

Civil Contracts Consultative Group (CCCG) Minutes

15 March 2017

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Date:	Wednesday, 15 March 2017	
Where	The Law Society, Chancery Lane, London	
Chair:	Richard Miller – The Law Society	
Attendees	Avrom Sherr - IALS Carita Thomas - ILPA Carol Storer - LAPG Caroline Leach – Commissioning [LAA] Dominique Smith - Bar Council Eleanor Druker Service Development [LAA] Eleanor Solomon HLP Grazia Trivedi minutes [LAA]	Laura Wensley - Service Dev -Commissioning [LAA] Malcolm Bryant Exceptional & Complex Cases [LAA] Nicola Jones-King ALC Nimrod Ben-Cnaan Law Centres Network Paul Seddon ACL Samantha Little - Resolution Zara Topping - Digital [LAA]
Apologies	Rachel Rogers – Resolution Steve Starkey – Civil Operations [LAA] Jon Cable – Assurance [LAA]	John Sirodcar – Contract management – LAA Tam Gill - MHLA

1. Minutes from the January meeting were approved.

Action 1 [Jan] – *Update on Work around solutions.* Z Topping had completed an update for billing and would send it to P Seddon for further additions before sharing with the group. Z Topping to send the update to P Seddon **Action 1 [Mar]** and share the final version with CCCG **Action 2 [Mar]**

Action 3 [Jan] – taken forward to next meeting

Action 4 [Jan]. Z Topping said that the estimated lifetime expectation for CCMS was 15 years. She'd find out from when **Action 4 [Mar]**

2. LAA Updates

2.1. Client and Cost Management System [CCMS] Z Topping talked about what the team had been working on in the previous quarter:

- The notifications focus group was testing how users managed open and closed notifications and if this could be changed to improve this function. This had only included solicitors but would extend to advocates in the next month.
- A functionality upgrade in the Amendment application had been released to Beta providers. Focus groups and surveys were ongoing to collate feedback and make changes before release to all providers.
- Revisions of error messages.
- A housing workshop had taken place to identify key issues for providers: actions were being agreed and would then be circulated wider.

Following quarter:

- Meetings with rep bodies would commence in April to discuss issues and planned work
- Work continued to improve infrastructure leading to the replacement of the "portal". The team would address some users' logging on experience.
- Changes to the Amendment application would be made and released to all users: dynamic questions, navigation bar, active calendars.
- It would not be necessary to complete the means for a merits application, just one could be done if the other was unnecessary.

P Seddon asked for clarification on scope limitations because on CCMS they were different from the published ones. Z Topping to take this forward and feedback to CCCG **Action 5 [Mar]** P Seddon also requested that the case workers be made aware of what the right limitations were; Z Topping to speak to S Starkey about this **Action 6 [Mar]**. Z topping also would ensure that once clarified this would be reflected in the system **Action 7 [Mar]**.

LAPG had launched a survey in February for their members to report on their experiences using CCMS. C Storer would share the summary of this survey **Action 8 [Mar]**. C Storer asked Z Topping what changes had been made following the *Urgent Process* meeting held in September and what changes were in the pipeline. **Action 9 [Mar]**.

Resolution asked whether paper *means assessed legal aid applications forms* had to be signed by a guardian in cases where practitioners acted for children. Z Topping to check **Action 10 [Mar]**.

2.2. Civil operations

M Bryant talked the group through the main points in the report

3. Performance remained good and well within target in all areas except one, High Cost Case Plans; N Jones-King asked whether a meeting could be set up with Antony Leal to discuss High Cost Family issues. M Bryant to take this forward **Action 11 [Mar]**
4. Rep bodies were asked to encourage their members to check that all relevant documents were attached when submitting applications and/or bills on CCMS. The LAA had not so far adopted as hard a reject policy with CCMS as they had with paper but would do in due course, therefore applications/bills HAD to enclose the requisite documentation. S Starkey to circulate a list of the most commonly omitted CCMS billing evidence and any other common billing errors¹. **Action 12 [Mar]- closed**
5. In February the Civil Operations team in South Tyneside hosted a visit by a group of Association of Cost Lawyers [ACL] reps. P Seddon agreed that the day had been very interesting and informative.
6. There would be some changes made on CCMS with regards evidential requirement for tax bills. The LAA had shared their proposals with ACL during their visit and were waiting for a response before proceeding further. This was aimed at making the process more efficient for all.

2.3 Exceptional and Complex Cases [ECC].

M Bryant updated CCCG.

- Telephone calls to ECC were being diverted to the LAA customer service team in South Tyneside; this enabled callers to get through quickly because there were more operatives answering the calls. First time resolution was still low but this was because the service was in its very early stages and operatives were not yet fully trained/familiar on the subject areas but this was improving week on week.
- High cost appeals had been centralised and were dealt with within the wider civil case management to ensure consistency of procedures.
- Efforts were being made to bring the Immigration ECC processing within target although emergency cases were still being dealt with within 48 hours.
- The database created to capture the information on high profile cases [mainly Court of Appeal and Supreme Court cases] that were dealt with under the standard operating procedure, was now operational and the first quarterly data [April to June] would feed into the LAA official stats pack. M Bryant to circulate a link to the High Profile SOP **Action 13 [Mar]-closed**



Post meeting note: the SOP is not published on the internet so pdf doc is attached below²

- The email service had been centralised using the customer service team in South Tyneside.

2.4 Commissioning update. C Leach updated CCCG.

Civil Contract 2018. The tender would now begin in May 2017 rather than in April and the LAA would provide further detail on the revised timetable on their website in due course. Representative bodies requested that this include FAQ dates.

A single stage process would now take place instead of the two stage process initially planned. The LAA anticipated this new approach would be simpler for most applicants and would ensure applicants still had reasonable time to submit tenders under a single stage process. The LAA were committed to publishing confirmation of the change to the timetable [published 17/03/17]

Post meeting note: The web update published 17/3/17 reads: *We [the LAA] have reviewed and revised our planned start date for the procurement process for new Civil Legal Advice and civil face to face legal aid contracts and this will now open in May 2017. We plan to use a single stage process i.e. running the SQ and ITT stages at the same time: These will cover:*

- *testing organisational suitability to hold a contract (SQ)*
- *organisations tendering to category-specific services (ITT)*

This approach differs from the one originally outlined in the Headline Intentions documents for civil and family mediation services which we published on GOV.UK. At that time we were considering running a two stage process for the SQ and ITT elements and starting the procurement process a little earlier in April 2017. We will publish further information in due course giving further details on the new timetable for the procurement.

EOIs for Housing and Debt in areas where provision had been lost. Warrington & Halton, Calderdale and Cambridgeshire were all completed and new schedules **would** commence imminently. In North Herts no responses had been received so the LAA were now exploring alternative options to secure supply in this area.

EOI for Immigration & Asylum was underway; this was resulting from local intelligence about increases in demand from Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) and asylum seekers transferring to London from other parts of the UK.

Specialist Quality Mark [SQM] – – auditor training had taken place and LAA remained on track for services under the new concession contract to commence on 1 April. Rep bodies were asked to inform their members that if they intended to apply for new civil contracts they'd need to hold a quality standard. Organisations relying on an SQM [audited by the outgoing SQM administrator \(SQM Delivery Partnership 'SQMDP'\)](#) were to be encouraged to check they had their certificate and if not, they [may](#) request this from SQMDP before 31 Mar. This had been communicated in the LAA Bulletin. Circulate the [link](#) to the article **Action 14 [Mar]-closed**.



Adobe Acrobat
Document

New civil Schedules – new schedules would be issued to replace those which were due to expire at the end of March. Schedules would be available to view in CWA by 31 March.

Post meeting note – an article informing all providers published 23 Mar as part of the LAA Bulletin

3 Issues raised by Representative Bodies

3.1 New single email box for high cost cases queries. Rep bodies wanted to know how many queries had been received and what was the LAA’s target time for responding?

M Bryant explained that this dedicated mail box was monitored by a team of people who sifted the emails and forwarded them to one of 3 other boxes: Exceptional Contract cases, Immigration cases and High Cost cases. Providers would get a response to their email, though not necessarily a resolution, within 48 hours. HCC received the most emails but 20 operatives were allocated to deal with these. M Bryant would share the stats for Feb³ **Action 15 [Mar]-closed**. C Storer said that this was a concern only because providers had built a relationship over time with caseworkers, many of whom had given an exceptional level of service which was highly valued. The issue for the LAA was that if that caseworker was not working on the day the query was sent, it would sit in his mail box unanswered and undetected. This solution would provide a better and more consistent service for all.

S Little said that providers would prefer to have one single caseworker to deal with one case from start to finish rather than, as was the case, a different caseworker at each stage of the case; this was the reason for providers wanting to contact a caseworker directly. M Bryant asked rep bodies to feedback to him any live examples of instances when providers had been dissatisfied with the new process. Currently CCMS related email queries were being answered but eventually providers would be asked to raise these queries via the online system and email correspondence regarding CCMS cases would cease.

3.2 LAA provider directory – There were some concerns about the current data being out of date and the lack of search options, e.g. searching by geographical area.

The way in which providers entered their firm’s address onto the directory affected the search outcome. If for instance only one provider entered the name of the county, i.e. Essex in the designated box, then a search for all providers in the Essex area would show just one provider. P Seddon suggested that guidance be put on the webpage. E Druker said that the best way to get issues with the directory addressed was through the feedback link. E Druker to circulate the link to the directory page: <http://find-legal-advice.justice.gov.uk/> **Action 16 [Mar] - Closed** so that rep bodies could send it to their members asking them to check their details and contact their contract manager if changes needed to be made **Action 17 [Mar]**.

Following a request by P Seddon E Druker would contact the digital team to request that they improve the search ranking for legal aid adviser. **Action 18 [Mar]**.

4 AOB



Microsoft Excel

3 97-2003 Worksheet



Microsoft Excel

97-2003 Worksheet



Microsoft Excel

97-2003 Worksheet



Microsoft Excel

97-2003 Worksheet

4.1 Legal Aid Lawyer of the Year. C Storer encouraged CCCG to promote nominations that would be open till 28 April.

Actions from this meeting		Owner	deadline
AP1 [Mar]	Send the <i>Work Around Solutions</i> update to P Seddon	Z Topping	17 Mar
AP2 [Mar]	Share the final version of the <i>Work Around Solutions</i> update with CCCG	Z Topping	30 Apr
AP3 [Jan]	Share planned CCMS enhancements to reduce rejects/assessments on bills.	Z Topping/ P Seddon	17 May
AP4 [Mar]	Find out when the estimated 15 years CCMS lifespan commenced from	Z Topping	30 Mar
AP5 [Mar]	Clarify what the scope limitation was and feedback to the group	Z Topping	30 April
AP6 [Mar]	Speak to S Starkey about case workers handling of Scope Limitations and feedback to CCCG	Z Topping	30 April
AP7 [Mar]	Ensure that CCMS is updated with the correct cost limitations	Z Topping	30 April
AP8 [Mar]	Share the summary of the LAPG survey on CCMS user experience	C Storer	16 Mar
AP 9 [Mar]	Update CCCG on what changes had followed the <i>Urgent Process</i> meeting held in Sep and what changes were planned.	Z Topping	30 April
AP10 [Mar]	Check whether paper means assessed legal aid applications forms had to be signed by a guardian in cases where practitioners acted for children	Z Topping	30 April
AP11 [Mar]	Set up a meeting with Antony Leal to discuss HCC application issues	M Bryant	30 Mar
AP12 [Mar]	Circulate a list of the most commonly omitted CCMS billing evidence and any other common billing errors	S Starkey	Closed
AP13 [Mar]	Circulate the hyperlink to the SOP for high profile cases that were dealt with under that procedure. Post meeting note: SOPs not on the internet. Circulated the HCC SOP	M Bryant	Closed
AP14 [Mar]	Circulate the link to the LAA SQM update that was included in the Feb bulletin	G Trivedi	Closed
AP15 [Mar]	Share the Feb stats for the email box for high cost cases queries	M Bryant	Closed
AP16 [Mar]	Circulate the link to the CLA directory	E Druker	Closed
AP17 [Mar]	Rep bodies to ask their members to check their details on the CLA directory	Rep Bodies	30 Apr
AP18 [Mar]	Ask the digital team to improve the search ranking for legal aid adviser	E Druker	30 Apr