

**Notes of Meeting of Legal Aid Special Interest Group Committee held on  
Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> January 2016 – 9:15 am to 11.45am**

Present: Paul Seddon  
Rachel Perkins  
Linda Kann  
Samantha Bagnall

**Agenda**

- 1 - March Conference
- 2 - AGM/Election/Replacement committee member
- 3 – Potential input to Labour Review on Legal Aid/working group
- 4 - Pre payment audits/FOI
- 5 – Software providers and CCMS
- 6 – Update from SPG/CCCG
- 7 – Claim 1c
- 8 – Advert in costs lawyer magazine/brief article re pre payment audits
- 9 – Expert invoices and advice from Claire Green
- 10 - Election for ACL Chairman and ramifications for LAG
- 11 - Manchester breakout session v stand alone conference
- 12 – Website
- 13 – AOB

**1. March conference**

PS confirmed that Stephen Barker was booked and he had provisionally put him down for the afternoon session to assist with his travel arrangements.

Draft timetable is as follows:

- |               |   |
|---------------|---|
| 09.30 – 09.55 | Registration  |
| 10.00 – 10.05 | PS Introduction and housekeeping                                  |
| 10.05 – 11.15 | Anthony Leal/Daniel Good (subject to confirmation) – CCFS         |
| 11.15 – 11.30 | Coffee  |
| 11.30 – 12.45 | Samantha Bagnall - IP costs/6 column bills/provisional assessment |
| 12.45 – 13.15 | AGM (ACL LAG members – lunch for non ACL LAG members)             |
| 13.15 – 14.00 | Lunch (ACL LAG members)   |
| 14.00 – 15.15 | Stephen Barker CCMS   |
| 15.15 – 15.30 | Coffee  |
| 15.30 – 17.15 | Stephen Barker CCMS cont  |
| 17.15         | Finish  |

This will attract 5 CPD hours. PS to confirm with Diane/Kirsty that this is allowed under ACL Training Ltd due to change in CPD allowable by accredited trainers **Action 2 [January]**

It was suggested that any questions re AGM be asked in advance if members wished for a full and proper response **Action 3 [January]**

PS is still waiting confirmation from Anthony Leal that he is able to attend and cover CCFS. If unavailable then PS would do a backup session on: CCFS/agenda items.

SB agreed to lead session re IP costs/6 column bills/provisional assessment, and will liaise with PS as required.

Diane to send out booking forms (these were received shortly after meeting concluded)

RP to liaise with Diane regarding questions to be included in feedback forms (from last minutes)

PS would like additional questions on the feedback forms:

- 1) Did you stay over?
- 2) Would you take up an ACL accommodation offer (Please note that hotel room prices can go up as well as down)?
- 3) Would there be a better day (other than Monday)?

#### **Action 4 [January]**

May Breakout session at National Conference:

Suggested topics include

POD refresher – with regard to LA

POPs – ie how to construct etc. PS confirmed these are still relevant especially for Family and Housing (basically everything except clin neg and actions against Police and 2014 contract). 2013 contracts are to be extended until 2018.

General roundup of LA costs issues

## **2. AGM/Election**

Subjects for inclusion at AGM

- CCCG/SPG
- Financial position – still don't have information
- Recap what the committee does
- Committee structure
- Discussion re working party required for Labour LA review

PS expressed concern at lack of nominations for committee members – currently 1 nomination. No committee = no ACL LA SIG. Nominations close 15.2.16 – if more than 6 then election required between 15.02.16 and 28.02.16 with announcement at AGM and new committee takes up position at that point.

PS confirmed that a full committee was required to enable the Chairman to delegate tasks. It was suggested that there be a “reminder” sent out at end of January (SB agreed to undertake this via Diane) to push this and explain the nominations are still X number short, and that maybe it should also be put on the forum. Also suggested that email include that even if not nominating for committee, members can still be proactive, ie working groups for Labour review etc. SB agreed to do list of main attributes of LAG, what we do, and list accomplishments from last 12 months **Action 5 [January]**

## **3. Labour Review of Legal Aid**

PS confirmed that there was a meeting taking place today and another next week, although PS was not attending either. PS voiced concerns that the ACL's input should not be too technical so that it could be read and understood.

PS advised that Richard Miller of Law Society had suggested that the LAG's input could highlight the complexities of the LA remuneration schemes, ie look at all schemes and summarise/rates/schemes etc. Responses were due by 28<sup>th</sup> April (PS to check date) **Action 6 [January]**

In view of deadline, the current committee need to start the ball rolling re working group as waiting until after new committee elected is not an option. SB agreed to highlight this opportunity in her email (see action point 5)

#### **4. Pre payment audits**

PS has circulated the latest briefing note from the LAA on this to the LAG. He confirmed that LAA consider that Court bills are still a problem, but the audits seem to be working.

~~SB agreed to make enquiries re Freedom of Information request and it was suggested that Maurice/ACL council may know how to go about this. PS confirmed the document was NOA Audit Completion Report (also known as Management Letter) directing the LAA to undertake activity on court assessed bills, although unsure whether it related to year ending 2012/13 or 2013/14. PS advised that James Hood (Chair of CCCG) had stated the document was confidential, but PS not convinced. Agreed that initial request would be made to NAO and thereafter to LAA. If response from both is that document is indeed confidential, PS inclined to letter matter lie. **Action 7 [January]**~~

#### **5. Software providers and CCMS**

RP advised of email from Lamberts and continuing difficulties with LAA.

PS advised that Costsmaster fine with bulk upload, but SB advised of difficulties with civil (non family) matters and Counsel. Costsmaster bulk upload does not give option of including Counsel in the solicitors claim, but most chambers appear to prefer making their own claims in any event.

PS agreed to ask the LAA who they were working with re bulk upload, but thought that they would provide limited information. RP agreed to make continuing enquiries with Lamberts, and LK was asked to make enquiries with iDraft. No one knew of any other costs software providers **Action 8 [February]**

PS advised the only other option was continuing to push that the billing side of CCMS has not improved and issues if the bulk upload was not progressing.

#### **6. SPC/CCCG and 7. Claim 1c**

Update:

SPG – Labour review

CCCG – Claim 1c.

PS confirmed that the LAA had conceded to remove this document from the website due to issues over the VAT position and certification within the next few days.

However PS also advised that he still had major issues with claim matrix. The LAA had advised they needed this information to compare figures to scope and file, but PS wanted to know what they were comparing this to?

PS to prepare list of questions on other problems he wanted a response to **Action 9 [January]**

PS confirmed he had no idea when the LAA were likely to put this document back online.

#### **8. Advert in Costs Lawyer mag/brief article on pre payment audits**

LK confirmed she had forwarded this to Paul, and he in turn to Neil Rose.

LK to chase Louise Eckersley (PS to provide contact info) **Action 10 [January]**

It was agreed that article re pre payment audits no longer required in light of briefing note.

**9. Experts invoices**

~~PS was not satisfied with response from C Green and was not sure they had grasped what was being asked of them. Thereafter PS to again respond to LAA using PD's etc. Action 11 [February]~~ In some ways the issue is becoming increasingly academic. SB confirmed that in her experience, LAA happy as long as attempts to obtain information were shown.

**10. ACL Election**

Voting closes tomorrow, and result hoped be out by end of week.

**11. Manchester breakout v standalone**

Carry over to next meeting. **Action 12 [March]**

~~**12. Website**~~

~~PS frustrated at lack of progress. Carry over to next meeting. Action 12 [March]~~

**13.12. AOB**

None.

Reminder - An agenda needs to be circulated before each committee meeting.

NB = Next committee meeting due in late February/early March prior to ACL Council meeting 11.03.16.

Actions from this meeting		Owner	By when
AP1 [Jan]	Draft minutes of this meeting to be prepared and sent to PS	R Perkins	Closed
AP2 [Jan]	Check with Diane/Kirsty able to offer 5 hours CPD under ACL Training Ltd	P Seddon	ASAP
AP3 [Jan]	Members asked to submit any questions for AGM	P Seddon	ASAP
AP4 [Jan]	Liaise with Diane re questions for feedback forms	R Perkins	ASAP
AP5 [Jan]	Send nominations "reminder" email and also place on forum	S Bagnall	31.01.16
AP6 [Jan]	Confirm date of responses to Labour Legal Aid Review	P Seddon	ASAP
<del>AP7 [Jan]</del>	<del>Enquiries re FOI request</del>	<del>S Bagnall</del>	<del>January</del>
AP8 [Jan]	Make enquiries with Lamberts Make enquiries with iDraft Ask LAA who they are working with on bulk upload	R Perkins L Kann P Seddon	Jan 16
AP9 [Jan]	List of Questions requiring response from LAA	P Seddon	Jan 16
AP10 [Jan]	Chase Louise Eckersley	L Kann (PS to provide contact details)	Jan 16
<del>AP11 [Feb]</del>	<del>Respond to LAA re expert invoices/Return matter to Claire Green</del>	<del>P Seddon</del>	<del>Feb 16</del>
<del>AP12 [Mar]</del>	<del>Carry over agenda items 11 and 12</del>	<del>R Perkins</del>	<del>March 16</del>
AP13 [Jan]	Provide report to ACL Council prior their meeting 25.01.16	P Seddon	22.01.16