 2007 at the Park Inn Hotel, 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)
Dafydd Ifans – CAFCASS Cymru
Rhys Evans, Welsh Consumer Council – representing Nich Pearson
Graham Benfield – Wales Council for Voluntary Action
Naomi Alleyne – Welsh Local Government Association
Paul Newell - Head of Civil Policy, Legal Services Commission
Jonathan Bennett – Tribunal Service, Cardiff
Gareth Moss – SOLACE Wales
Tiana Williams, Wales Policy Manager, Legal Services Commission
Tracy Scott – Secretariat

Attending for Presentation:

Professor Richard Moorhead – Cardiff University
Angela McCarthy – National Offender Management Service
Panos Dasygenis – Consumer Direct Wales

Apologies for Absence:

Alexy Buck - Legal Services Research Centre
Nick Chibnall – The Court Service
Dr Caroline Turner – Welsh Assembly Government
Dr Neil Wooding – Equalities & Human Rights Commission
Yvonne Thomas – National Offender Management Service
Nich Pearson, Welsh Consumer Council
Pascoe Pleasance, Legal Services Research Centre
Crispin Passmore, Legal Services Commission

1.	Introductions, Apologies and Welcome Tom welcomed everyone to the meeting and a particular welcome was extended to the new members, John Bennett from the Tribunal Service, Gareth Moss from SOLACE Wales, Fran Targett, Chair of the CLS National Forum for Wales and Graham Benfield from WCVA.	
2.	Minutes of the meeting held on 8th June 2007 Both sets of minutes from the previous Committee and Provider meetings were agreed as an accurate record and it was noted that they would be posted on the Legal Services Commission website.	

<p>3.</p>	<p>Matters arising</p> <p>It was noted that <i>Making Legal Rights a Reality in Wales</i> had been published the previous day. Tom thanked everyone involved in getting it prepared on time for the meeting.</p> <p>It was noted that an event was held in Westminster with Welsh MPs in January 2007 to update them on the latest developments and the Way Ahead reform programme. The event will be repeated on 16th January 2008. Lord Hunt had indicated that he would like to be present.</p>	
<p>4.</p>	<p>Voice of the Client – Role of Wales Council for Voluntary Action</p> <p>Graham Benfield discussed the contents of the <i>Informed and Organised Voices</i> paper and outlined a proposed approach to engaging a broader client voice in a way that was both manageable and informed. The paper set out 6 different levels of engagement and the WCVA could potentially facilitate engagement at each level. It was noted that the WCVA held a large database of organisations and networks and that this was at the core of a web of communication. There was also an extensive range of networks that made up the Partnership Council with the Welsh Assembly Government. At a local level, the WCVA supports and works closely with Local Voluntary Councils many of which are established along unitary authority area. It was agreed that there needed to be clarity on what was needed from any engagement before any decisions could be made around who this should involve and how it could effectively be undertaken.</p> <p>Fran Targett welcomed the paper and felt that it was important to add to it with other research that had also been undertaken. Bangor University was undertaking some research on behalf of Citizens Advice Cymru that is working around how to define greatest need. It aims to look at how urgently the advice is needed, the capability of the individual, fairness, and the degree of detriment someone is likely to suffer without advice. The research comprises of 3 stages and is currently at the end of the first wave.</p> <p>Lynne Schofield reported that the Welsh Assembly had been involved in research with regards to children and young people and suggested that something could be learnt from it. Tom indicated that Shelter had held a conference specifically for young people 12 to 18 months previously. Dafydd raised the point that children and young people pose a real challenge as they are often not involved in direct negotiations but are ultimately impacted by the outcome.</p> <p>The Committee agreed that it would have to decide who it wanted to consult with, why, and how often. Priority clients needed to be identified and there should be accountability to those being consulted with. If people were to give up their time, it should be clear what would be done as a result and a transparent and honest approach taken particularly where feedback could not, or would not be possible to respond to. It would be important that simplified terminology was used. Graham highlighted that there would be a danger of raising expectations. The Committee was in agreement that clarity over purpose and targeting of client engagement would manage the level of expectation.</p>	

	<p>It was confirmed that the purpose of the next meeting on 7th December was to engage with client representative bodies and to consult on current experiences of legal advice services in Wales.</p>	
5	<p>Voice of the Providers – Role of CLS Wales National Forum</p> <p>Fran Targett delivered a presentation to the group regarding the <i>Community Legal Service Independent Advice Services National Forum</i>. Members included ‘umbrella’ organisations representing networks of independent advice providers and independent advice providers with a national remit across Wales. There was power to co-opt additional and appropriate members to ensure appropriate representation. Fran outlined the current membership and it was noted that the forum felt there were gaps in its membership.</p> <p>Fran was Chair of the Forum and was representing Citizens Advice Cymru. Roy Morgan was the Vice Chair, representing LAPG (Legal Aid Practitioners Group). Fran reported that the forum had responded to the consultation on the policy paper for Wales and welcomed the overall aims. There were some concerns as to whether the Committee would be a talking shop or would be influential in affecting the outcomes of the paper, and also whether it would address the issue of gaps in advice provision. It was noted that Fran would require time to consult the Forum in advance of Committee meetings if she was going to effectively represent her colleagues.</p>	
6	<p>Key Performance Indicators for the CLS in Wales</p> <p>Paul Davies reported that the LSC was in the process of some significant changes to its IT systems. The changes have meant that the Commission was unable to produce the data for the Key Performance at that point, however once available it would be circulated to the Committee.</p>	
7	<p>Consumer Direct</p> <p>Panos Dasygenis delivered a presentation to the Committee on <i>Consumer Direct</i>. The helpline took calls for all 22 Welsh Local Authorities and was also able to give pre-shopping advice. Any potential criminal offences or complex cases were referred to Trading Standards (around 15% of calls). It had been operating for 3 years and had handled around 300,000 calls, creating 190,000 cases. Around 5% of the calls were signposted on to other advice providers including CLS Direct and the links could be found on the Consumer Direct website. Consumer Direct had saved £11,5 million pounds of consumer detriment. There were a small number of calls going through the Welsh language line, representing 0.1% of the calls taken. It was noted that 20% of people in Wales speak Welsh, but from their experience felt that people were inhibited to speak Welsh if they did not know the Welsh words for all the legal terminology.</p> <p>The Committee agreed that it was good practice for organisations to take additional steps to encourage people to speak Welsh – even if this meant conducting the service in both languages, in such instances as outlined above.</p>	

	<p>It was noted that the helpline did not find that the 0845 telephone number deters people from calling. The average call took around 9 minutes and the call was charged at the local rate. There were plans to move to a 03 telephone number. It was noted that the costs to change to a 0800 number were very high.</p> <p>Paul Newell reported that CLS Direct was to begin a telephone family advice pilot in October.</p>	
<p>8</p>	<p>“Making Legal Rights a Reality in Wales”/ Welsh Assembly Government Update and Next Steps</p> <p>Lynne Schofield reported that although the consultation had ended in March, the Assembly elections and political changes had prevented an earlier publication of the response paper. The paper would be available on the Welsh Assembly Government and LSC websites later that day. Lynne reported that the Assembly Government saw joint commissioning and the pooling of budgets as a positive step. The policy paper fitted in with the Assembly Government’s wider policy framework and this was reflected in the document. It was noted that the Welsh Assembly Government intended to work together very closely with the Commission in its delivery.</p> <p>Tiana set out the initial next steps and invited any comments on the policy paper. There was a clear drive for regional working but that the regions identified in the paper were flexible. The plan was to have the first Community Legal Advice Service in place by April 2009.</p> <p>Naomi commented that the paper addresses a number of concerns that the WLGA and its members had and highlighted that flexibility was key in moving forward. All Local Authorities were looking for co-operative working but having one to one dialogue would be the most important issue. The first stage would be around discussion at the regional boards. Naomi commented that there was a need to get the new approach working in an area and then use this as a way of highlighting the benefits in joint working.</p> <p>Graham asked whether the commissioning process would include citizen/client voices. Paul Newell responded by saying that commissioners would decide jointly upon the detail of the commissioning process and it was unlikely that there would be a standardised approach.</p> <p>Fran welcomed the changes in approach and tone of the paper, but still had some concerns about the detail. She felt there was a re-distribution of inadequate funding, but welcomed the commitment to 3-year funding.</p> <p>The Committee agreed that it would need to clarify and quantify the money that would be available. Justice partners would need to understand what the changes would mean for them.</p>	
<p>9</p>	<p>NOMS Wales – Current initiatives/Key Programmes</p>	

	<p>Angela McCarthy delivered a presentation on NOMs projects that were in progress to help reduce re-offending. Angela highlighted that criminal justice agencies needed to work together and strong links with other bodies were encouraged. It was noted that there was a need to overcome a culture gap regarding involvement of the third sector. There were schemes in England that presented opportunities for learning and there were plans to open a prison for women in North Wales, as currently there were no women's prisons within Wales.</p> <p>It was queried whether NOMS or the Probation Service were the commissioners of services. Angela reported that the Probation Service currently undertook commissioning however; a transfer of functions was likely to take place within the next 2-3 years.</p>	
<p>10</p>	<p>Research – A trouble shared – legal problems clusters in solicitors' and advice agencies</p> <p>Richard delivered a presentation to the group on his research, which had examined whether clients presented with multiple problems, and how these problems were dealt with. It was noted that advisors when faced with problems outside their expertise were often not dealing with them seamlessly, particularly when a specialist's own organisation lacked specialist skills in the problem type presented by the client. The group welcomed the research.</p> <p>Fran referred to research being undertaken at Bangor University that looked at outcomes for clients. Fran would provide Richard with further details about the research. It was noted that researcher had found that levels of severe depression were much higher than had been anticipated. Fran agreed that although referral had improved, it was still an issue.</p> <p>Paul Newell commented that the additional research undertaken by Richard had provided further evidence that the LSC were right to go down the route it had with the CLS Strategy. The Committee agreed that moving ahead with dealing with the full range of problems that clients faced was the correct approach.</p> <p>Tom commented that clients should not need to worry whether a supplier was specialist or generalist and agreed that loss of health was an important catalyst to problems. It was agreed that quick intervention was important as people tended to walk away with their problems if they were unable to resolve them easily.</p> <p>Angela reported that similar factors had been taken into account with the Dawn Project. This initiative had brought services together in one building and had proven to be successful.</p> <p>Action – Fran to email Richard with details of research undertaken at Bangor University</p>	<p>FT</p>
<p>10</p>	<p>Close of Meeting</p>	

	<p>Tom thanked everyone for their presentations and attendance at the meeting. The next meeting would take place from 10.30am – 3pm on Friday 7th December at the Holiday Inn Hotel, Castle Street, Cardiff. This meeting would be citizen focused.</p>	
--	--	--

Forthcoming Meetings 2007 - 2008

Date	Type	Location	Notes / Topics
7 December 2007	Meet with Client Representatives	Cardiff	<p>Identify process for Committee engagement with clients and potential clients</p> <p>Understand client experience of advice services to help service design.</p>
7 March 2008	Wales Committee	Cardiff	Review progress towards implementation of Making Legal Rights a Reality in Wales.
6 June 2008	Meet with Provider Representatives	North Wales – venue TBC	
12 th September 2008	Wales Committee	Cardiff	
5 th December 2008	Meeting with Client Representatives	TBC	