

Legal Aid – The Next Generation

A conference for legal aid trainees



20th April 2009

Haberdashers Hall
London

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Legal Aid – The Next Generation

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Introduction

The conference was held on Monday 20th April 2009 at the Haberdashers Hall in London. This was held for all LSC funded trainees recruited under the 2008 Training Contract Grants Scheme. 150 trainees were invited who are at varying stages of their training; some studying the Legal Practice Course, whilst others have recently started their training contract. For many of the trainees the awards event was their first direct contact with the LSC.

Aims of event

- To celebrate their achievement at getting an LSC sponsored training contract
- To create an LSC trainee community
- To build on their commitment to legal aid
- To improve their knowledge about legal aid and the LSC

Overview of the conference

The conference began registration and refreshments and a meet and greet with Carolyn Regan, Chief Executive of the LSC before trainees heard from a variety of speakers including Lord Bach, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State. Biographies for all speakers can be found at the following address:

http://www.legalservices.gov.uk/public/working_legal_aid.asp

Trainees were then given the opportunity to ask questions from the panel of speakers. The panel was chaired by Tom Jones (Legal Services Commissioner).

Panel Members:

Carolyn Regan (Chief Executive of the LSC),
Patrick Reeve (Head of Legal Aid Service Development)
Aika Stephenson (Young LALY 2007),
Carol Storer (Director of the LAPG),
Richard Miller (Law Society),
Zarina Gani (Winner of Criminal Defence Lawyer 2008)
Julie Birch (Director of the Law Centres)

Speeches were then given by two qualified legal aid solicitors to provide the trainees with an insight of the life as a solicitor after training. Aika Stephenson was unfortunately unable to attend therefore speeches were heard from Jo Hickman and Zarina Gani.

During the lunch break trainees could speak to a variety of organisation and members of the Training Contract Grants team. This was then followed by workshops on LSC processes to give trainees practical knowledge about the LSC. The day was the ended by a wrap up speech from Training Contract Grants team member Sue McLellan.

Speeches



Introduction from Legal Services Commissioner Tom Jones OBE

Tom was appointed as Legal Services commissioner on 1st March 2004. His responsibilities include chairing the Wales Committee for the Community Legal Service and membership of the Audit Committee.

Tom commented on the value of the event and the opportunity to network with other trainees. He stated that clients are the most important factor and raised the importance of helping vulnerable people. He then noted that the reason for the event was driven by feedback from previous trainees.

Carolyn Regan

Carolyn has spent much of her career within the National Health Service before joining the Legal Services Commission in 2006 as Chief Executive.

Carolyn welcomed all the trainees and the opportunity to open dialogue with them at this early stage of their careers.

Carolyn focussed on the development of legal aid – its past, present and future – and the context in which we work and hope to encourage trainees to work in legal aid for a long time in the future.

Labour Government 1945–1950 reforms

This year marks the 60th anniversary of the passing of the Legal Aid and Advice Act in 1949. Before 1949 there were some provisions for the public funding of a defence in a criminal trial but on the civil side the work was largely done on a pro bono basis and the system was in crisis. Added to that, as the Second World War drew to an end there was an increasing demand for help with divorce cases as marriages made by members of the armed forces were not proving so robust in peacetime Britain when “forever” seemed a great deal longer.

However the spirit of the 1949 Act is firmly rooted within the great social reforms of the post-War Labour government of 1945. This saw:

- The creation of the National Health Service giving free healthcare for all
- The setting up of the welfare state giving support from the cradle to the grave
- Major reforms to the education system providing all children with free schooling
- Increased council house provision
- Nationalisation of the utilities and core industries, and so on.

This reforming programme marked a major cultural shift in how we viewed people in our society who are less well off and disadvantaged. Before the reforms they were essentially expected to be very grateful for what the privileged professional classes, including lawyers, would do for them. The professional classes were, in turn, expected to contribute towards helping the poor.

By contrast, afterwards people had a right to access healthcare, education, welfare benefits, pensions, housing – and justice.

International comparison of legal aid spending per capita

To us today it seems unquestionable that, in an adversarial justice system, anyone accused of a crime for which they might lose their liberty should be defended. And people who can least afford it should have fair access to justice when providing such help is clearly in the interests of justice.

We invest a considerable amount of public money in upholding this principle.

Our clients tend to be on the margins of society, with little economic or social clout, and so less well equipped than others to find or demand good quality public services. One of the Legal Services Commission’s roles therefore is to ensure that we empower our clients by commissioning, on their behalf, the right services of the right quality to meet their needs.

Legal Landscape

The Legal Services Act of 2007 is changing the way legal services in England and Wales are regulated and increasing the choice and flexibility of business structure possible for providers of legal services – the so-called Alternative Business Structures set out in the Act.

The Legal Services Board has been set up – confusing for some with such a similar name to the Legal Services Commission – and the Office for Legal Complaints officially began last month.

We are seeing a significant growth in the number of solicitors with Higher Rights of Audience, qualified to offer full advocacy services to clients. This opens up the possibility of one provider being able to offer legal aid clients a full range of services from advice to representation. Some clients prefer this, particularly when their problems are sensitive and intensely personal.

There has been a growth in the number of not-for-profit providers of legal aid services, with Citizens Advice Bureaux, Law Centres and organisations such as Shelter adding their strong community perspective to the mix of providers.

However, there is already an oversupply of new solicitors and barristers for the size of the market. Together with the possibility of large organisations such as the Co-op, Capita and even Tesco's entering the market, there will be fierce competition for legal work in the future which is likely to fuel a drive towards more innovative services.

The most important part of the landscape is the clients themselves – their changing needs and expectations, behaviour and lifestyles. The Legal Services Act is a response to changes already happening, with legal advice becoming a consumer-led service rather than simply a repository of legal knowledge – which is no longer enough.

For the moment I will focus mainly on civil cases as, for the first two questions at least, the answer is relatively straightforward for crime cases. Anyone in a police station can access telephone advice, or for more serious cases representation, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. We are proud of that service funded through legal aid.

On the civil side we are fortunate in being able to draw on robust evidence about our potential clients in the form of the English and Welsh Civil and Social Justice Survey.

Evidence base

This gives us information about people's issues in their lives from day to day. As it now follows particular individuals over time, we are able to track the life course of the problems they experience and how they resolved them – or not. It is always worth bearing in mind that there is a high cost to society when civil problems are not resolved. Generally speaking the longer they fester, the more expensive they are to resolve.

A few years ago the Survey was clearly showing us that problems do not exist in isolation but are much more likely to be connected to other problems. For example, a family struggling with debt might well experience problems with housing and in turn this might put an intolerable strain on the family relationships.

Getting a fairer deal for our clients

These findings became the basis for our policy to increase access. We are developing Community Legal Advice Centres and Networks. The principle is simple – we bring together advice on a range of different categories of law and different levels of help so clients can access all the help they need through a single point of access, usually located in the heart of the community. These services are jointly commissioned with the local authority – or local authorities – providing a further anchor to the local community and its particular needs and priorities.

Our Community Legal Advice helpline service gave guidance to over a quarter of a million people last year in addition to advice via its website. You will not be surprised when I tell you that its debt and housing advice services are much in demand at the moment. We have recently run a very successful pilot on family advice via the helpline and we will be rolling out that service later in the summer as the recession takes its toll on family relationships.

Ensuring quality for our clients

Another issue for clients is quality. They need to be confident that they are well advised and well represented as they go through what is often a life-changing point in their lives. We are committed to procuring quality services, and assuring clients and the taxpayer of this, even when we move to price competition. We regularly measure providers' quality through tools such as peer review, specialist quality mark and accreditation to ensure clients have access to the best quality services.

Modernising the delivery of legal aid

Of course we now live in an e-world and we are moving to modernise legal aid services. The new technologies offer great opportunities for realising enormous efficiencies, improving services and speeding up processes using electronic working, e-forms etc. We admit that we have had our problems in the past but we are now making good progress with LSC online, and many of our providers are well ahead in doing business in the digital world.

We have introduced fixed fees and graduated fees in a number of areas, moving away from paying by the hour. The next step will be to use the market power of legal aid to commission services based on client needs, procured at a fair market price.

The LSC is becoming a leaner, more efficient, commissioning organisation. Our skills base is shifting away from detailed administration of legal aid, towards expert procurement and shaping the market.

Efficient, high-quality providers like yours should have no fears as it is a changing landscape that offers great opportunities for growing their business and exploring new ways of delivery.

Conclusion

However the level of legal aid spend is unlikely to increase but the level is still a difficult message for the taxpayer but we are unapologetic – even to the Daily Mail. We will fund those vilified by the public as well as those most people recognise as having a just cause.

If you are a Ghurkha, with years of heroic service to this country, wanting settlement rights, we will fund you

If you are somebody who has suffered domestic violence, we will fund you

If you need a drug to stay alive, like Colin Ross, we will fund you.

If you are Abu Hamza, we will fund you.

Everyone has rights and the fact that we do fund these cases is a measure of our society being decent and civilised. What if it is a member of your family facing jail? We all hope that we will never need legal aid and our problems won't spiral out of control, and we won't be in the wrong place at the wrong time – but it could happen to any of us. That is why legal aid is a vital safety net for the well being of our society and why we need people like you to provide the advice that's needed.

Our aim in this 60th year is to build knowledge, understanding and commitment to legal aid well beyond the legal profession and you play a key role in that.

Legal aid is the sign of a fair, just and civilised society and we are determined to make the case with you as our partners for at least another 60 years. Thank you.

Lord Bach

Lord Bach was appointed Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Justice on 6 October 2008.

I am encouraged to know that so many young solicitors are committing to a career involving legal aid. Because it isn't going too far to say that what you'll be doing is a vocation. And for me as minister it's vital that I want to see healthy numbers of our young legal talent training to work in legal aid. So that we can help protect the poorer members of our society.

The successes of Legal Aid

I'm immensely proud of the contribution legal aid makes to creating a fair society. In which everyone can access justice. 2009 marks the 60th anniversary of the Act establishing modern legal aid. So this is an ideal opportunity to reflect on the great successes of legal aid. One I'm convinced is the best in the world. As a minister I'm committed to guaranteeing its future. So it can continue to deliver for the people who need it. And that commitment is borne out by the funds we have made available. At nearly £38 per head of population we spend ten times the amount that major European countries such as France or Germany do, making our legal aid system probably the best funded in the world.

Challenges to come

I recognise that in a court-based adversarial justice system such as ours, the costs are bound to be high. And that does present us with a challenge as we look forward. How can we sustain the current system? To what extent do we want to do so? Are there other models we might want to think about?

But in the short term, the challenge to us all – and to me as a minister in particular – is how we can best use the funds available to us to provide the best service possible to as many people as possible.

The justice system as a whole is about ensuring people can exercise their rights. And legal aid is particularly rooted in human rights and social justice. Indeed is a key enabler of social mobility. People cannot move on and fulfil their potential in society until they resolve the problems holding them back. And these problems are very often complex, inter-connected and are likely to need legal advice or recourse to the law.

A sustainable future

And the economic challenges we face at the moment really bring home how important it is that we use the £2bn we spend each year on legal aid so that it delivers the maximum possible amount of support to some of the most vulnerable and disempowered members of our society. And this also underlines just how critical it is to make sure that legal aid's future is sustainable. Change can be a painful business. But the reforms we're about are there to increase and encourage efficiency in delivering legal aid. So that ultimately we help more people with the money we spend. To put it crudely, so that we get more bang for our buck.

This could sound like some kind of bureaucratic mantra. Of putting the squeeze on the people on the front line. But I don't think it is. I'm sure that many of you want to

work in legal aid work because you care about social justice. And because you want to help the disadvantaged. Equally, since you're attracted to the prospect of dealing with important, complex issues. With real impacts upon real lives. Human rights law, mental health issues, relationship breakdown, housing or debt problems. The whole spectrum of criminal law.

Quality, access and value for money

And reform - especially the new fees - are there to encourage lawyers to spend time where their skills can be best used. And also so that the budget is sustainable. Which means long-term certainty for firms. Necessary security, I suggest, for young lawyers to enter the market with confidence, and remain there.

We've already delivered significant reform under previous legal aid ministers. And we'll be consulting with practitioners on continuing this programme of work. And I very much hope that you'll take the chance to give your views. I want to deliver the best possible value for the taxpayer. But help the greatest number of those who are most in need within the resources we have.

So I'm looking for three things from reform: quality, access and value for money. And I recognise that balancing these out presents challenges to us all. But they are challenges we can best meet together. So that we work in a public service we can all be proud of.

Helping people with real issues

You've entered a fine profession and an excellent legal system. And have chosen to work within one of the greatest parts of it. Helping people with real issues. Trying to help them get their lives back on track. I salute the support and commitment you're offering. I want a profession still committed to its core principles of justice, integrity, independence, acting in the best interests of the clients, providing a high standard of service – and retaining public confidence. Your contribution is pivotal to the future success of legal aid. And so I thank you and wish you all the best for a productive future in the legal profession. I hope you enjoy the conference.

Patrick Reeve

Patrick is has worked for the Legal Services Commission for a number of years in various policy roles. He is currently the Head of Legal Aid Service Development

Patrick welcomed the delegates and invited them to provide feedback on the scheme and views on working together in the future.

Investing in future lawyers

We believe investing in future lawyers who wish to work in legal aid is one of the ways that we can make a difference both now and in the future.

Legal aid is celebrating it's 60th anniversary this year and that wouldn't be possible without dedicated and committed trainees like you who want to make a difference by working in legal aid.

We recognise that today many students incur huge debts training to be solicitors and competition for training contracts is fierce.

The Training Contract Grants Scheme

You may not know but our investment in the next generation of legal aid solicitors like you stands at over £15 million. In fact we are the single largest national grant scheme for trainee solicitors. Training grants already awarded have supported the development of over 600 legal aid solicitors.

The package represents a commitment to support a student and the organisation for up to a four-year period through both the Legal Practice Course (LPC) and training contract.

Since the scheme was launched many, many students such as yourselves and organisations have benefited from the scheme and it is the largest national single funding scheme for trainee lawyers in the market.

Working together

You are part of something quite unique, you are important to us and we think it is worthwhile investing in you.

You have done well to get on the scheme as for every training contract there are hundreds of applications, so this is an indication of the caliber of people who have got this far.

As you have demonstrated that want to make a difference to society by pursuing this career choice rather than pursuing a career in corporate law and we want to reward that choice and work much more closely with you.

Last year we issued a questionnaire to trainees already on the scheme to get their feedback on the Scheme and their ideas for how we could improve it.

The majority of them had found their Training contract and being on the Scheme a very positive experience. An area where they felt we could improve though was in our direct communication with trainees on the Scheme and in providing more guidance and training on LSC processes and procedures. And trainees also wanted the opportunity the network with their peers in the field, as you are often the only trainee in your organisation.

We want this event to start those networks, whether formal or informal, so make the most of getting to know each other today and exchange details.

New support systems to the scheme

We have done a lot of work on this since we got that feedback and we've introduced a lot of new aspects to this year's Scheme, which we hope you'll benefit from:

- You were all sent an awards pack from us in March giving you useful information about the Scheme and working in legal aid. This is the first time we have sent this out. We hope you found it useful... and welcome your views on the pack
- This event is the first event for new trainees on the Scheme, and again we welcome your feedback on how useful it is via the feedback forms in your conference packs

- We issue a newsletter via email, 'Trainee Connect'. You will get your first issue of this shortly
- We are setting up an on-line forum so you can contact other trainees on the Scheme
- Following on from the practical workshops you will be attending this afternoon, we are planning to run more detailed training for you on LSC processes and set up visits to your local LSC office later in the year.
- For the first time we have set up a mentoring Scheme. If you would like to be part of this scheme you will be put in touch with a trainee nearing the end of their training contract. You will be able to ask them questions, get support from them. If you would like to be put in touch with a mentor please visit the LSC stand during today, where you can sign up.
- We are currently planning the 2009 Scheme, and a big part of this is promoting legal aid and the Scheme to students and potential trainees. It would be great for trainees be involved in this and to speak to students about their experiences. Again, if you would like to be involved in promoting legal aid, whether by giving a careers talk, attending a law fair, or providing information to form a careers case study, please visit the LSC stand to find out more information and sign up.

Keeping in touch

Your feedback on the Scheme is very valuable to us. Every 6 months we will send out a feedback form to you to find out how things are going. But in between receiving these forms, please do contact the team at any point if you have any questions or suggestions to make.

Richard Miller

Richard is now Head of Legal Aid at the Law Society but has been involved in the Training Contract Grants Scheme since the scheme began during his role as the director of the Legal Aid Practitioners Group.

Its great to see so many of you here. I was in the same position as you 20 years ago; I didn't want to go into private practice. Instead I wanted to make a real difference in peoples lives this is where job satisfaction lies. You are the front line in protecting the rule of law. The G20 summit shows how important this is. Holding the line for the protection of legal aid.

All career info given to me was about city firms, there was little info about legal aid out there. In 2000 I became director of LAPG and started going round to law fairs to promote it as a valid career choice. The feedback I received from students led me to realise we needed help for students and legal aid organisations. This led to creation of the Training Contract Grants Scheme through discussions with Legal Services Commission. This is one of the best things the LSC has done.

I still doesn't think its enough and believe there is still more which can be done. I believe the scheme needs to be expanded. There are a lot of concerns about future of legal aid but I don't believe there's no future in it. We are trying to get £3 billion worth of work for £2 billion; the Law society wants to work with LSC prevent the

scheme from breaking down. £3 billion is a significant amount and there's a lot which can be done with it. A lot of work is required by statute, the government is required to provide this so there will always be work.

It's a turbulent time at the moment following carter review. It's going to be different for both the profession and LSC who has some good ideas and some bad ideas and a profession who generally opposes both. The Law society's role is let the LSC know which it believes will not work and support those which will.

Due to the Legal services act, tesco law etc I believe other career paths will open up. You will do important work which means so much job satisfaction, you really count to these people.

Q&A section



Question - *Can the LSC help with bureaucracy? There's too much form filling and too much paper work.*

Carolyn responded that the LSC is looking to roll out two projects in response to this. We are working towards electronic working and will pilot this later this year which she hopes some of the trainees firms will be involved with. There are longer term plans to review the LSC forms to reduce unnecessary form filling.

Question - Rachel Welch - *Do fixed fees encourage efficiency?*

Carolyn responded that this does encourage efficiency and that hourly rates are not the most efficient way of working. We must balance between a fixed budget and quality however quality must always be the leading factor. There is now a need to look at the case as a whole, look at other ways of working for example outsourcing typing.

Carol Storer noted that many firms are doing a brilliant job under fixed fees. At beginning of your career there is a conflict between pressures to bill for your firm and to do what your client wants you to do.

Richard Miller then commented that he did not believe that fixed fees were flexible enough and may lead to some firms being paid for work they are not doing and causing problems for others.

Patrick Reeve responded that there are arguments both ways but does not believe that hourly rates are a good system.

Question - Julia Wheeler - *What do we see happening to small specialist firms due to changes?*

Carolyn Regan does believe that they have a strong future. These firms may change the way in which they work by outsourcing. Many family firms will always be needed due to conflict of interest.

Carol Storer believes that much of the work completed in these firms is not billable but is completed by dedicated staff and hopes that the future will not be in large providers as specialism and dedication may be lost.

Zarina Gani commented on the importance to remain a specialist firm and the need to adapt the way in which they work.

Richard Miller raised potential issues regarding the CLAC's (Community Legal Advice Centres). These were set up in areas in which they were needed but is unsure on the effects this may have if they are set up in areas where there is provision.

Tom Jones responded that there are consultations in place to ensure that this does not cause a negative affect.

Question – *Concerns were raised that eligibility can prevent early intervention.*

Carolyn responded that Lord Bach is committed to reviewing eligibility criteria in particular those who have received redundancy. Working with a fixed pot causes this difficulty. Carolyn commented that this debate should be raised by those in the profession to the government, not just within the legal press. The current climate means that more money is needed.

Question – Tariq Al-Mallak - *How can firms work under a new business model without relying on work experience staff and those which are untrained?*

Carol commented that the number of individuals looking for training contracts is always higher than the number of firms hiring trainees. The role of solicitors may involve a lot of supervision of paralegals.

Concerns were raised of having unskilled paralegals working for vulnerable members of society. Zarina Gani responded that only skilled paralegals should be delegated appropriate work. Quality and service should not be compromised. Patrick Reeve agreed there was pressure on what work should be delegated and what shouldn't. He also commented that there are more quality measures in legal aid than in most other areas. Quality is key therefore supervision should not be compromised.

Tom Jones commented that the future is uncertain and that he shares these concerns. These problems also arise in the corporate sector and firms must demonstrate a commitment to quality.

Question - Fiona Mullan- *The focus on getting funding seems to be the main priority but there seems to be no communication between LSC and courts.*

Patrick Reeve responded that in general terms we work a lot with the court services but the current system in family cases needs to be reviewed. There are real issues in terms of budget in terms of expense of the system. Much work needs to be done as soon as possible.

Richard Miller raised a number of issue which he felt should be addressed. A review of the family justice system as a whole needed to be undertaken. Solicitors should

not be in the middle. He felt that the LSC should manage the system and not individual cases. More authority should be given to the firms to avoid unnecessary delays.

Tom Jones then raised concerns that the public systems are fractured which wastes time of solicitors as organisations are working in different ways. The taxpayer could be paying twice for the same case therefore government and leaders need to address this.

Additional Speeches

Jo Hickman (speaking in place of Aika Stephenson who was unable to attend).

Jo is a member of the Public Services Law department of Fisher Meredith and specialises in public law, human rights and civil liberties. Jo was named the Legal Aid Lawyer of the Year in 2008.

Jo raised several concerns regarding the ongoing changes to legal aid. She remarked that solicitors should now be working with the LSC to lobby the government to increase legal aid funding. She observed that the NHS funding is not a capped profession. Doctors as professional are not expected to accept a low remuneration therefore legal aid solicitors should not be faced with low salaries.

She also responded to concerned raised during the Q&A session that no case in her experience can be immediately delegated to untrained staff.

Zarina Gani

Zarina, of Gani and Co Solicitors in London, began her career as a Criminal Solicitor. She was awarded Criminal Defence Lawyer of the Year in 2008.

Zarina gave advice to trainees on the experience which should be gained during a training contract. She noted that in a corporate firm, you don't necessarily get first hand experience.

Zarina commented that a trainees commitment and level of service should not be compromised. You are expected to make mistakes during your training otherwise you will not learn. It is important to ask questions during your training contract, to gain a variety of experience, she recommended looking at other trainee cases and to learn from each other.

Legal aid work is full of emotion but very rewarding.

Networking

During the lunch break trainees were given the opportunity network with other trainees on the scheme and to meet with a variety of organisations.



Organisations in attendance were:

Community Legal Advice - A free and confidential advice service paid for by legal aid.

Law Society - The Law Society represents solicitors in England and Wales. From negotiating with and lobbying the profession's regulators, government and others, to offering training and advice. They are there to help, protect and promote solicitors across England and Wales.

Legal Aid Practitioners Group - LAPG represent legal aid practitioners in England and Wales

The Legal Services Research Centre (LSRC) - The independent Research Division of the LSC. It was set up in 1996 to inform legal aid policy and the implementation of reform. It has a broad remit to conduct strategic research in the civil and criminal justice fields.

Advice Services Alliance - The umbrella body for independent advice services in the UK. Their members are national networks of not-for-profit organisations providing advice and help on the law, access to services and related issues.

Legal Services Commission - Trainees could meet with members of the Training Contracting Grant Team. The team were available to answer queries about the scheme or their grant and gave trainees the chance to sign up to the Training Contract Grant Mentoring Scheme and volunteers to work with the team on future events at law fairs.

Workshops

A variety of workshops were held to provide trainees with practical knowledge on LSC processes.



A total of four workshops were held and students were given the opportunity to attend the two of their choice.

Introduction to legal aid & the LSC

Topics Included:

- The Legal Services Commission
- Legal Aid History
- Providing the Service
- Community Legal Service CLS
- Criminal Defence Service CDS
- Levels of Service
- Community Legal Advice
- Carter Reforms
- Our vision for legal aid services
- Delivery Transformation
- Where do you fit in?
- Putting it into Context

Making an LSC application,

Topics Included:

Levels of Service, Devolved Powers and Applications

- What are the Levels of Service in Family, both Public Law and Private Law, and Civil.
- What is a certificate?
- What are Devolved Powers?
- When should Devolved Powers be used?

Form filling and client knowledge

- The Forms
- APP7 Mediation Forms
- Client Knowledge
- Rejects

After Funding has been granted

- Amendments and Authorities
- Application form
- Required information
- Obligations to the LSC and your client,

Hints & tips on preparing a claim and avoiding rejected claims

Topics Included:

- Controlled Work
- Licensed Work
- Fees Schemes
- Legal Help
- Fixed Fees
- Fee Structure
- Max Fee principle
- Submission of Bill and Assessment
- Detailed Assessment by Court
- Reject Policy
- Costs Awarded against the Opponent
- Useful Website Documents
- Family Graduated Fees and You
- Payment on Account
- Billing do's & don'ts

Criminal Applications

Topics Included:

- Standard Fees
- How a claim becomes a Non Standard Claim.
- Common reject reasons
- Common assessment reasons
- Appeal procedure
- Evidence we expect to see in a file
- Prior Authority

Post Conference Feedback

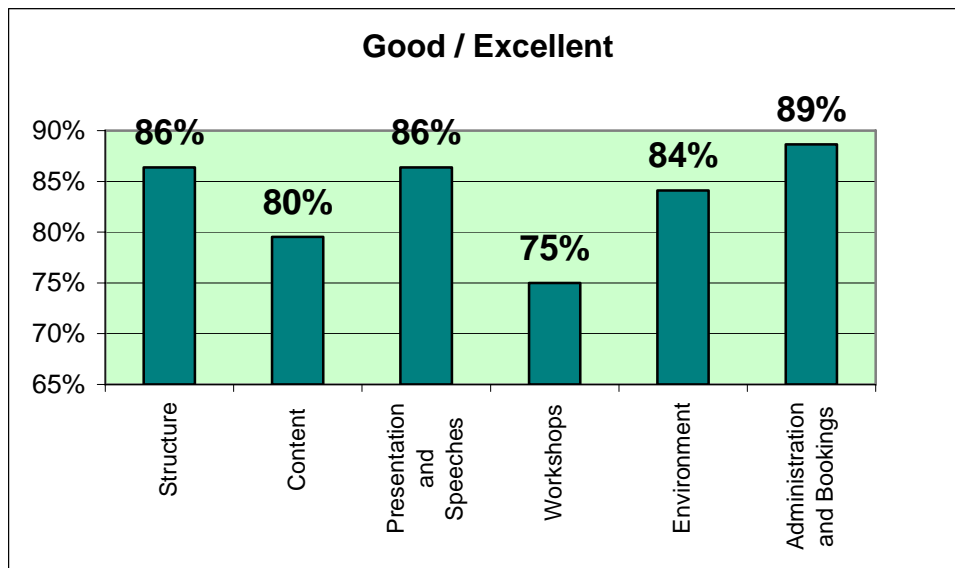
The overall feedback received from trainee was very positive.



The feedback forms completed by trainees gave some very positive comments regarding the event overall such as:

- “It’s a great day. Thank you for arranging the day for us! I look forward to the next one. “
- “The whole event was beneficial.”
- “Really enjoyed the event - I thought it was a good idea as it is helpful to meet other people from other firms and compare experience with them. Thanks!”
- “It was very useful, thank you!”
- “More idea on working under legal aid. Glad I chose this career in legal aid - so thank you for giving funding to my firm- because of you I will be a legal aid lawyer! Thank you.”
- “Meeting other trainees. Grasp and awareness of available support. Gained a greater appreciation for how fortunate I am to be a part of this scheme and a sense of community as an 08 candidate. Re-enforced my understanding of levels of service schemes.”

We asked the attendees to provide feedback on the structure, content, speeches, workshops, environment and administration of the event. Each section of the event was rating to be good or excellent by 75% or more of the trainees.



Structure and Content

The overall structure of the conference was rated highly. Over 85% of trainees thought the structure was good or excellent. The content also scored similarly. With almost 80% of trainees rating this as either good or excellent.

The overall content of the event received positive comments such as: “It gave me a little boost in the it reminded me why I have decided to work in this area of law.”

ABOUT THE EVENT	STRUCTURE	%	CONTENT	%
POOR	0	0%	0	0%
UNSATISFACTORY	0	0%	0	0%
OK	5	11%	9	20%
GOOD	27	61%	25	57%
EXCELLENT	11	25%	10	23%

Presentation/Speeches and Panel Discussion

The presentations and speeches were rated very favourably with 86% of trainees rating this to have been good or excellent. This section of the conference also received many positive comments.

The panel discussion was again rated highly with 90% of trainees rating this section to be good or excellent. Of this 90%, 52% of trainees considered the panel discussion to be excellent.

When asked what trainees like most about the event, the following comments were received:

- “The co-ordination and the frankness in the speech from the speakers”
- “The panel open for debate”
- “Panel discussion was very interesting it was good to have varying new points and to be able to gain a rounded view of the LSC strategy,”

ABOUT THE EVENT	PRESENTATION AND SPEECHES	%	PANEL DISCUSSION	%
POOR	0	0%	0	0%
UNSATISFACTORY	0	0%	0	0%
OK	5	11%	4	9%
GOOD	19	43%	17	39%
EXCELLENT	19	43%	23	52%

Environment and Administration

The environment in which the conference took place including the room, equipment, access and catering was rated as excellent by 56% of trainees with 88% of trainees rating the administration of the event to be either good or excellent.

Workshops

Introduction to Legal Aid and the LSC

The Introduction to Legal Aid workshop was aimed at those who were still studying their LPC and therefore have limited or no experience of working within a legal aid firm. The course was rated highly by trainees with 81% considering the workshop to be good or excellent. Of this 81%, 45% considered it to be excellent.

WORKSHOPS	INTRO TO LEGAL AID	%
POOR	0	0%
UNSATISFACTORY	0	0%
OK	0	0%
GOOD	4	36%
EXCELLENT	0	0%

Making an LSC Application

The 'Making an LSC Application' workshop was rated as good or excellent by 66% of trainees.

WORKSHOPS	MAKING AN APPLICATION	%
POOR	0	0%
UNSATISFACTORY	0	0%
OK	1	3%
GOOD	2	7%
EXCELLENT	1	3%

Hints & tips on preparing a claim and avoiding rejected claims

Almost 60% of trainees found the workshop on Preparing a Claim to be good. A further 16% found this workshop to be excellent.

WORKSHOPS	PREPARING A CLAIM	%
POOR	0	0%
UNSATISFACTORY	1	3%
OK	7	22%
GOOD	19	59%
EXCELLENT	5	16%

Criminal Applications

The Criminal Applications workshop was helpful to all trainees who attended with 64% rating the workshop to be good.

WORKSHOPS	CRIME APPLICATIONS	%
POOR	0	0%
UNSATISFACTORY	0	0%
OK	3	27%
GOOD	7	64%
EXCELLENT	1	9%

Overview Of Comments Received

The feedback form gave trainees the chance to let us know what they liked most about the event overall and where there are areas for improvement.

Positive Comments

We received a variety of positive comments particularly regarding the speeches and the panel section, the workshops and the opportunity to network with other trainees.

- The opportunity to hear from various speakers about the Legal Services Commission and the future of legal aid was highly praised. This section of the event appears to have enthused many trainees and established a good working relationship between the trainees and the LSC. Trainees commented on the value of hearing from solicitors experienced in legal aid which was very beneficial to them.
- Comments were made regarding the frankness of the panel member and the willingness to debate subjects raised by the trainees. This gave a valuable insight into the legal aid system for many trainees, most of which had not yet had any experience with the LSC.
- The workshops received a high number of comments. The trainees provided ideas and requests for future workshops and felt that these could be a regular occurrence throughout their training contract and commission period.
- A large majority of trainees found that the chance to network with other trainees taking part in the scheme was invaluable. The trainees found that sharing experiences with those in similar positions to them was not commonly experienced by trainees in legal aid firms, as most of these firms do not employ more than one trainee at a time. Many have now signed up to the Trainee Mentoring Scheme.

Suggestions for the future

- Some trainees found that the workshops were not detailed enough but commented that time restrictions were the cause of this. More detailed workshops can now be considered as the number interested in attending is high. We have received a large number of suggestions for topics to be covered on future workshops which can be fed into future workshops.
- A suggestion was made to hold regular workshops at various stages of the training contract and commission period to ensure the workshops are relevant to the trainee and contribute to their development.
- We received a few comments from those currently studying the LPC as some felt that the workshops were difficult for them to follow as they had not yet begun working within a legal aid firm. The workshops for those at this stage in their studies can now be reconsidered to tailor this to their needs.
- Many have requested further opportunities to network with other trainees. We have now set up a forum for LSC funded trainees to allow them to contact each other and discuss their training and experiences with other trainees.

This feedback can now be fed into future events with LSC funded trainees. All comments received shows that all trainees found the event valuable and would like to see many more event of this kind in the future.