



LAPG Update 41 of 2019

It's Membership Renewal Time!

As you know, LAPG Membership runs from January to December so now is the time to renew to benefit from the Early Bird discounts running until the 31 January 2020.

Why renew?

Every ounce of our energy is dedicated to improving the legal aid scheme to ensure it is accessible to as many people as possible. We're also working tirelessly to improve the system for you – the providers of legal aid – without whom there is no legal aid system. We know the system is unnecessarily complicated, that pay rates are ludicrously low, that the work is relentless and stressful, and that the Legal Aid Agency can be a thorn in your side. But we also know how committed you are and that you put the hours in and take everything that comes with legal aid because it is the right thing to do for your clients.

As a membership body we rely on your financial support through your subscriptions to give us the resources we need to fight for a better system. Our Members not only gives us an independent and representative voice, you also gives us a strong collective voice and the coalface experience to be able to lobby the government for change. Access to justice is a fundamental right and for most people it cannot be realised without a fair, comprehensive and accessible legal aid scheme. And the system also requires a robust and sustainable supplier base, a point that seems to have been overlooked by government in their recent review.

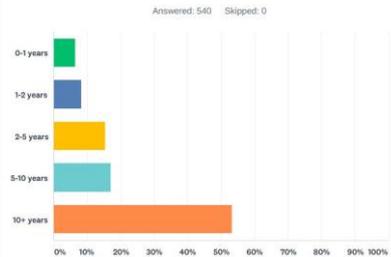
So what have we done this year to support you?

- We have answered countless **Member queries**, on operational issues such as funding for judicial review, income disregards, amending certificates, police disclosure fees and recoupment of historic POAs.
- Those Member queries and our own concerns feed into our **policy work** directly

with the Legal Aid Agency and MoJ. We meet with the MoJ and LAA through the Civil and Crime Contract Consultative Groups, the Process Efficiency Team, the Quarterly Digital Meetings and ad hoc meetings on issues such as supervisor standards, the 2018 tender civil process and the education and discrimination contracts. These meetings lead to substantial improvements for providers, such as the recent increase in cost limitations in family cases, which will soon be rolled out to other categories of legal aid.

- Feedback from Members also led to our decision to run our recent **LAA decision-making survey** to try to get a better picture of the extent of the issues within the LAA. Over 540 practitioners responded and we are now wading through over 1800 examples of problematic processes within and decisions by the LAA. We'll use this data and the examples provided to push for improvements.

Q2 How long have you been practicing in legal aid?



- As an **official consultee body** (along with The Law Society and Bar Council) government must consult us on all proposed contract changes. This year we have represented your views through consultations on changes to prison law, family, immigration and housing possession court duty schemes.
- We are currently engaging with the MoJ on the future of legal aid policy through the Legal Support Action Plan. We sit on all of the **Advisory Groups** set up to advise and shape recommendations around the means test, the criminal legal aid review, the early advice pilot and other key areas of the Action Plan. Our role is to ensure that your voices are heard so that we can safeguard and improve legal aid in what will be a critical year ahead.
- We also engage politicians through our role as joint secretariat of the **All-Party Parliamentary Group on Legal Aid**. The work of the APPG has expanded massively in recent years, so while we still hold regular meetings in parliament on key legal aid issues, we are now training MPs' caseworkers, briefing Select Committees, sending monthly bulletins to MPs and Lords and running campaigns such as this year's successful Take Your MP to Work campaign which garnered support from over 60 MPs. We have some exciting projects in the pipeline for the New Year as we seek to convince parliamentarians that access to justice is not a party political issue.
- Members receive **regular email updates** on operational and policy issues, news and events. These come out about once a week and keep you informed about all things legal aid and related access to justice issues.



- We bring practitioners together every year to celebrate the incredible impact of legal aid through the **Legal Aid Lawyer of the Year Awards**. The event has grown to around 500 guests and we acknowledge the achievements of legal aid lawyers across 12 categories. Crucially, we run the awards on a non-profit making basis, with finalists and their guests attending for free, and tickets prices much lower than other sector awards and offered at substantial discounts to junior lawyers, so that all practitioners can be part of the LALY family. 
- We support Members with **recruitment**, advertising jobs on our website and on social media. We also encourage the next generation of legal aid lawyers through our work with Young Legal Aid Lawyers and with a range of universities and colleges.
- Our **Annual Conference**, this year in Birmingham, brought nearly 200 practitioners, policy workers and students together. This year we focussed on campaigning to save legal aid, but we also covered a career in legal aid, vicarious trauma and stress, the new SRA Standards and Regulations, cost maximisation, Universal Credit, working with clients with mental health or developmental issues, current issues in crime, peer review, the interplay between immigration, public law and crime, staff development and training. 
- Each year we deliver **training courses** tailored to your needs. We offer an intensive practice management course, and workshops on LAA supervision, GDPR, income maximisation and an introduction to legal aid for new practitioners. Over the last two years more than 250 practitioners have attended our training courses.
- We have carried out a **governance review**, strengthened our Board and created a new Advisory Committee. We are also applying for charity status. The new structure and status is designed to make us more sustainable and more effective in meeting your needs and representing your views.

With just 2.8 staff members we couldn't do any of this without our incredible voluntary Advisory Committee made up of expert legal aid lawyers and practice managers. They help answer Member enquiries, attend meetings with the LAA and MoJ, speak at the LAPG conference and support our events including the LALYs (and so much more). They also form the nucleus of our Board of Directors, LAPG's governance body.

But to continue our fight for legal aid we need your support. Recognising how difficult it is

to make ends meet in the legal aid world, we have frozen our membership fees for the fourth year running.

| Total number of fee earners | Early Bird Fee (to 31.01.20) | Standard Fee (from 01.02.20) |
|------------------------------------|---|---|
| 1 – 5 fee earners | £170.00 | £195.00 |
| 6 – 10 fee earners | £250.00 | £295.00 |
| 11 – 20 fee earners | £360.00 | £425.00 |
| 21 – 30 fee earners | £470.00 | £575.00 |
| 31 – 50 fee earners | £590.00 | £675.00 |
| 51+ fee earners | £690.00 | £775.00 |
| Non-contract holding rate | £275.00 | £350.00 |

Making Payment

[Download the 2020 Early Bird Membership Form here](#)

Please either return the completed form and cheque to: LAPG, 12 Baylis Road, London SE1 7AA **OR** email the completed form to office@lapg.co.uk and pay electronically:

Sort Code: 20 32 06 Account No: 53045706

This year, we are introducing the option of paying the membership fee by Direct Debit which we hope will make life easier and avoid having to renew each year. If you want to use the DD option, please get in touch.

Any queries? Please call us on **020 7833 7431** or email office@lapg.co.uk

Chris Minnoch, CEO
Kate Pasfield, Director of Strategy
Rohini Teather, Head of Parliamentary Affairs
27 November 2019



LEGAL AID LAWYER OF THE YEAR AWARDS

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