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**little jewels of
information**



legal aid history

- 1** Legal aid was born after the **Rushcliffe Report of 1945**. It was part of the largest social reform in British history that included creation of the welfare state.
- 2** Legal aid was established with the **Legal Aid and Advice Act, 1949**.
- 3** Legal aid was **created at the same time** as the National Health Service; Bank of England; and the Nationalisation of Coal Mines, Civil Aviation, Cable and Wireless services, gas, electricity, railways, road transport and steel.
- 4** The principle of Legal Aid and Advice Act, 1949, can be traced back to the **Magna Carta**. The Carta states, 'To no-one will we sell, to no-one deny or delay right or justice.'
- 5** In 1955, **78%** of all legal aid certificates concerned **divorce**.
- 6** Following the **Toxteth riots in 1981**, the LSC's Liverpool Office accepted burnt and water damaged paper in support of the local solicitors claims for costs.
- 7** In the **50s and 60s** civil legal aid applications took an average of 13 weeks, which included an interview with the Department for Health and Social Security.
- 8** The first paragraph of the **first ever legal aid handbook** was 'An act to make legal aid and advice in England and Wales, and in the case of members of the forces legal advice elsewhere, more readily available for persons of small or moderate means, to enable the cost of legal aid or advice for such persons to be defrayed wholly or partly out of monies provided by Parliament, and for purposes connected therewith.'
- 9** Before the establishment of legal aid – the first way of helping people with civil legal problems was to identify them as '**poor persons**'. This process was introduced in 1914 and applied to the High Court and Court of Appeal only.
- 10** The **Second World War** put pressure on the pre-legal aid system due to the amount of solicitors and clerks who joined the forces. Those remaining behind found it difficult to deal with their extra caseloads and take on unpaid work. There was also growing numbers of broken marriages among the armed forces, increasing the pressure on the legal profession.

...legal aid history

- 11** Criminal legal aid was available as early as **1903** in one form – volunteer solicitors and advocates could represent particularly poor defendants with limited funding from local ratepayers. But magistrates were advised never to advertise it publicly.
- 12** The Widgery Committee of **1964** recommended that anyone accused of an **imprisonable offence** should receive legal aid.
- 13** The Widgery Committee of **1964** established a set of **tests** to guide magistrates on whether to grant legal aid.
- 14** Duty solicitors – solicitors on a **24 hour rota** to visit police stations when someone needs legal advice – were introduced in **1984**.
- 15** The **Legal Aid Board** was set up under the Legal Aid Act **1988**, and took over the administration of legal aid from the Law Society in 1989.
- 16** The **first legal aid handbook** was published in **1951** and the last edition was published in 1998/1999. It was replaced by the LSC Manual.
- 17** The **Legal Services Commission**, which currently administers legal aid, was established in **April 2000** after the Access to Justice Act 1999.
- 18** The Legal Services Commission is a non-departmental public body, sponsored by the **Ministry of Justice**.
- 19** The Legal Services Commission runs two legal aid schemes. The **Community Legal Service** administers civil legal aid, and **Criminal Defence Service** runs criminal legal aid.
- 20** Since 2002, the LSC's training contract grant scheme has funded around **750 potential solicitors** to be trained.

...legal aid history

21 In 1957, Mr Justice Vaisey was outraged to find that a couple who owned a television set had qualified for legal aid. The Daily Mail reported the judge as saying: 'People able to afford a television set should not be able to qualify for free legal aid...Anybody who applies for legal aid should confess at once that they have bought a television set and their application should be dismissed.'

22 Legal aid shares its 60th birthday with the **vinyl single**...

23 ...and **Bill Nighy, Martin Amis, Twiggy, Robert Lindsay and Zoe Wanamaker!**

24 In the same year that legal aid started, **clothes rationing ended**.

legal aid clients

25 Every year **£2.1 billion** is **spent legal aid** in England & Wales.

26 LSC processes **233,000 legal aid applications** every year.

27 If we laid all the legal aid applications for a year on top of each other they would be as high as **225 Empire State buildings!**

29 LSC helps **2 million people** get **help with their legal problems** every year.

30 LSC funds over **250,000 people** involved in **family disputes**.

28 LSC funds over **90,000 people** struggling with **debt** every year.

31 LSC helps around **125,000 people** with their **housing** problems every year.

32 LSC helps around **18,000 people** experiencing **domestic abuse** every year.

33 Every year the LSC helps **90,000 people** get the **welfare benefits** they are entitled to.

34 Legal aid solicitors gave legal advice to people being held at **police stations** on more than **750,000** occasions during 2007/8.

...legal aid clients

35 Legal aid ensures representation for people involved in more than **650,000 magistrates' court appearances** each year.

36 The LSC Public Defender Service acted for clients in nearly **6,000 criminal cases** last year.

37 Since April 2005 we have helped **87,347 people** through our **Housing Possession Court Duty Schemes**.



LSC's legal aid services

38 **Community Legal Advice** telephone helpline gives specialist legal advice to over **7,000 callers each month**.

39 Last year **Community Legal Advice** helpline provided **help and advice** to over **250,000 people**.

40 **Community Legal Advice** helpline takes about **70,000 calls each month**. That's almost enough people to fill Old Trafford Stadium every month.

41 **92%** of our **Community Legal Advice** helpline clients would **recommend our service**.

42 **Community Legal Advice** helpline offers translation services in **170 languages plus Type Talk**, for people with a hearing impairment.

43 The **Community Legal Advice website** is available in **ten languages**.

44 We have **five** established **Community Legal Advice Centres** in Leicester, Derby, Portsmouth, Hull and Gateshead.

45 Since May 2001, the LSC has directly employed criminal defence lawyers, known as public defenders. **The Public Defender Service (PDS)** provides exactly the same services as lawyers in private practice.



legal aid records

46 The LSC's National Filing Centre holds approximately **1.5 million** files.

47 If all legal aid files were laid flat they would cover **18** of the 20 **football pitches** in the Premier League.

48 If all the files were stacked on top of each other they would be as high as:

- 375,000** double decker buses
- 198** Big Bens
- 43** Empire State buildings
- 24** Burj Dubai towers

49 If you laid all legal aid files end to end they would reach between **Edinburgh and London with 11 miles to spare** or between **Dover and Calais 14 times**.

50 If Usain Bolt could sustain a 10 second 100m pace for the length of all legal aid files it would take him **153 hours and 20 minutes** to get from one end to the other.

51 The combined weight of all legal aid files would be approximately **886 tonnes**. That is the same as seven blue whales.

52 Files are kept between four months and the **lifetime** of a client.

53 The LSC's National Filing Centre, located in Jarrow, South Tyneside, is the size of **4.5 Olympic swimming pools**.

about the LSC

54 LSC receives **25,000 phone calls a week**, from contracted providers as well as legal aid clients.

55 LSC processes **6,480 provider bills** a week.

56 A **Relationship Manager** makes on average **50 visits** per year to contracted providers, helping them to deliver high quality advice to our clients.

57 LSC's website gets **180,000 hits** a month.

58 LSC Update, the LSC electronic newsletter is sent to approximately **10,000 email addresses**.

59 Exchange Tower in London Docklands is the LSC's biggest office, housing **410 staff**.

60 Pat Harrup, Communications Assistant based in Exchange Tower is the longest serving staff member, with 45 years of service under her belt.

