

Strategic Plan 2009-12



legal aid – fair access to justice

Legal Services Commission Strategic Plan 2009-12

Presented to Parliament pursuant to paragraph 15 of Schedule 1
to the Access to Justice Act 1999



Legal aid marks 60 years of justice

2009 marks the 60th anniversary of legal aid. Legal aid was born on 30 July 1949, when the Legal Aid and Advice Bill received Royal Assent. Its aim – that nobody should be ‘financially unable to prosecute a just and reasonable claim or defend a legal right.’

For the last 60 years legal aid has not only helped individuals, but also funded test cases in the courts which have helped many more people. At times it has improved the justice system and sometimes changed the law itself.

The Legal Services Commission is working with partners, within and outside the legal sector, to raise awareness of how legal aid helps disadvantaged people, especially during a recession. We aim to generate discussion about the role of legal aid in a democratic society today. We will also look to the future when we are confident legal aid will continue to play a vital role.

To learn more about the anniversary, visit www.legalaid60.org.uk

Contents

Foreword by the Commission Chair and Chief Executive	2	Strategic objectives	
Services that support clients in difficult times	2	Objective 1	10
Commitment, collaboration and the client	3	Maximise access to quality services to meet the diverse needs of the clients we serve	
An efficient, more tightly run organisation	3	What we have achieved so far	11
Meeting the challenge	3	What we want to achieve	12
Legal aid – fair access to justice	4	How we will measure success	13
Our Purpose	5	Objective 2	14
Our Vision	5	Deliver a sustainable Legal Aid Scheme and an efficient and diverse organisation	
Our Objectives	5	What we have achieved so far	15
Our Values	5	What we want to achieve	16
Our Structure	6	How we will measure success	17
Our Sponsors	7	Objective 3	18
Our Resources	7	Facilitate the efficient and effective delivery of justice and wider government priorities	
Our Strategy	8	What we have achieved so far	19
LSC Strategy – Summary	8	What we want to achieve	19
How we will deliver our strategy	22	How we will measure success	20
What we have achieved so far	23		
What we want to achieve	23		
How we will measure and report success	24		

Foreword by the Commission Chair and Chief Executive

We set out in this document our strategy for the Legal Services Commission (LSC) for 2009–2012. Since last year's strategic plan we have redefined our thinking. The LSC's new vision recognises our significant role within the legal services market, focusing on procuring good quality legal services that deliver fair access to justice for people who cannot otherwise afford it.

It is an ambitious and challenging vision, but one that we believe will take us forward as an effective commissioning organisation, to meet the future needs of those we serve while living within available funding. We are taking on the role of discriminating consumer in procuring high quality, value for money services for clients.

This strategic plan outlines how we will deliver our vision in the next three years. Our aim is to give purpose and direction to our staff and stakeholders, as well as build public confidence and involvement in our work.

2009 is the 60th anniversary of legal aid in England and Wales. We can celebrate with our staff and stakeholders what legal aid has achieved so far in our society. It is also an opportunity to look forward and discuss how best to meet changing client needs in the future.

Services that support clients in difficult times

The current extraordinary economic climate has created an even greater urgency for us to deliver services that meet the needs of our clients, particularly in the areas of debt, housing and employment. We have already taken action to increase availability of services and funding in these priority areas. In consultation with our providers and their representative bodies, we have also improved our payment systems, which we believe will particularly help small businesses to manage their cash-flow during this difficult period.

Legal aid is often the unsung emergency service, providing legal help in times of crisis. Our budget of £2 billion serves the needs of over 2 million people a year – some of the most vulnerable people in our society. In 2008/09, the number of people helped through our housing possession duty schemes increased month on month. Our Community Legal Advice (CLA) helpline alone helped nearly 600,000 people between April 2006 and December 2008, and it has continued to develop services to extend its reach. In the last year CLA has introduced online advice in British Sign Language and piloted telephone advice on family law.

We have made significant progress in delivering the reform programme outlined in *Legal Aid Reform: the way ahead* (2006). Over the last year we have built positive working relationships with stakeholders in the legal aid field, to deliver significant changes to civil and criminal legal aid. We are committed to continuing this collaborative approach in the future, as well as reviewing and simplifying our processes and policies, in consultation with legal aid practitioners.

The legal landscape in which we work is changing, in particular following the Legal Services Act 2007, so we must change with it.



Commitment, collaboration and the client

The relationships we have forged with partners and representative bodies are crucial to the efficient delivery of legal aid, for both clients and taxpayers. We will continue to work with our partners across the justice system at local and national levels to make services more effective, and improve clients' experience of the justice system.

In the period of this plan, we will develop and implement the commissioning of services, including joint commissioning of integrated social welfare law advice in partnership with other funders such as Local Authorities. Services must be shaped to reflect clients' needs and local priorities, and to be more easily accessible.

An efficient, more tightly run organisation

Last year we completed a review of our structure, which resulted in re-organising into three directorates – Commissioning, Business Support, and Corporate Services. The structure at senior and middle management levels has also been reviewed and streamlined to ensure that we have the right people in the right roles.

Over the next three to five years we will move our administrative processing work into five sites, whilst retaining a regional presence to ensure our local knowledge and relationships with providers are maintained.

E-business processes will play a vital part in transforming our business by improving efficiency and reducing costs.

Meeting the challenge

We expect this period to be challenging for everyone involved in legal aid. The LSC is strongly committed to maintaining clear and constructive dialogue with our providers, our partners across the justice system and our staff. We are also committed to improving our engagement with the clients we serve.

We look forward to working with everyone who shares our ambition and commitment to delivering this vision.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bill Callaghan". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly stylized font.

Sir Bill Callaghan
Chair, Legal Services Commission

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Carolyn Regan". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly stylized font.

Carolyn Regan
Chief Executive, Legal Services Commission

Legal aid – fair access to justice



We are changing legal aid so that we can carry on delivering the services that people need. For clients, services must be high quality and readily available.

Our Purpose

The Legal Services Commission provides legal aid and legal advice and information in England and Wales through two schemes: the Community Legal Service (CLS) and the Criminal Defence Service (CDS). Our work is essential to the fair, effective and efficient operation of the civil and criminal justice systems. It is also critical in helping to provide access to legal advice for some of the most vulnerable members of society.

We are a non-departmental public body sponsored by the Ministry of Justice (MoJ). The Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice, The Right Honourable Jack Straw MP, is accountable to Parliament for our activities and performance. In addition, within Wales, the LSC maintains close links with the Welsh Assembly Government, in recognition of the devolved administration.

A board of 12 independent Commissioners, chaired by Sir Bill Callaghan, oversees our work. The Lord Chancellor appoints our Commissioners, who are responsible for establishing and maintaining the overall strategic direction of the LSC within an agreed framework.

The Commission has corporate responsibility for fulfilling the following objectives:

- To ensure that the LSC fulfils its statutory duties set out in the Access to Justice Act 1999
- To ensure that the LSC fulfils the aims and objectives set by the Secretary of State
- To establish the overall strategic direction of the LSC
- To ensure high standards of corporate governance at all times
- To promote the efficient and effective use of financial, human and other resources by the LSC.

In addition, the Commission also has several sub committees. The LSC's Audit Committee ensures that the LSC adheres to the highest standards of propriety in the use and stewardship of public funds and encourages proper accountability for the use of those funds.

Our Chief Executive is the accountable officer for the delivery of legal aid and its associated reform programme.

Our Vision

Legal aid – fair access to justice

Legal aid is a pillar of the welfare state and society because it gives fair access to justice to the people who need it but can least afford it.

We all hope our problems will not get out of control 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.

We are changing legal aid so that we can carry on delivering the services that people need. For clients, services must be high quality and readily available. For taxpayers, services must be value for money and affordable.

Our Objectives

We have three objectives which cover the full range of activities and outcomes we will deliver. We will work with our providers, justice partners at local and national level, staff and other government departments to:

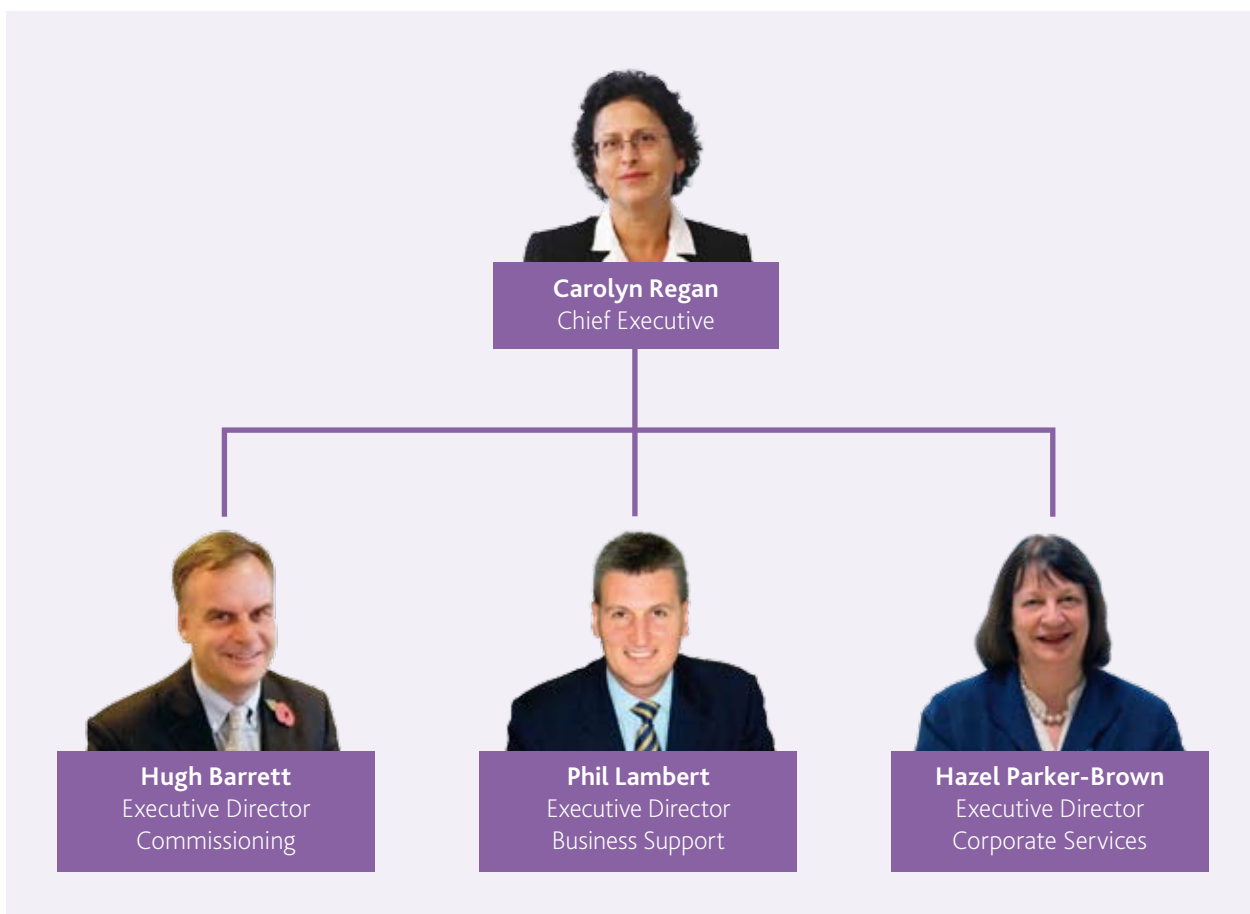
- Maximise access to quality legal aid to meet the diverse needs of the clients we serve
- Deliver a sustainable Legal Aid Scheme and an efficient and diverse organisation
- Facilitate the efficient and effective delivery of justice and wider government priorities

Our Values

We strive to be an organisation which is competent in all it does, and which is clear, confident and courageous in going about its business:

- We are purpose driven, efficient and compliant but we are also committed to quality, value and equality.
- We behave in ways that demonstrate clarity, confidence and courage whilst delivering our vision.
- We will be competent in all we do, driven by efficient processes to ensure maximum focus on meeting client need through good quality providers.

Our Structure



The LSC has its headquarters in London and provides local services from a total of 14 sites, including our Wales office and Headquarters. We also operate four Public Defender Service (PDS) offices that deliver legal advice and representation to people involved in criminal cases. Across our locations we employ a total of around 1700 people¹.

Our organisation is divided into three directorates, which ensure that we focus on day-to-day delivery and performance as well as our change programme. A member of our Executive Team leads each directorate, reporting to the Chief Executive.

1 Figure includes permanent staff and temporary payroll staff as at 31.1.09

Our Sponsors

We are sponsored by the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) and contribute to the MoJ's ministerial priorities and Departmental Strategic Objectives (DSOs), as well as to a number of cross-government Public Service Agreements (PSAs) which the MoJ and its delivery arms are working with other government departments to deliver. The MoJ's DSOs are:

- **DSO 1** – Strengthen democracy, rights and responsibilities
- **DSO 2** – Deliver fair and simple routes to civil and family justice
- **DSO 3** – Protect the public and reduce reoffending
- **DSO 4** – Ensure a more effective, transparent and responsive criminal justice system for victims and the public

The LSC contributes to all four DSOs and particularly to DSO 2 by enabling people to access civil and family justice through over one million acts of assistance provided by the Community Legal Service, and also to DSO 4 where an effective Criminal Defence Service ensures a defendant's right to a fair trial. The LSC also directly contributes to two cross-government PSAs:

- **PSA 16** – Increase the proportion of socially excluded adults in settled accommodation and employment, education or training
- **PSA 21** – Build more cohesive, empowered and active communities

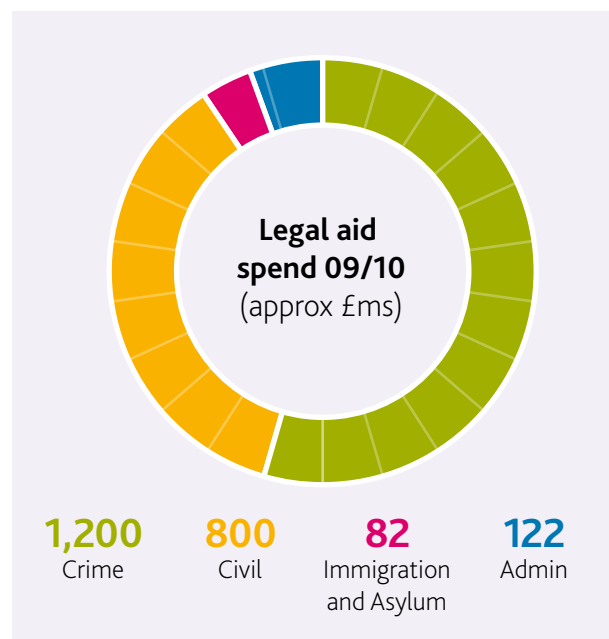
Our work also supports a further two PSAs:

- **PSA 23** – Make communities safer
- **PSA 24** – Deliver a more effective, transparent and responsive Criminal Justice System for victims and the public

We are also committed to ensuring that we as an organisation deliver our services in a more efficient way, and this commitment is reflected in the cross-government Service Transformation Agreement.

Our Resources

The total budget for the LSC is just over £2 billion per annum. Over the period 2009-2012, the legal aid fund will remain constant. Over the same period we will continue to work towards reducing our administration spend by approximately £27m against projected spend.



Our Strategy

LSC Strategy – Summary

MoJ Departmental Strategic Objectives	Strengthen democracy, rights and responsibilities	Deliver fair and simple routes to civil and family justice	Protect the public and reduce reoffending	Ensure a more effective, transparent and responsive criminal justice system for victims and the public
Our Vision	Legal aid – fair access to justice			
Our Values	An organisation which is: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Competent • Clear • Confident • Courageous 			
Our Strategic Objectives	1 Maximise access to quality services to meet the diverse needs of the clients we serve	2 Deliver a sustainable Legal aid scheme and an efficient and diverse organisation	3 Facilitate the efficient delivery of justice and wider government priorities	

Legal Aid Reform: the Way Ahead (2006) provides a clear sense of purpose and direction. During the term of this plan we will implement reforms which will form the basis of a sustainable legal aid scheme. They will be in the interests of clients, providers and the taxpayer, as well as ensuring that resources are directed to priority areas.

Historically, criminal services have been universal, whilst civil and family services have been controlled through scope and eligibility changes. This has seen a lower proportion of funds being spent on services relating to civil justice in comparison to crime. Our strategy is to better understand Government's priorities, allocate funding against those priorities, and specify the services we want to commission. This means we must choose which providers are best placed to deliver the services clients need.

We believe that moving to a competitive market for the majority of legal aid services is the best way to deliver quality services at the best possible price. It will also give providers the advantage of an agreed price, which they have offered and which they know is attractive to them. This moves away from a system, which simply rewards hours worked, and towards one that rewards the case as a whole and focuses on outcomes. Subject to consultation, we will design and implement a system of best value tendering, which supports efficient providers, and enables them to focus on their core task of delivering good quality advice to clients. It will enable providers to take their own decisions on how to conduct and expand their businesses.

The planned reforms will build on changes already made in recent years, whereby fixed and graduated fees have been introduced in the majority of both civil and crime work and the Community Legal Service (CLS) strategy has shaped services more effectively around clients' needs. Government and the LSC, remain committed to increasing the proportion of overall budget devoted to civil over crime.

This clarity of purpose gives greater focus to what we aim to achieve. The key to success will be our ability to work with our partners in the justice system to deliver services shaped effectively around clients' needs, and provide access to quality services. We will also continue to work with our colleagues in the MoJ and other government departments to deliver against PSAs and the DSOs to which we contribute.

The LSC is committed to promoting equality and tackling unlawful discrimination of any description. This applies in our role as an employer, a commissioner of services and in carrying out our functions.

Objective 1



Maximise access to quality services to meet the diverse needs of the clients we serve

We are working in a challenging economic and financial climate, and we have a fixed budget within which to deliver our services and implement the transformation programme. We will seek to make best possible use of the resources available, in order to meet the diverse needs of our clients. Our independent research centre, the Legal Services Research Centre (LSRC), conducts research of international standing, including wide-ranging research on the patterns of problems that clients face, the barriers they experience when seeking advice, and the decisions they make about handling their problems. We want to achieve the right balance between early advice that helps address problems before they become more complex and serious, and the litigation and advocacy services that are so crucial in protecting fundamental rights. Within civil services in particular, we want to work with other commissioners or funders of services in order to maximise access to joined up quality services

Our assessment of whether someone qualifies for legal aid is based on a financial means and legal merits test laid down by Parliament. Our decision to provide help cannot be influenced by public or political emotion towards a case or person and we sometimes have to make difficult decisions to ensure that we focus on the people who most need help.

Although we will focus increasingly on those in most need, we will still offer free civil legal information through our Community Legal Advice website (www.communitylegaladvice.org.uk) (helpline: 0845 345 4 345) and leaflets. We will also seek to continue to join up legal aid services with other legal and advice services.

Similarly, within criminal legal aid we will continue to focus on cases requiring urgent legal help at the police station and representation at their first magistrates' court hearing, where someone is at risk of imprisonment or in custody.

What we have achieved so far

We help around 2 million people each year by providing access to legal advice, assistance and representation. We have continued to deliver on our commitment to make services more accessible and shape services around clients' needs. Key successes include:

- We have made significant progress on our commitment to working with stakeholders and have set up a number of working groups considering specific aspects of the reform programme, including Very High Cost Cases (VHCC), quality assurance, contract compliance and the civil contracts consultative group. All of these groups have had provider representation to assist us in the development of robust policy and implementation plans.
- We opened Community Legal Advice centres in Gateshead, Portsmouth and Hull. We now have five centres open, with Derby and Leicester being the other locations. We are working with local authorities to open up to 8 more centres by April 2010.
- We reached an agreement with the Bar Council, Law Society and Ministry of Justice on our current VHCC scheme for both litigators and advocates. This will be cost neutral; the costs being recouped through reducing the number of cases requiring two junior counsel.
- In light of the economic downturn and increased possessions, we completed a tender process to deliver Housing Possession Court Duty Schemes (HPCDS) in selected County Courts to offer on-the-day advice and advocacy to clients who have a hearing listed at court, irrespective of eligibility under means and merits tests.
- The Community Legal Advice helpline piloted a scheme to enable telephone operators to book appointments for callers with face-to-face advice providers via an online system. We have also piloted the provision of email advice for the hard of hearing and the provision of advice by British Sign Language in collaboration with the Royal Association for Deaf People.

Objective 1

- Our Community Legal Advice website www.communitylegaladvice.org.uk has been awarded the Gold standard by the Plain Language Commission and accreditation by the Shaw Trust for its accessibility for people with disabilities.
- We completed successful bid rounds for immigration advice and representation at police stations.
- We completed successful bid rounds for additional services in a range of categories, particularly domestic abuse, public law childcare and social welfare law. We have also begun work with women's refuges to make civil and family legal aid more accessible.
- We implemented the Unified Contract in crime ensuring full coverage was maintained in England and Wales for those seeking representation at the police station and courts.
- Increased civil fee rates following agreement with the Law Society.
- Launched consultation on civil bid rounds for 2010 contracts.
- Delivered quality improvement workshops in partnership with the Advice Services Alliance in categories of debt, housing, immigration, welfare benefits, family and crime.
- Our Community Legal Advice helpline ran a successful pilot for a family law service, which had 3000 calls per month, and resulted in 82% of callers being able to resolve their problems.

What we want to achieve

Over the next three years we will ensure:

- Clients have access to quality services which meet their needs.
- Providers we contract with meet our quality requirements and statutory duties.
- We increase engagement with clients to gain a better understanding of their needs in order to improve our commissioning of services and the way in which clients might access services.
- We work with providers to deliver services, which are designed to meet the needs of the community they serve.
- We provide an accessible civil and family justice system by delivering 1 million acts of assistance, supporting the MoJ to achieve DS02.
- We contribute to achieving PSA 16 by working to increase the number of providers delivering advice across categories of law such as social welfare and housing so that more people can understand their rights to benefits and maintain their tenancies. We will also work with local authorities to continue to develop Community Legal Advice centres and networks.
- We contribute to PSA 21 by working with local authorities to commission advice services that are tailored to the needs of the local community

Key actions in 2009-10 include:

- Maintain magistrates court duty solicitor coverage at 100%.
- Maintain Defence Solicitor Call Centre deployment for representation of clients in police custody – 95% of calls accepted within 30 minutes.
- Maintain access to civil legal advice services.
- Quality assurance scheme for advocates pilot begins.
- Following the success of the piloted Community Legal Advice helpline service offering family advice we will roll this out nationally from July 2009.
- Continue to explore other opportunities to work in partnership and jointly commission legal and advice services which are citizen-centred, and responsive to external social and cultural factors.
- Work with providers to ensure through the contracting process that they can deliver culturally and linguistically sensitive services which reflect the demographics of their area.
- Work with legal aid stakeholders to develop a better understanding of the services currently delivered and address current and future need to inform the procurement process.
- Set out the quality framework which we are designing in consultation with our stakeholders.
- Increase the information available to clients about the services our providers deliver.
- Work with providers and representative bodies following our consultation on family legal aid funding to implement schemes to cover private certificated work and introduce a fee for family advocacy which is the same for barristers and solicitor advocates.

- Work with representative bodies to publish details of our Family Graduated Fee Scheme.
- We will use competitive processes to maximise the quality access and value for money of services such as in commissioning, Community Legal Advice centres and helplines and the 2010 civil contracts.

We will be working more effectively with clients to determine current and future need to inform our commissioning processes.

How we will measure success

We will review our performance against the actions set out above, and their contribution to the overall success of MoJ DSO2: to deliver fair and simple routes to civil and family justice. Our performance will also be measured against our contribution to achieving PSA 16, to increase the proportion of socially excluded adults in settled accommodation and employment, education or training, and PSA 21, to build more cohesive, empowered and active communities.

We will continue to review our services in light of the changing economic and financial environments. Where need increases we will be proactive in providing additional services wherever possible within our funding constraints.

We will maintain access to quality services which we will achieve through partnership working with our providers and being clear about our expectations. We will continue to measure provision of criminal representation at the police station and court. We are currently consulting on how to provide more integrated advice for clients experiencing civil and family problems, and will work with our partners in the civil and family justice system to identify effective measures to ensure this advice is provided in a consistent and fair manner, following the results of the consultation.

We will have a provider base which consistently delivers good quality advice to clients delivering positive outcomes. We will develop the three strands of our quality framework: a quality threshold for providers; the use of commissioning to encourage quality improvements above the threshold; and informing client choice. We will also work towards handing over the lead on peer reviews, which represent a part of our quality framework to the regulator.

Our locally based staff will maintain and utilise the relationships they have built with providers to ensure compliance with our quality systems and work with providers when issues arise to find a resolution.

Objective 2



Deliver a sustainable legal aid scheme and an efficient and diverse organisation

Through implementation of our transformation programme we will place the legal aid budget on a sustainable footing by procuring good quality legal services at the best price for the taxpayer through market based competition. As well as the reforms made to both civil and criminal legal aid schemes, we are reforming our processes to ensure that the LSC is structured and resourced in the most efficient and effective way to obtain the maximum value from the reforms.

What we have achieved so far

We have worked closely with the Law Society, Bar Council, and other representative bodies through working groups that were established in 2008-09. These have allowed for a series of open, constructive and pragmatic discussions to find an agreed way forward to implement policies with stakeholder input. This provides a certain amount of stability for legal aid providers and enables them to adapt to the changes to the legal aid system, which have already been introduced, and to consider and plan for future changes.

In 2008 we were shortlisted as a finalist for a Guardian Public Services award for innovation and progress for our Community Legal Advice telephone service, website and leaflets.

During 2008-09 we have implemented various changes to;

Civil schemes:

- Reached agreement with the Law Society on our approach to reconciliation of standard monthly payments and remainder work.
- Increased the amount available through Community Legal Service Grants, an effective way of funding complementary services not funded from other sources, to £3m over a three-year period.
- Published a civil route map outlining milestones up to and beyond April 2010.

- Published two major consultations on civil legal aid services – one on family fees for representation and advocacy and the other on the civil bid rounds for contracts starting in 2010.

Crime schemes:

- Implemented the Unified Contract ensuring 100% coverage across England and Wales.
- Consultation launched for the introduction of means testing in crown courts.
- Consultation launched on the pilot of virtual courts, a system designed to fast track first hearings and to make efficiency savings across the criminal justice system and provide better client care.

Our systems and processes:

- Delivered 32 provider briefing events around the country in support of the consultation paper Managing Legal Aid Cases in Partnership – Delivery Transformation. These events gave providers an opportunity for an open and honest discussion on the issues and for us to take suggestions to ensure our processes are efficient and we best manage the transition to increased electronic working.
- Delivered a phased plan to relaunch LSC Online which will see over 5000 provider firms able to use the system by 31 March 2009.
- Worked with providers and representative bodies to improve our payment processes, resulting in a move from fortnightly to weekly payments where no standard monthly payment applied.

Our staff:

- Appointed three new Executive Directors.
- Reviewed our senior leadership group, resulting in a reduction in numbers of staff at this level of 20%.
- Announced our plans to move from 13 processing centres to 5 nationally, maintaining local commissioning presence

Objective 2

What we want to achieve

Over the next three years we will ensure:

- Effective implementation of our legal aid transformation programme on time and on budget as it provides the basis for a sustainable legal aid scheme.
- Effective internal and external process transformation through working with providers.
- Effective financial control and value for money delivered by living within legal aid fund and administration budgets as well as management of debt.
- Effective internal transformation to ensure we have a more capable, efficient, engaged and diverse workforce.
- We will maintain national customer service levels.
- We contribute to achieving the Government's Service Transformation Agreement by rationalising our estate and investigating the long term possibilities of co-locating and sharing accommodation with other members of the MoJ family.

Key actions in 2009-10 include:

- Begin implementation of an effective means tested legal aid scheme in the Higher Courts, to ensure that all those who can afford to pay for, or contribute towards their legal costs, do so.
- Ensuring that the funding available for civil, family and immigration legal aid is targeted on vulnerable and socially excluded people, and by maximising availability, in particular through the development of more co-ordinated advice structures and closer relationships with other funding bodies, jointly commissioning those services wherever it is appropriate.
- We will clearly map Government's priorities for legal aid, and how our budget will be balanced against those priorities.
- Continue our pro-active approach to funding priority services in accordance with external factors, such as increased need for housing and debt advice.
- Publish a consultation on the proposed introduction of fixed fees for Prison Law.

- Publish second consultation on Best Value Tendering options
- Identify where we will pilot civil Best Value Tendering after 2010
- Continuing to ensure that decisions on the development of justice systems take account of legal aid and reflect whole system costs and benefits.
- Keeping forecasted legal aid expenditure under review so that adjustments can be made if necessary to live within budget.
- Managing our finances effectively, continuing to contact providers who have failed to invoice us, or come back to us to confirm the completion of cases, to ensure that payments made on account reflect the work done. Reduce our overall provider debt and improve performance in reconciling payments on account to bills paid.
- Simplifying internal and external processes in partnership with the working groups.
- Recognising the importance of our employees to our success. We will continue to measure against our people scorecard which demonstrates progress against our target headcount (temporary and permanent) reductions, reducing long and short-term sickness absence, investing in personal development and our leadership capability.
- Continuing the review of our structure for the future organisation and rolling this out to incorporate middle managers. This will produce less layers, less bureaucracy and faster decision making. Embedding electronic monitoring and best practice recruitment and development will enable us to work towards a more diverse workforce at senior levels and across all departments.
- Maintaining our customer service score for customer facing departments at 90%, including dealing effectively with complaints, correspondence and telephone calls. We will continue to look for new ways to improve processing times for applications and payments.

How we will measure success

We will report on our delivery of the actions set out above in our Annual Report.

We will measure our success by ensuring that we are delivering the reforms on time and within cost and that they deliver the cost savings required.

We will ultimately, over the course of this plan, reform and modernise the system to control financial pressures while safeguarding good quality service delivered for clients by providers.

Ensuring that we live within our budget will allow us to continue to rebalance criminal legal aid and civil legal aid, and also to maximise access to early legal advice where appropriate. These savings will help us maximise services for clients within the available resources.

We will also measure our own performance in key service areas such as how quickly we make decisions on applications, pay bills, reply to correspondence and help legal aid clients and providers on the telephone.

We will deliver the anticipated real-term savings against the administration budget and deliver an organisation which is fit for purpose, competent and efficient in all it does. We will deliver the headcount reductions from 1,700 to 1,100 by 2011/12.

Objective 3



Facilitate the efficient and effective delivery of justice and wider government priorities

We will work with our providers, partners in the justice system, MoJ colleagues and other government departments to deliver against the priorities set out under Public Service Agreements as a result of the Government's Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR 07). One of our major shared aims is to ensure access to justice to help people to resolve and avoid civil and family disputes and a more effective and responsive criminal justice system thus supporting PSA 24 and PSA 23, lead by MoJ and the Home Office respectively.

What we have achieved so far

Key successes include:

- Full membership of all 42 Local Criminal Justice Boards (LCJBs) and on track to achieve full membership of all 39 Local Family Justice Councils (LFJCs)
- Worked closely with Refuge and Women's Aid to provide outreach services for civil and family advice
- Provided funding to enable defence representation at Local Criminal Justice Boards.
- Implemented a provider reporting tool, identifying and addressing issues across the wider justice system.
- LSC input to the MoJ's Access to Justice strategy, bringing together key justice system partners including Her Majesty's Court Service and the judiciary.
- Increased the number of courts covered by our housing possession duty schemes from 94 to 113

We have continued to support the training of new solicitors with our grants scheme, awarding a further 150 this year.

We have continued our work with MoJ to identify and implement ways to reduce the economic impact on businesses of LSC policies. We have defined a target reduction, which will drive our work towards better regulation and a greater understanding and appreciation of the administrative burdens that policy decisions can have on our providers and partners.

What we want to achieve

Over the next three years we will ensure:

- We work with our partners within the justice system to facilitate whole system reform.
- We continue our funding to ensure a new generation of legal aid lawyers.
- We contribute to government targets around corporate social responsibility to deliver economic, sustainability and social outcomes.
- We provide an effective Criminal Defence Service to ensure a defendant's right to a fair trial, supporting the Ministry of Justice to achieve DS0 4.
- We support the achievement of PSA 24 by ensuring that legal aid contributes to an effective criminal justice system, where cases are dealt with fairly, but also efficiently.
- We support the achievement of PSA 23 by participating fully in Local Criminal Justice Boards, and providing legally aided advice and support for prisoners upon release, to reduce re-offending.

Key actions in 2009-10 include:

- Continuing to work with providers to identify efficiencies which will enable them to maximise the benefits of LSC fixed fees.
- Work with MoJ to develop a strong strategy for Access to Justice and gain maximum leverage from bringing delivery agencies together to improve the justice system through shared targets.
- Continue to support the training of new solicitors by providing £3 million for the training grants scheme.
- Meeting our target for reduction in administrative burden through increased electronic working and simplifying processes.
- Exploring ways to reduce or maximise usage of LSC property and possibilities to share services with other MoJ partners and other government agencies.
- Ensuring compliance, and working towards best practice, with Cabinet Office guidelines on information security.

Objective 3

- Delivering cost and environmental savings by focused recycling and using alternative communications methods to reduce travel costs.
- Promoting a culture of rights and responsibilities by giving people early information on how to access advice.
- Evaluating and considering further roll-out of our scheme of community engagement working with schools, universities and the third sector.
- Consult and finalise on the contractual framework for the 2010 civil and criminal contracts, balancing effective accountability and better regulation.

How we will measure success

We will review our performance against the actions set out above, and their contribution to the overall success of MoJ DSOs, and in particular DSO 4: to ensure a more effective, transparent and responsive criminal justice system for victims and the public.

Implementation of reforms to the wider justice system delivering greater efficiency and effectiveness will be tracked through PSA 24 which the MoJ will lead on, and our participation in PSA 23, lead by the Home Office

We will deliver a significant proportion of the MoJ's target to deliver savings on the administrative burden imposed on stakeholders by the LSC's regulatory framework and associated systems and processes.

We will continue to support the next generation of legal aid lawyers through funding training contracts.

We will continue to deliver against our corporate commitment to reduce waste and energy consumption as part of our 3 year plan to meet sustainability targets.

We will generate greater interest and awareness of legal aid through our pilot community engagement project working with schools, universities and the third sector.

How we will deliver our strategy



We are committed to creating a sustainable legal aid scheme supported by an efficient and diverse organisation. We realise that 2009/10 will be a challenging year given the limited financial budget we have to work within to ensure we provide services to those most in need. We are confident that the direction and measures set out in this strategy will give urgency and impetus to our work.

How we deliver is guided by our values and the focus will be on ensuring we have an organisation that is clear, competent, confident and courageous in all that it does.

What we have achieved so far

We met or partially met 22 out of 35 key performance indicators in 2007/08 and made progress against the milestones set out in our 2007/2010 plan. During 2008-09 we have continued our focus for laying the foundation for our whole reform programme.

Maintained and improved access to services. We have worked with our providers to maintain access to duty solicitors at the court and the police station. We continued to identify opportunities to fund additional acts of assistance through civil bid rounds ensuring targeted assistance to priority clients.

Improved communication. We have worked with the Law Society, other representative bodies, providers and wider justice stakeholders to understand and manage the impact of the reform programme on providers. We have continued to inform providers through our system of regular fortnightly email updates about key information concerning the transformation programme and other news. We have focused on increasing the opportunities for face to face communications in smaller groups, for example through Provider Reference Groups and consultation events.

Resources matched to priorities. We have taken tough action to match resources to priorities. We have brought the 2007/08 budget in on target and anticipate achieving the same for 2008/09 despite some slippage in implementation of reform milestones and the need to deliver contingency work around LSC Online.

People at all levels have the right skills and are effective. We have completed a review of our organisational structure, which has resulted in a new three directorate structure allowing for quicker decision making and increased accountability. Our review of the senior leadership group was completed on time and within budget, delivering a reduction in staff at senior levels in the organisation.

Systems which work and make delivery easier – we had significant problems following the initial implementation of our updated LSC online system. We have learnt from our mistakes and worked with our providers to ensure that issues with the system were resolved to enable them to work with us electronically. We have consulted with providers about future phases of electronic working and how we will devolve decision making effectively. We will be professional and innovative in improving our systems and processes and matching resources to priorities – achieving significant efficiencies in our administrative and other costs.

What we want to achieve

We have a challenging transformation programme to deliver and ensuring we achieve our strategic objectives will require an even greater emphasis on:

Leadership and the right skills at every level. We must continue to build an excellent team of committed, skilled and diverse leaders. They will need to set a clear direction; involve our stakeholders and staff in delivery; and challenge and manage poor performance effectively. To achieve this we are delivering our business as usual activities and moving forward with our People Strategy which includes:

- All of our staff demonstrating the leadership competencies we will require for the future.
- Continuing with our Management Skills Programme and Advanced Leadership Development Programme.
- Continuing with our review of staff at middle management level.
- Moving our processing centres from 13 sites to 5. Working with all staff affected to ensure the business keeps the right skills.

How we will deliver our strategy

Partnership working. Our strategy emphasises the need for decisions around provision to be made at a local level, so that they are consistent with prioritising need. We recognise the importance of working with our providers, representative bodies and other legal aid and justice stakeholders to ensure the transformation programme is implemented effectively and recognising the impacts the reforms will have on our providers and their clients. We are also conscious of the need for LSC departments to work more collaboratively with each other and reduce 'silo' working. To achieve all this we will:

- Work with our partners to devolve more decisions to a local level.
- Involve our partners and other stakeholders more consistently in the development and delivery of policies and services using forums such as our provider reference groups, consultative groups and working parties.
- Work closely in conjunction with representative bodies and regulators to ensure policy decisions are implemented effectively.
- Explore new and innovative ways to engage in consultation exercises.
- Work to improve internal communications through regular staff briefings. We will also continue to involve business support and commissioning teams in designing and coordinating communications to providers on the transformation programme to ensure consistency and better cross-department working.
- To work with the Wales Committee for the Community Legal Service (CLS) to enable the delivery of the CLS Strategy in Wales, taking account of relevant developments in Welsh Law.

How we will measure and report success

We will measure success through our performance reporting framework and will provide updates on our external website. At year-end we will communicate performance achieved through our annual report.

We will also report progress to our Board of Commissioners on a regular basis. We will report on various workstreams to a number of relevant committees comprising key internal personnel, Commissioners, MoJ staff and representatives from other justice organisations. We report success in our programme of works and measured against ministerial objectives and budget to MoJ.

Our strategy emphasises the importance of transforming legal aid, not only in the way we procure and deliver services but also in the way we administer the scheme. Ultimately success will be measured in delivering a sustainable scheme with the associated monetary savings and efficiencies that meets client needs.



The Corporate Plan is available to download from www.legalservices.gov.uk under About us > Our publications

A Welsh version of our strategic objectives and targets is available to download from www.legalservices.gov.uk under About us > Regional information > Wales

The Legal Services Commission

www.legalservices.gov.uk

This document is printed on Revive 100, a fully recycled paper containing 100% post consumer waste. It can be disposed of by recycling, incineration for energy recovery or is biodegradable. The pulp is bleached using an Elemental Chlorine Free (ECF) process. Revive 100 is FSC and NAPM approved.



Recycled
Supporting responsible
use of forest resources

Cert no. SGS-COC-2842
www.fsc.org
© 1996 Forest Stewardship Council