

LSC Provider Reference Groups – summer 2011

Cambridge: 11 July

London: 26 July

Nottingham: 13 July

Bristol: 2 August

Manchester: 13 July

London: 4 August

Leeds: 15 July

South Tyneside: 4 August

Birmingham: 19 July

Brighton: 16 August

Cardiff: 22 July

Legal Aid Reforms – Overview

- On 21 June the Government :
 - published consultation response to proposals for the reform of legal aid in England and Wales
 - introduced the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Bill
- Legal aid reforms are a radical set of changes aimed to **deliver £350m savings** over the spending review period

Legal aid consultation response timelines

- The changes to payments for civil (non-family), crime and experts legal aid work are planned to be implemented on 3 October 2011
- These are the first changes to arise from the consultation response
- Planning and preparation is currently underway to determine the timeline for other changes set-out in the consultation response

Family Tender and Bill timeline

Family retender timeline

- 5 September Invitation to tender opens
- 3 October Tender process closes
- Mid to late November Applicants notified of tender outcome
- Feb 2012 Contracts start

The Bill timeline

- Committee stages started on 12 July and will run until 13 October
- Royal Assent is expected in April 2012
- The Bill proposes to abolish the Legal Services Commission as a Non-Departmental Public Body, to be replaced by a new Executive Agency of the MoJ. We are planning for October 2012

Civil case management – processing delays

- We have recruited extra staff to work on Legal/Means and Finance casework because of:
 - increases in work volumes
 - closer scrutiny of applications and billing
- More than 25% of applications and bills are not completed correctly which:
 - means they are rejected
 - volumes are artificially increased

Civil case management – processing delays

- What you can do to help speed up processing
 - check forms are fully complete, supported by information required
 - subscribe to LSC Update
 - only telephone or fax in urgent cases
- Majority of 10,000-plus weekly calls to our contact centres are “chaser” calls

Criminal case management – processing delays

- Additional staff have also been brought in to tackle processing delays in crime
- Delays with litigator fee/advocate fees
 - system fix implemented in both areas
 - now clearing backlog of cases
 - all old claims to be cleared by end of August 2011

Criminal case management – processing delays

- As on the civil side errors on legal applications and claims are also affecting crime case management
- Check before telephoning us whether the answer to your question is available online e.g. LSC Update or the payment dates page on the LSC website
- This will reduce pressure on our staff – allowing us to process bills and applications more quickly

Action taken to reduce processing delays

- Deployment of additional resources – crime and civil
- Reduced telephony service – crime and civil
- Simplified process for fax authorities
- Change to Emergency Certificate duration
- Working with representative bodies to simplify processes
- Encouraging increased electronic working

Civil legal aid online

- LSC wants to improve efficiency and financial control through:
 - the introduction of a new client and cost management system
 - a scanning solution for paper evidence
 - new ways for clients to pay

Civil legal aid online (cont.)

- The new system will improve financial controls and reporting
- It will also contribute to a reduction in bureaucracy for providers through increased electronic working:
 - forms completed online
 - reduction in lost paperwork and client information
 - tracking progress online

Civil legal aid online (cont.)

- The new system will not remove the need to:
 - provide evidence of eligibility
 - comply with regulations and requirements
- Decisions will still be based on information provided

Civil legal aid online (cont.)

- New system roll-out will begin with a pilot in 2012 at the earliest
 - internally, pilot will involve our South Tyneside office
 - no decision yet made on who to involve externally
- Phased roll-out, perhaps over a year, to allow us to support providers as they come on board
- We plan to share our engagement and roll-out plan with you later this year

Civil legal aid online (cont.)

- You can find out about progress in the following ways
 - representative body meetings
 - contract managers
 - future conferences and events, e.g. PRGs
 - LSC Update – e-alert which signposts you to key parts of our website
- Online training for providers and Chambers is being developed

LSC approach to audits

- In an ideal world we would not want to audit at all or at least target our auditing of firms
- NAO and financial stewardship visits have identified significant control and financial issues. In 2010/11:
 - more than 1,100 contract notices issued
 - £12m of overpayments/misclaims recovered
- Qualification of LSC accounts for two years

LSC approach to audits (cont.)

- Audits are prioritised around risk
- Risk assessment, using management information data, is carried out
- Higher-risk providers visited earlier by the LSC
 - this does not mean a provider is not complying with contractual requirements
 - management information just suggests they may not be and we will visit to decide whether this is the case

LSC approach to audits (cont.)

- By March 2012 we want a ‘one visit’ approach to auditing:
 - a contract manager visiting you once a year
 - potential file validation issues during annual visit
 - clear understanding at end of meeting about any further action that is needed

LSC approach to audits (cont.)

Outcome of this ‘one visit’ will be either that:

1. all issues are resolved and the next visit will take place in a year
2. there are minor issues that need following up and a revisit is arranged
3. there are significant issues and more audit involvement is necessary.

LSC approach to audits (cont.)

- We want to work with you:
 - suggestions on how we can improve our auditing process are always welcome
 - if you have any suggestion please let your contract manager know
- Keep an eye on our website for details of the:
 - elements that feed into our audit risk assessments
 - various audit and file activity work currently in place