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## WALES COMMITTEE FOR THE CLS

Minutes of the Meeting held on Thursday 31<sup>st</sup> March 2011  
LSC office, Marland House, Central Square, Cardiff

### Present:

Tom Jones - Commissioner for Wales, LSC (Chair)  
Anna Buchanan – Office of the Commissioner for Older People  
Fran Targett – Citizens Advice Cymru  
Jeremy Stephens- SOLACE

### Legal Services Commission Staff:

Hilary Williams – Wales Stakeholder Liaison Manager

### Apologies for Absence:

Paul Davies – LSC  
Eleanor Marks - WAG  
Rob Heaton-Jones NOMS  
Hugh Simkiss HMCS  
Tracey Rogers – Children’s Commission.  
Alison Rees - Wales Office  
Naomi Alleyne – WLGA  
Rhys Evans - Consumer Focus Wales  
Lynne Schofield - WAG  
Tim Luke - HMCS  
Eleanor Williams – Equality and Human Rights Commission  
Catrin Williams CAF/CASS CYMRU

### Absent – Graham Benfield – WCVA

Lisa Jasper Tribunals

1.	<b>Introductions, Apologies and Welcome</b> Tom Jones welcomed everyone to the meeting especially Jeremy Stephens representing SOLACE who was attending his first meeting.	
2.	<b>Minutes of the meeting held on 23d July 2010 and 7<sup>th</sup> December 2010.</b> The minutes of the previous 2 meetings were approved by those present subject to any feedback from those that weren't in attendance <b>ACTION: HW to email absent Committee members to request confirmation that minutes approved.</b>	
3.	<b>Matters Arising</b> HW confirmed that all actions had been completed.  Tom Jones had attended a meeting with the Legal Aid Minister on the previous day. There had been some 5000 responses to the Legal Aid Reform Consultation and the MoJ response therefore was unlikely to be published until May time. Thereafter a Bill would go to Parliament that would also include the transfer to Executive Agency. Unlikely that this would be completed before October 2012. The Wales Committee would therefore continue until that time and a decision was needed in the meantime on the status of the Wales Committee after October 2012. A paper had been prepared asking for the Committee to continue as a Justice Committee for Wales on Civil Law and all major stakeholders had indicated their support.	

	<p>Clear instructions will be needed from Ministers as to what they want the Committee to do and to achieve and whether or not the membership should be broadened to include representation from the private sector and academia.</p> <p><b>ACTION: Tom Jones to approach Chief Executive to arrange a meeting with the Minister for further discussion of the matter.</b></p> <p>Fran Targett indicated that Adrian Webb of the AJT Council (which was being disbanded) might be an appropriate member of the Committee as there was always a concern about how people access Tribunals</p> <p><b>ACTION: HW to arrange meeting with Adrian Webb and Tom Jones</b></p> <p><b>ACTION: Fran Targett to send Adrian Webb's email address to HW</b></p> <p>Jeremy Stephens indicated that SOLACE would support in any way possible as the Committee had an impact on community cohesion. With Solace backing there would be 22 Local Authority Chief Executives supporting the work of the Committee. The cost to the public sector of the public not getting early advice will be huge. The long term outcome is a concern as the effect of social welfare law reductions won't be felt immediately.</p>	
4.	<p><b>Update on stakeholder engagement</b></p> <p>HW had circulated a paper prior to the meeting setting out details of the meetings and the outcomes. ( paper attached to the minutes)</p> <p>Item 1 on the paper – Peter Bryant report. Citizens Advice Cymru had been commissioned to provide a follow up report on advice to older people in Wales where the geography and advice needs in Wales have been researched. Initial Citizens Advice Cymru report on advice needs is on Older People Commission website. The link is as follows:</p> <p><a href="http://www.olderpeoplewales.com/Libraries/OPCW_Publications/CAB_Report.sflb.ashx">http://www.olderpeoplewales.com/Libraries/OPCW_Publications/CAB_Report.sflb.ashx</a></p> <p><b>ACTION: Anna Buchanan will send copy of completed report to HW</b></p> <p><b>ACTION: HW to put links to report into minutes.</b></p> <p>Item 2– Results Based Accountability (RAB) –</p> <p><b>ACTION: HW to talk to Naomi Alleyne about RAB.</b></p> <p>Item 3 - Financial Inclusion – Fran Targett reported that they had received 1 year Financial Inclusion Funding. 32 out of the 36 debt advisers will remain in place. Government will look at future funding of Debt advice through a levy on the Finance industry rather than from the Treasury. However it's likely that will take longer than 12 months and concern as to the speed with which decisions will be made on the future of the debt advisers.</p> <p>Citizens Advice Cymru has been successful in obtaining a contract from Money Advice Service (previously known as Consumer Financial Education Body) to deliver money advice for 3 years extendable to 5 years if the contract is delivered successfully. This is prevention rather than debt advice and is not for people in crisis and will provide information on finance and budgeting with an emphasis on vulnerable people. The money advisers will have to provide extensive face to face advice across Wales and will work with other organisations as intermediaries to deliver the service. Jeremy Stephens confirmed that there is a Data Observatory in WAG developing an Economic Impact Tool and there is an opportunity to broaden the data sets.</p> <p><b>ACTION: On behalf of Tom Jones, HW to send a copy of the update and the annual report (after approval from other Committee members) to all the LSC</b></p>	

	<b>Commissioners to keep them updated on developments in Wales.</b>	
5	<p><b>Update on the Government's Green Paper on legal aid reform consultation.</b> A response from MoJ is unlikely to be published until May as a result of some 5,000 responses being received by MoJ.</p> <p>A query was raised about whether the Welsh language and equality rights come under the Equalities legislation or the Welsh Language Act. It was considered that the right to use the Welsh language was not a stream under the Equalities Act but is an equalities issue under the Welsh Language Act.</p> <p><b>ACTION: HW to check with Eleanor Williams from the Equalities and Human Rights Commission what is the position</b> <b>ACTION: HW to notify Kirstie Adams that we have more information for her on Welsh language and equality.</b></p>	
6	<p><b>To consider and agree the format for the Wales Committee Annual Report 2010/11</b> The draft Annual Report was approved by those in the meeting.</p> <p><b>ACTION: HW to send draft annual report to other members for their comments and to allow 1 week for any responses.</b> <b>ACTION: HW to check if Nicola Cragg is still the contact in Head Office.</b></p>	
7	<p><b>Updates on initiatives from other agencies and stakeholders</b> <b>Citizens Advice Cymru:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Independent Providers Forum – Work by Citizens Advice Cymru and other NFP agencies and working with WAG and WLGA colleagues on welfare reform legislation and monitoring the impact of previous reforms on benefits that have already changed e.g. Housing Benefit. Lobbying as much as possible to ensure the impact is reduced as much as possible although it looks as if the impact on those with disabilities will be high.</li> <li>• Government Equalities Office meeting in Wales today to consult on access to advice and information on equalities. There is a need for both caseworker service and a helpline in Wales including delivery through Welsh language and lobbying for that to happen.</li> <li>• Advice delivery on the ground. In Wales CABx are currently expecting an overall reduction of 1% to independent advice in funding from Local Authorities. In England the situation is much more severe.</li> </ul> <p>The Wales Committee welcomes the fact that Local Authorities in Wales have responded generously and appropriately in the current financial situation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Citizens Advice Cymru are still engaging in the restructure of the service and by the middle of 2011 only 2 counties in Wales where there will not be a county service.</li> <li>• Citizens Advice Cymru are currently consulting with members and looking at a hub model so that a service will be strategically planned across a wider geographic area than a single local authority.</li> <li>• Citizens Advice Cymru working with Consumer Focus Wales and Consumer Direct Wales on future delivery of consumer advice and advocacy services following the proposals to transfer the responsibilities to Citizens Advice. An update will be provided at the next meeting on any developments.</li> </ul> <p><b>ACTION: Fran Targett to circulate top line paper.</b></p>	

	<p><b>Older People's Commission</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anna Buchanan reported that a major piece of work was being developed on information and advice and the link with poverty and older people.</li> <li>• Guide on the law and the protection of older people to be published and launched on 15<sup>th</sup> June 2011.</li> </ul> <p><b>SOLACE</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jeremy Stephens reported that local authorities had ensured that there was no disproportionate impact the third sector when considering funding cuts. Next year the position may not be as good.</li> <li>• WCVA keen to establish relationship building with local authorities</li> <li>• In the next 12 months there will be a key piece of work on how the third sector becomes part of the public sector in Wales</li> <li>• Economic Impact Assessment. WAG is due to roll out a new process for assessing economic impact and JS to arrange a presentation to the Committee.</li> </ul> <p><b>ACTION: JS to arrange a presentation to the Committee</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Career transition service between public services being developed for people displaced, also advice line and outplacement service.</li> <li>• Corporate Social Responsibility Charter – waiting for Ministerial backing but once approved critical for LSC and Committee to be committed to it.. Every Local Service Board will have to sign up to it. And UK bodies in Wales should be signed up to it.</li> </ul> <p><b>ACTION: JS to feedback and to update the Committee on the Charter</b></p>	
8	<p><b>Discussion on programme for future meetings</b> June 13 – Carolyn Downs has agreed to attend this meeting and this will be a providers meeting</p> <p>September meeting - A suggestion was mooted that we have a Conference on Advice Wales to look at the consequences of the legal aid review. The Legal Aid Minister and the Social Justice Minister could be invited. The future of prison advice and telephone advice could be discussed and the question then arose as to whether the providers meeting should be subsumed into the September meeting. The question of sponsorship to cover the cost of a Conference was considered. It was agreed that a Working Group should be set up to look at the cost of a venue/food. There is a Citizens Advice Cymru conference in November and important for the dates not to be too close to each other.</p> <p><b>ACTION: Tom Jones to meet with Carolyn Downs the Chief Executive to discuss.</b> <b>ACTION: If the Chief Executive agrees in principle then HW to circulate a questionnaire to members and ask for a response</b> <b>ACTION: HW to cost some venues plus food.</b></p>	
9	<p><b>Any Other Business</b> There was no other business</p>	
10	<p><b>Dates and locations for future meetings</b> June 13<sup>th</sup> 2011 – If this meeting is a provider meeting then likely location will be offices of Citizens Advice Cymru</p> <p><b>ACTION: Fran to check if training room available</b></p>	

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	September 20 <sup>th</sup> 2011 – possible conference in Cardiff December 14 <sup>th</sup> 2011 – citizens meeting – at LSC offices. March 12 <sup>th</sup> 2012 – Wales committee meeting – at LSC offices.	
<b>11</b>	<b>Close of Meeting</b> Tom Jones thanked everyone for their attendance and contribution to the meeting.	