

**Notes of Meeting of Legal Aid Special Interest Group Committee held on
Wednesday 28th January 2015 – 1pm-4.50pm**

Present: Paul Seddon
Samantha Bagnall
Jonathan Brennan
Rachel Perkins

1. Seminar

Diane has provisionally booked the Hilton Doubletree at Milton Keynes for Monday 16th March 2014. Paul has sent an email to all in the Legal Aid Group advising of the date. Everyone needs to be reminded of the change of venue. The deal negotiated by Diane includes a sound system. Sound is included at a lower rate per head than the other Hilton charged last year. We will not need to use Linda's contact.

An AGM will need to be held at the conclusion of the conference – and proposed that this last for 1 hour

The cost is likely to be £100 plus VAT (£120) for ACL members and £150 plus VAT (£180) for non ACL members. We need approximately 43 delegates to break even. Paul has proposed that all committee members be permitted to attend for free and that there be expenses for 4 committee members plus Diane for attending, all of whom have significant journeys to make.

Location was discussed for future seminars and it was agreed that, although not the easiest place to travel to, Milton Keynes still is as good as anywhere.

Although the second seminar could be in Manchester, either as a breakout session on the ACL Manchester National Conference in October, or as a full conference on its own in September. Paul proposed that if as part of the ACL Manchester Conference, then this must be on the basis that a portion of income of the Conference be allocated to LAG. No final decision was made.

It was agreed the AGM should be held at the end of the seminar – 4.30-5.30 or thereabouts. This will include a report updating on the last 12 months together with an annual report for the Council/LAG members. Under the constitution there needs to be an election in respect of the committee – results to be announced at the AGM, and following the AGM there will be a short committee meeting of the new committee.

In view of the AGM the seminar will attract 5 CPD points.

Seminar will commence with registration at 9.30am for a 10am start and finish approximately 4.30pm with the AGM taking place afterwards, finishing at 5.30pm. There will be a 1 hour lunch and 2 coffee breaks of 15 minutes each.

The provisional programme was agreed as follows: (all times approximate)

15 mins	Introduction
1 hr	CCMS
1 hr	Brainstorming/questions on CCMS
1 hr	Update on contract/rates changes/authorities etc
1 hr	Top tips on rejects/incorrect rejects/issues re CAG's/electronic handbook
1 hr	Q&A session
1hr	AGM

Jonathan requested there be a session on High Costs Cases, but Paul advised that the LAA have advised that they are reviewing all Family High Costs Case Plans and despite the fact that they are not on time with these changes, they plan to put this in place in March. In the circumstances there will be 10/15 minutes just advising as to the current position (Paul is expecting to hear any time in the near future).

2. What's been done over the last 12 months, and our involvement with the LAA and other representative bodies

Paul reported on his various meetings and his success in re-engaging with the CCCG, SPG, CCMS, LAPG, Law Society, Bar Council, Resolution, HLPAs.

Jonathan advised of his involvement with the ACL's education/training in Legal Aid and it was agreed that this should be highlighted in the annual report.

Publications - Paul advised of a LAG member's article regarding travel expenses for a Resolution e-update. It was agreed that members should be actively encouraged to provide articles for publications, especially the Costs Lawyer magazine.

3. Roles and Responsibilities of Committee Members

This is obviously dependant on any change to committee members following the election.

a. Education

Paul felt this fell into two categories, the training course and LAG work e.g. seminars. Paul was clear that while input from experienced Legal Aid Costs Lawyers is important, the line between the ACL LAG and ALCD Training Ltd (trading as ACL Training) should be borne in mind, because ACL Training is the profit making branch of the ACL and care should be taken that the LAG does not end up taking responsibility (pro bono) for the Legal Aid Module on ACL Training's behalf. Also any updates on training should be on the new ACL website and this will need to be maintained once it is up and running.

b. PR

This would include things such as updates on the LAG's work, fielding and providing articles for the Costs Lawyer magazine and also external publications.

c. Policy

This would cover things such as consultation on CAG, and liaising with ACL Policy Officer Claire Green on issues such as communications for the Civil Justice Council on legal aid issues in the CPR.

d. Finance and Governance

Dealing with seminars and budgeting, liaising with Diane. Paul also raised the point of whether the LAG income and expenditure should be recorded separately with the ACL, in order to show precisely whether the LAG was incurring a loss, breaking even or making a profit for the ACL (thus justifying any additional resources needed etc.). Paul thought that it is important that if the LAG was not costing the ACL anything, then the proof should be there for the LAG to rely upon.

Paul also advised that these could not be one person's jobs and that there may be the need for sub-committees.

Paul would like everyone to consider the above and any further tailoring of roles that best suit the LAG. He proposes another committee meeting, with all committee members attending, within the next two weeks. Dates to avoid were given of 10th and 13th February. Any further dates to avoid by committee members to be provided to Paul ASAP. This meeting will again take place by video conference due to time constraints and ease for members.

Paul also mentioned the new website, and that he was yet to receive any proper or significant feedback from James Barrett (Council Member responsible for PR etc. including the new website) about the proposal document prepared by Sam and sent to Diane last August.

4. Committee Meetings

Paul reiterated he wished for 6 meetings a year, ie approximately 1 every 2 months. These need to be dates agreed in advance, around 10 days before ACL council meetings to allow reports to be given to the Council.

4 meetings by video conference – together with more as considered necessary

2 meetings in person. Discussions took place as to when and where these would be. It was agreed for convenience of the members (and to save on expenses), these should be on the same day and immediately following LAG seminars, ie proposed for March and September. It was noted that this would make seminar day a long day, but members felt this was more convenient than making a special trip for a committee meeting.

Paul wishes to try and arrange these 12 months in advance.

Committee members do not pay for LAG seminars. Discussions also took place as to whether they should pay for the National Conference, and it would depend on whether they substantively assisted with the Legal Aid breakout session.

5. Finally CCMS

Paul advised of his meeting on 28.08.14 with himself, the LAA, Ian Black and Chris Nelson (from Ben Horbell, who was on the Pilot). Following the meeting an action point list was prepared by the LAA, and they followed up on these. APs concerning further information were met, but where a function had to be changed this has been classed as a 'significant change' that cannot be made.

When Paul responded CCMS arranged a further telephone conference on 13.01.15.

It was agreed that while we need to work with CCMS but that doesn't necessarily mean we think it's any good and that we must make our position known (as LAPG, Law Society and Resolution have), in order that ACL LAG members are not misled about CCMS based on our involvement.

Need to find out what the current position is with regards to bulk upload onto CCMS.

Paul raised concerns that the CCMS Team appears to now be relying on the bulk upload, but is still trying to indicate that CCMS can operate as a standalone solution. Paul said this is concerning for those CL's who don't already use the products of the few software providers that have persevered with the CCMS bulk upload, because these CL's may be forced to procure new software that they are unfamiliar with and have not budgeted for, with little notice and no recognition of the affect it will have in the short term on the service they can provide to their clients.

Paul will do an updating report.

Actions from meeting		Owner	By when
AP 1 [Jan]	Chase Diane r.e. putting seminar date on ACL website	PSe	02.02.15
AP 2 [Jan]	Finalise agenda and fwd to Diane to create and distribute booking form (N.B. Form must highlight that venue has changed)	PSe	02.02.15
AP 3 [Jan]	Obtain dates to avoid for next committee meeting – w/c 09.02.15 & 16.02.15	PSe, LK & KF	03.02.15
AP 4 [Jan]	Arrange next committee meeting	PSe/RP	03.02.15
AP 5 [Jan]	Review Roles & Responsibilities as discussed and detailed in Report and these minutes to finalise at next meeting	ALL	w/c 09 & 16.02.15
AP 6 [Jan]	SB to fwd draft material for Costs Review to PSe for collaboration on Seminar segment	SB	04.02.15
AP 7 [Jan]	Draft Annual report for review by committee in preparation for AGM	PSe	20.02.15
AP 8 [Jan]	Full updating report on CCMS	PSe	20.02.15
AP 9 [Jan]	All material for Seminar handouts to be forwarded to Diane in time for printers	PSe	27.02.15