

National Energy Efficiency and Savings Plan consultation  
Climate Change and Water Division  
Welsh Assembly Government  
Cathays Park  
Cardiff CF10 3NQ

2<sup>nd</sup> June 2009

Dear colleague

### **Response to the 'National Energy Efficiency & Savings Plan Consultation'**

The Legal Services Commission welcomes the opportunity to respond to the consultation on the Assembly Government's National Energy Efficiency & Savings Plan, and in particular the points raised in questions 15 – 18, relating specifically to the theme of fuel poverty.

The Legal Services Commission (LSC) is responsible for the administration of the legal aid budget across England and Wales. We are a non-departmental public body sponsored by the Ministry of Justice (MoJ), with whom we have a close working relationship. We are committed to empowering the most vulnerable people in society to safeguard their rights. The Commission funds a range of subject specific legal advice services through face-to-face contracts and through Community Legal Advice (CLA) - a telephone service providing information, triage and a legal advice service.

#### **Community Legal Advice (CLA)**

CLA is a free, confidential and bilingual advice service paid for by legal aid. The helpline **0845 345 4 345** provides specialist advice in debt, education, benefits and tax credits, employment and housing, to eligible callers. Those on a low income or benefits can access the service and their cases taken on and help provided to resolve them. Other callers will be directed to alternative sources of advice and information, including local face-to-face advice services.

The website provides high quality legal information [www.communitylegaladvice.org.uk](http://www.communitylegaladvice.org.uk). The service includes an online debt advice tool, a wide range of downloadable leaflets and a directory of national and local advice providers.

**Response to Question 15** – Do you think that better co-ordination of advice and support (along with the proposals for targeting support on page 31) will ensure that everyone is able to access appropriate advice and support on energy related matters?

We believe that better co-ordination of advice and support is essential. Many difficulties that individuals face relating to fuel poverty are cross cutting and therefore a range of services will be required to deal with the problem holistically. Of particular relevance to fuel poverty may be an individuals existing debt problems or difficulty in obtaining welfare benefits. We would recommend that when targeting people most in need, that debt and welfare benefits advice services are factored into the range of services that householders are directed and referred to. As detailed above Community Legal Advice would provide a comprehensive service for this purpose.

**Response to Question 16** – Are any advice or support services missing from the list above?

Yes – Community Legal Advice (CLS) – see description of service and contact details above.

**Response to Question 17** – Is there anything else that the Assembly Government and its partners should be doing to ensure that everyone is able to access appropriate advice and support on energy related matters?

It would be of benefit to individuals faced with problems requiring multiple solutions, for referral and signposting links to be formalised and embedded across a range of publicly funded services. An emphasis could be placed in particular on bridging devolved and non- devolved public services.

**Response to Question 18** – How could your organisation contribute?

As outlined previously, the Legal Services Commission funds a range of face to face and telephone civil advice contracts that are able to help many people living in fuel poverty. A range of private solicitors and not-for profit organisations hold these contracts eg. CABx and Shelter Cymru and deal with matters ranging from debt, welfare benefits, housing, employment and family matters amongst other subjects.

Community Legal Advice (CLA) as a telephone and web based resource that can be linked into other advice services eg. formal links exist with Consumer Direct Wales. The Legal Services Commission would be keen to explore any opportunities for expanding these links. A range of bilingual marketing materials are available to assist in the awareness raising and promotion of CLA and the Commission would welcome the opportunity to embed signposting into initiatives and services offered by other stakeholders.

I hope you will find this response useful. If you have any queries about its content, please do not hesitate to contact Tiana Williams, Wales Civil Policy Manager [Tiana.Williams@legalservices.gov.uk](mailto:Tiana.Williams@legalservices.gov.uk)

Regards

Yours sincerely

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