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## The All-Party Parliamentary Group on Legal Aid

**APPG on Legal Aid Bulletin**

**6th Edition - February 2018**

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Dear Parliamentarian,

Welcome to the sixth bulletin from the APPG on Legal Aid. This edition has three sections:

### **1. Dates for your Diaries**

- APPG on Legal Aid Meeting: Early Advice 7 March 2018 9.00 -10.30am (Thatcher Room, Portcullis House)
- Training events in March

### **2. Recent Events**

### **3. Legal Aid News**

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### **1. Dates for your Diaries**

#### **7 March 9am – 10.30am: APPG on Legal Aid: Thatcher Room, Portcullis House**

There will be a meeting on **Wednesday, 7 March from 9:00-10:30 in the Thatcher Room (Portcullis House)**. The topic will be “Early Advice” and we are delighted to welcome

- The Rt Hon Dominic Grieve QC MP on the importance of intervention at the early stages of legal problems
- Lord Colin Low and Kari Gerstheimer who will be speaking about developments on the Low Commission four years on and Mencap’s legal coalition project
- Christina Blacklaws, Vice-President of the Law Society who will speak about the Law Society’s [report](#) on early advice and their ongoing campaigning in this area
- Rachel Jones, civil justice lawyer at Justice who will speak about their newly published report (available [here](#)) and
- a speaker from the Bach Commission

We also have some members of the Ministry of Justice Post-Implementation Review team in attendance who will say a few words about the impending review if it has been announced.

### **Training events:**

This training is aimed at MPs, their caseworkers and Councillors who deal with casework on behalf of their constituents. The “Introduction to Legal Aid” training has been developed as a result of work and conversations that have been held with Councillors, MPs and their staff across the country. The aim of training is to:

- ensure that that MPs, their caseworkers and Councillors are aware of the availability of Legal Aid for the issues that their constituents may approach them about
- explain how best to refer constituents to sources of legal assistance

If you live in any of these areas please share them with your local Councillors and MP’s office and encourage them to attend.

- 2 March: Sheffield: please book [here](#)
- 9 March: Birmingham: please book [here](#)
- 14 March: Leeds: please book [here](#)
- 15 March: Newcastle: please book [here](#)
- 22 March: Manchester: please book [here](#)
- 28 March: Cardiff: please book [here](#)

## **2. Recent Events**

The APPG on Legal Aid meeting on 7 February covered a range of current issues including:

- Legal Aid and Inquests
- New Domestic Violence Regulations
- Criminal Legal Aid update
- Prison Law reforms

The minutes of the meeting are [here](#).

## **3. Legal Aid News**

### **Justice Questions in January**

Lucy Frazer, the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Justice, was the Minister

answering the questions and her responses are [here](#).

### **Education and Discrimination Services**

The Legal Aid Agency has announced that it will not be awarding any civil legal advice contracts for education and discrimination services after 1 September, after receiving 'insufficient compliant tenders'. Further information should be announced. The decision is [here](#).

### **“Business as usual” on legal aid helplines following Carillion collapse**

The Ministry of Justice (MoJ) has said it was “business as usual” on the housing and debt legal aid phone lines operated by Carillion Advice Services (CAS) yesterday, following the collapse of the parent company. For further information click [here](#).

### **Forensic science regulator criticises legal aid cuts**

The Forensic Science Regulator has highlighted the enormous damage that continuous cuts to police budgets and legal aid are inflicting on the criminal justice system in her [latest annual report](#).

### **Joint Committee on Human Rights Inquiry**

The [Joint Committee on Human Rights](#) has launched an inquiry into factors which may impede individuals from using the UK's human rights framework effectively.

*“But however much rights may be recognised in the legal framework, they are only valuable if they are enforceable. Effective human rights enforcement requires judicial independence; access to resources; a fearless legal profession and the confidence to stand up for rights in all parts of society....In this wide-ranging inquiry, the Joint Committee on Human Rights is calling for evidence on factors which may impede individuals from using the UK's human rights framework effectively.”*

The time for responding in writing has closed but evidence sessions are now being held. Click here for more information: [Inquiry: Defending Rights: attitudes to enforcement](#)

### **Reforming the Advocates' Graduated Fee Scheme: Government Response**

The response has now been published and the government has made changes to the original proposals. The [response](#) is designed to reward 'work done'. It was considered that fees paid were not paying fairly for the work actually being carried out. There is particular attention paid to better reimbursing junior advocates. The Law Society has launched a judicial review of the Litigator Graduated Fees Scheme and the proposed fee cuts announced in that response.

**Rohini Teather**

**Christine Peace**

**APPG Project Workers**

**Legal Aid Practitioners Group | Young Legal Aid Lawyers**  
**28th February 2018**

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#### **About the APPG on Legal Aid**

The All-Party Parliamentary Group on Legal Aid aims to promote parliamentary and public understanding of the importance of the role of publicly funded legal services. It is chaired by Karen Buck MP. Secretariat support is provided jointly by the Legal Aid Practitioners Group (LAPG) together with Young Legal Aid Lawyers (YLAL) with funding from The Legal Education Foundation.

For more information contact:

[rohini.teather@lapg.co.uk](mailto:rohini.teather@lapg.co.uk)

#### **About the APPG Plus Project**

LAPG and the APPG on Legal Aid have been funded by The Legal Education Foundation to engage with MPs and councillors and their caseworkers to ensure that there is a good understanding of what is left in legal aid in the wake of LASPO, and to offer constructive advice, resources and training on how busy MPs and their caseworkers can engage better with lawyers and advice charities in the legal aid sector. In doing so, we aim to assess current access to justice issues facing the public and to help inform future decision making at a policy

level.

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You are receiving this email because you have expressed an interest in the work of the APPG on legal aid or generally in issues affecting access to justice.

**Our mailing address is:**

Legal Aid Practitioners Group

12 Baylis Road

London, England SE1 7AA

United Kingdom

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