

WALES COMMITTEE FOR THE CLS

Minutes of the Meeting held on 8th June 2007 at City Hall, Cardiff .

Present: Tom Jones, Commissioner for Wales, LSC (Chair)
 Nick Chibnall, Her Majesty's Court Service
 Paul Davies, Wales Director, Legal Services Commission,
 Rhian Davies, Office for the Children's Commissioner for Wales
 Rhys Evans, Welsh Consumer Council
 Dafydd Ifans, CAFCASS Cymru
 Paul Newell, Head of Civil Policy, Legal Services Commission
 Dr Caroline Turner, Welsh Assembly Government
 Siân West, NOMS
 Tiana Williams, Wales Policy Developer, Legal Services Commission

In Attendance: Elaine Bennion, Legal Services Commission, Minute Taker
 Earl Smith, NOMS

Apologies for Absence: Naomi Alleyne, WLGA
 Maria Battle, Children's Commissioner for Wales
 Graham Benfield, WCVA
 Crispin Passmore, Legal Services Commission
 Nich Pearson, Welsh Consumer Council
 Pascoe Pleasance, Legal Services Research Centre

1.	<p>Introductions, Apologies and Welcome</p> <p>Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and apologies were noted on behalf of the above.</p> <p>Dr Caroline Turner was asked if there were any updates from the Welsh Assembly in view of the appointment of the new Minister for Social Justice & Public Service Delivery, Andrew Davies AM. She advised that there were no significant updates at the moment but that the new minister is willing to meet with the Chair.</p>	
2.	<p>Minutes of the meeting held on 2nd March 2007</p> <p>These were agreed, as being an accurate account of the meeting subject to a wording change at point 6.4, 'strikes' will be changed to industrial action.</p> <p>A discussion ensued about whether the minutes will be available for viewing on the LSC website and it was decided, subject to agreement from absent members, that a summary should be available which would be circulated to members for comments along with the full minutes.</p> <p>Action – absent members to feedback their comments to the Chair</p>	

<p>3.</p>	<p>Matters arising</p> <p>It was noted that Guy Tompkins had agreed to send a representative from Tribunals Group to attend meetings from September.</p> <p>4.6 It was noted that the WCVA are now represented on the Committee, which will help with client involvement and although Graham Benfield gave his apologies for today's meeting he will be attending meetings in the future.</p>	
<p>4.</p>	<p>Terms of Reference</p> <p>It was noted that no comments about the draft terms of reference had been received from members prior to the meeting.</p> <p>The content was discussed and it was decided that the list of members should not form part of the document, as it needs to be flexible as new members are identified. The timing of meetings should also be flexible and should be a <u>minimum</u> of 4 times a year rather than a <u>maximum</u> of 4 times a year. This is to enable extra meetings to be convened such as a meeting with ministers.</p> <p>It was agreed that the terms of reference would be reviewed annually.</p> <p>Chair agreed to sign off the terms of reference once the amendments have been included.</p>	<p>TJ</p>
<p>5</p>	<p>Work Programme</p> <p>The work programme was discussed and it was noted that members could suggest items for inclusion.</p> <p>It was also noted that it is the intention to prepare an annual report at the end of the year and to host a CLS conference next year and these would be included in the programme.</p> <p>The importance of the difference between the CLS and LSC was emphasised and that it needs to be made clear that the Committee is not just about legal aid issues but about legal advice services generally.</p> <p>It was suggested that members should think of areas of their work that would be of general interest to the Committee and consider whether they could carry out a presentation at future meetings.</p> <p>It was agreed that the Committee would encourage joined up working and would enable the pooling of resources for research etc. and input into consultations with the Welsh Assembly Government.</p>	<p>All</p>
<p>6</p>	<p>Key Performance Indicators</p> <p>Data tables were distributed from the LSC on the Legal Help spend in Wales and Community Legal Service Direct closed cases, which generated a discussion on</p>	

	<p>the management information that the Committee would like to look at.</p> <p>A question was asked as to why there was a significant peak in the number of calls made to CLS Direct in November 2006 for debt and it was noted that one possibility was a debt campaign that was launched by the LSC on 1st November 2006 although it is not confirmed that this is the reason. It was decided that an exception report explaining the peaks and troughs in the data would have been useful to have alongside the data tables.</p> <p>It was agreed that more detailed information on telephone advice was needed which will be provided for discussion at a future meeting.</p> <p>Action – item to be tabled at a future meeting</p> <p>CLS Direct work closely with Consumer Direct and members were asked what management information their organisations could provide. It was decided that a useful piece of work would be to overlay each member’s data to get a bigger picture.</p> <p>It was agreed that the Consumer Council at the next meeting would provide statistics on Consumer Direct.</p> <p>A discussion took place on the need to look at geographical data and it was agreed that at the next meeting the Committee will look at data on current spend against historical spend and would also look at how clients access services. The need for a discussion on mapping was recognised and it was agreed to have this at the next meeting.</p> <p>Action – discussion on mapping to be tabled at the next meeting.</p> <p>Action – members to be e-mailed with the March data for CLS Direct</p> <p>The requirement to have comparative data with England was discussed as it has been suggested that people in Wales do not access telephone advice. NOMS compare statistics with North East England because it is recognised as being of similar size and make up to Wales.</p> <p>It was agreed that somebody from CLS Direct would be invited to talk at the next meeting to enable understanding of how the data is collated, as there appears to be no obvious patterns in Wales.</p> <p>Chair expressed his interest in why young people are not accessing telephone advice services as research suggests.</p>	<p>NP</p> <p>PD</p> <p>PD</p> <p>TW</p>
7	<p>“Making Legal Rights a Reality in Wales” – Update</p> <p>The key focus of the consultation was where the most appropriate procurement areas in Wales should be and the governance of the CLS in Wales and it was noted that 32 representative responses were received and a summary of which has been prepared. The LSC and Welsh Assembly Government are now in discussions about producing a joint response in the summer.</p>	

	<p>Chair commented that this consultation was published some time after the English equivalent and it is hoped that in the future separate consultations for England and Wales would be published at the same time.</p> <p>Not covered by this item – A request by the CLS Forum to be represented on the Committee was discussed and it was agreed subject to agreement from absent members, to invite the chair of the CLS Forum formerly onto the Committee but they would not be able to be involved in any discussion about commissioning that could result in a conflict of interest.</p> <p>Action – Contact absent members to see whether they have any objections</p> <p>Action – Chair to write formerly to Chair of CLS Forum</p>	<p>PN</p>
<p>8</p>	<p>Update on the work of the LSC in Wales</p> <p>8.1 The end of year figures are in and it was noted that 51,000 people were helped in Wales without any of the budget being overspent. This was achieved by shifting money from areas that were underspent to ensure that clients were helped in the right areas. It was also noted that there had been a 25% increase in NfP performance.</p> <p>8.2 It was noted that there had been a lot of uncertainty in the supplier base and industrial action had been conducted in some areas, however despite this duty solicitor work had been unaffected.</p> <p>8.3 Suppliers who do civil work currently send their monthly reporting forms for work completed, in paper form to the LSC. By the 1st October 2007 the terms of their new contract requires that they must submit these reports through LSC online. 50% of suppliers are now submitting their reports online and the next 50% will be submitting by the October deadline. Suppliers that just do criminal work are on target to be submitting by next year as the terms of their new contract states that they should be doing this by 1st April 2008.</p> <p>8.4 It was noted that the Welsh Language Board had signed off the Welsh language scheme.</p> <p>8.5 An event was held in Westminster with Welsh MP's to update them on the latest developments and the Way Ahead reform programme. The event was well received and it is the intention to do the event again next year and to host a similar one for AM's. Views were sought on next year's event being hosted by the Committee and members were asked to feedback their comments to the Chair.</p> <p>8.6 A programme of supplier visits has been introduced with the intention of keeping them informed and up to date of developments.</p> <p>8.7 It was noted that all targets for 2006/2007 had been achieved.</p>	<p>All</p>

	<p>8.8 It has been agreed with the Welsh Assembly Government to work together to ensure that AM's are kept informed and which will hopefully reduce the amount of casework that they will have to do.</p>	
<p>9</p>	<p>Any Other Business</p> <p>It was noted that this was Siân West's last meeting and Yvonne Thomas will be attending in the future.</p>	
<p>10</p>	<p>Close of Initial Meeting – followed by meeting with legal advice providers</p> <p>Next meeting will be held on Friday 14th September 2007, Venue to be confirmed.</p>	