

Networking...

The national voice of Law Centres

Much Delayed Community Legal Service Strategy Document Published

In the little village that concerns itself with publicly funded legal services, the much delayed strategy from the Legal Services Commission on the future of the Community Legal Service has been as eagerly anticipated as the latest Harry Potter opus *"Harry Potter and the Half Blood Prince"* which was published in the same week. This could be a cue for some debate as to if CLS head and the strategy's main architect, Crispin Passmore, is more like Voldemort than the adolescent wizard. As LCF broadly welcomes the report it might be tempting to award Passmore the accolade of wizard, but unfortunately in the grey muggle world of policy making there is no magic in the report to counter the budgetary and other constraints in the system.

Positive Points

The report has some very positive points, which seem to indicate that the pendulum of the debate on legal services is swinging towards the Law Centres movement. For example, the report stresses the importance of supporting a "rights based culture" and the use of the law to achieve positive change. Most significantly the paper also recognises the use of strategic legal services in tandem with conventional casework services as central to a vision of the future of the



Community Legal Service. Also, in articles written to support the launch of the strategy the LSC has said it plans to create *"a single social welfare law contract"*.

The paper titled *"Making Legal Rights a Reality"*, is positive and hopefully, signals the LSC's commitment to more assiduously assert its independence from government where necessary. This is particularly important in the aftermath of the London bombs as the LSC will have a pivotal position in facilitating the defence of civil liberties as the political establishment grapples with trying to contain the threat of extremism.

Crisis in Civil Legal Aid

Significantly, in the Government's paper "A Fairer Deal for Legal Aid" published just before the LSC paper the crisis in civil legal aid services was starkly acknowledged by reference to the reduction of over a fifth in civil cases and the gaps that are appearing in provision. "Making Legal Rights a Reality" is an attempt to address this

Law Centres Federation

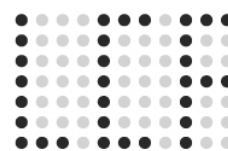
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crisis. In this regard an important theme runs through the paper which the targeting of face to face social welfare law services in deprived areas with it seems, regional services and *"an accessible national telephone service"* filling in the gaps. The presumption is that such services should provide assistance across the main areas of social welfare law, -benefits, housing, debt, community care, mental health and employment.

This approach is likely to have its critics. For example, the danger of an over reliance on telephone services in the non targeted areas at the expense of face to face services is likely to be cited. The history of legal aid and particularly social welfare law though shows that in reality there has always been a tendency for such services to develop in the most deprived communities. One need look no further to illustrate this point than the Law Centre movement itself with the vast majority of our sixty centres concentrated in urban areas. It is the establishment of regional centres at the hub of referral networks that is key to meeting those non-urban as well the more prosperous urban communities needs for social welfare law services.

Community Legal Aid Centres (CLACs)

This brings me on to one of the frustrations of the strategy. One of its most eye-catching initiatives is the Community Legal Aid Centres. These will deliver casework services across a range of areas of social welfare law as well as undertaking group, legal education and other strategic work. Funded in partnership mainly with the LSC and Local Authorities they seem to be Law Centres by another name and to be sure it might well be appropriate for LCF or existing Law Centres to either bid to establish them or become the lead agency in a parallel initiative announced for existing organisations, Community Legal Advice Networks. However, these will only be pilots.

Surely after at least ten years of pilots from the Legal Aid Board and latterly Legal Services Commission this should not be necessary? Has all the experience and research available from the original NfP LAB Franchise Pilots to the recent Partnership Innovation Bid projects been lost?

As there is a consultation period for the strategy ending in October which is to be followed by a final report in "the winter" of 2005/6, the LSC has an opportunity to answer these questions. Law Centres can have their say at a general meeting to be held at the Law Society on 5th September, (see inside for details). Crispin Passmore has agreed to speak at this meeting.

The End of CLSPs?

Returning to the legal services village, the strategy's trashing of the legal services partnership concept is likely to stimulate much debate in our metaphorical village pub. It should be remembered that these were a centrepiece of government policy and government ministers were quick to claim them a success as they reached nearly 100% coverage of the country. Aside from this, the NfP sector devoted much time and effort to them believing they were to plan and coordinate services at a local level. The strategy effectively argues that they should be abandoned and replaced with funders' forums, with a super forum at national level augmented with some user representation.

Part of the reason for this abandonment of the CLSP's is the conflict of interest of providers having a major say in the planning of services. This ignores the fact that Local Authorities and other public bodies have an equal conflict of interest, as they are often reluctant to fund services that litigate against them. Also, the NfP sector or even private practice lawyers don't view themselves as merely providers of services but as active participants in ensuring access to justice. This should involve a role in planning. This said it has to acknowledged, that CLSPs largely did not work so the consultation over the strategy has to find a better structure.

Little Opportunity for Growth

Finally, the strategy is constrained ultimately by both the historic pattern of supply of legal aid services and the budget. The strategy acknowledges that its priorities remain - Children Act proceedings, mental health, asylum and actions against the police. Aside from mental health in which services including Law Centres are likely to expand due to legislative changes, there will be little opportunity for

growth in the other areas of social welfare law unless savings are made on criminal and other areas of traditional expenditure, particularly family. Also, implicit in the report is that resources for non-casework services will mainly have to be found from other funders.

Despite the cynicism, the proposed "CLAC" pilots might be useful in finally persuading Government of the merit of integrated social welfare law services like Law Centres. However, appealing above the heads of government to the people that really matter, the public, should remain the primary means to bring about change in the system. The alternative, is the "Harry Potter strategy" and rely on magic spells to open the portals of access to justice!

Steve Hynes
LCF Director

Legal Services News

A Fairer Deal for Legal Aid

Prior to the publication of the Legal Services Commission's paper, "Making Legal Rights a Reality", the Department for Constitutional Affairs, published "*A Fairer Deal for Legal Aid*" which looks at how to reduce the expenditure in criminal work in order to give priority to the needs of vulnerable and disadvantaged people. In the last seven years, criminal legal aid costs have risen by 37% in real terms. In part this reflects the changes made by government that have increased the demand for criminal defence work. This was illustrated in a report by the Legal Services Research Centre, "*Demand Induced Supply? Identifying Cost Drivers in Criminal Defence Work*" by Professors Ed Caper and Richard Moorhead. The report argues that policy changes have increased demand both in terms of volume and quantity of services.

A review to the way publicly funded legal advice and representation services are procured is to be produced by Lord Carter by early 2006. It will focus particularly on criminal defence services and on specific issues such as high cost cases - nearly half of all legal aid spending in the Crown Court goes on just 1% of cases. It will look at options for new procurement arrangements such as a block contracting, price competition and lead

suppliers. The purchaser would contract with one lead supplier for all preparatory and advocacy work in a case. The paper suggests that the lead supplier could be a firm of solicitors or a barrister or a consortium of the two. They would be responsible overall for the running of a case, including subcontracting any litigation or advocacy work that they were not qualified to do. "*By dealing with a single lead supplier, the transaction costs and bureaucracy of the current system on both lawyers and the purchasers could be reduced. In the longer term it may be possible to contract with non-legal firms as lead suppliers.*" There are bound to be strong feelings on this particular proposal.

Legal aid for Divorce

Proposed changes to the way legal aid is provided in divorce and other civil cases were published in June. The new regulations provide that where legally-aided clients are able to obtain affordable loans or have funds available, they will no longer automatically be eligible for public funding for disputes over financial arrangements on divorce or separation. The government aims to save £56.3 million over three years.

"Making Legal Rights a Reality"

LCF General Meeting

Monday, 5th September 2005
2.30 - 5.30 p.m.

Chancery Room, The Law Society
113 Chancery Lane, London WC2

With

Crispin Passmore

Director - Community Legal Service
Legal Services Commission

In addition we hope to have a speaker
from ASBO Concern

*Followed by a Reception at 60 Carey
Street, the official residence of the
President of the Law Society*

CLS Direct

CLS Direct has expanded to include two new telephone advice lines for people with employment or housing problems. They join the existing advice lines for benefits, tax credits, debt and education advice services. The Legal Services Commission also report that as well as increasing the areas of law covered by CLS Direct they have improved the information on the website www.clsdirect.org.uk by translating information into three new languages; Arabic, Hindi and Turkish. The CLS Direct helpline 0845 345 4 345 offers a translation service to help those that do not speak English as their first language.

The LSC now have 31 leaflets. Recent additions include Care Proceedings, Changing Your Name and Neighbourhood and Community Disputes.

New Constitutional Affairs Committee

The new Committee was announced on 20th July. Alan Beith MP remains as chair. One of the major issues for the Committee in the coming months is access to justice and their first task is to examine the small claims system. Members of the Committee are :

Rt Hon Alan Beith MP, Chair (*Liberal Democrat*)
Berwick-upon-Tweed

James Brokenshire MP (*Conservative*)
Hornchurch

David Howarth MP (*Liberal Democrat*)
Cambridge

Ms Barbara Keeley MP (*Labour*)
Worsley

Mr Piara S Khabra MP (*Labour*)
Ealing Southall

Jessica Morden MP (*Labour*)
Newport East

Julie Morgan MP (*Labour*)
Cardiff North

Mr Andrew Tyrie MP (*Conservative*)
Chichester

Keith Vaz MP (*Labour*)
Leicester East

Dr Alan Whitehead MP (*Labour*)
Southampton Test

Jeremy Wright MP (*Conservative*)
Rugby and Kenilworth

The Committee has made a call for evidence on the small claims system with a closing date of 7th February.

Public Legal Education

The Advice Services Alliance, the Citizenship Foundation and Legal Action Group have published a paper, "*Public Legal Education: A Proposal for Development*" which follows on from their consultation earlier this year. The authors believe that action is needed to increase public knowledge and understanding of the law and rights, to allow people to become more effective citizens and give them the confidence, knowledge and skills they need to manage the problems they face in the course of their lives. The three organisations are proposing:

- * An independent steering group to guide the development of a national strategy, chaired by a senior figure from a non-governmental background
- * Group members to include representatives from all relevant government departments, but with a majority drawn from outside government
- * Government funding to support the work of the group.

Martin Jones, project director, ASA's Advicenow Project, said:

"We need to see fundamental changes in the way the public learn about their individual rights, to bridge the knowledge gap that is so evident when it comes to legal issues."

Nony Ardill, policy director, Legal Action Group said:

"We were encouraged by the level of interest in public legal education shown in the responses to our discussion paper. The challenge now is to harness this interest and to persuade the government that the idea of a national strategy has legs."

The importance of access to legal education has been acknowledged in the Legal Services Commission's paper on "*Making Legal Rights a Reality*" referred to earlier.

For a copy of the position paper, the summary of responses and the initial consultation paper, please contact Nony Ardill at : nardill@lag.org.uk. Telephone: 020 7833 7435.

Lord Woolf retires

The Lord Chief Justice, Lord Woolf is to retire this summer. Lord Woolf has supported Law Centres over many years and we shall miss him. We do however, welcome Lord Phillips of Worth Matravers who will be taking up his new post in October. Lord Phillips was seen supporting legal services on the march organised by the London Legal Support Trust in April.

Lord Justice Clarke succeeds Lord Phillips as Master of the Rolls.

Law Centres® must keep up the pressure for Access to Justice

The **Access to Justice Alliance** (AJA) was formed on a chilly November evening last year when Doughty Street Chambers basement conference room became packed with legal aid workers alarmed by the growing crisis facing legal aid. All shared the concern that solicitors are dropping out of legal aid work in droves and those remaining must increasingly turn away vulnerable people who have nowhere else to go. Only the poorest people now qualify for public funding, yet finding lawyers and advisors who will take on legal aid cases or even give first stage advice is challenging. Many people who need legal help with basic needs simply can't get it.

The Law Centres Federation is a key player in the Access to Justice Alliance, which consists of representatives from Advice UK, Advice Services Alliance, Child Poverty Action Group, Citizens Advice, Justice, Legal Action Group, Legal Aid Practitioners Group, Liberty, Public Law Project, Rights of Women, Shelter, and 20 other organizations, including Law Centres.

Many Law Centre workers participated in the AJA public meeting in April at City University with over 300 people in attendance. Commentaries in *the Guardian* and *the Times* written by Helena

Kennedy QC and Shami Chakrabarti of Liberty highlighted the civil legal aid crisis. *The Times* also published a letter to the editor from the AJA and ran a news story on the day of the meeting. In a separate event, more than 70 Law Centre workers, solicitors, and their clients marched to Downing Street after the AJA public meeting to demand "*Legal Rights for All.*" Shortly after the meeting, the Lord Chancellor admitted that civil legal aid spending has fallen by 22 per cent since 1997.

The AJA is taking the campaign forward with an aggressive Parliamentary lobbying strategy. On July 4th, the Lord Chancellor and DCA Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State Bridget Prentice addressed the AJA's Parliamentary launch in Westminster joined by several MPs and Lords. Early Day Motion 453, drafted by the AJA and sponsored by Marsha Singh MP, is accumulating signatures. The AJA will also be represented at fringe meetings at the Liberal Democrat Party Conference and the Labour Party Conference this autumn.

The Law Centres Federation will distribute an Access to Justice campaign pack to Law Centres in the build-up to a coordinated Parliamentary lobby in October. All Law Centres are encouraged to participate. Please contact jen@lawcentres.org.uk to get involved. For more information, go to www.accesstojusticealliance.org.uk.

The Access to Justice Alliance will continue to target and educate decision-makers, donors, and the general public until everyone has full access to their legal rights. Rights that cannot be enforced make a mockery of the system and those working for social justice.

EDM 453 Civil Legal Aid

This House both welcomes the establishment of the Access to Justice Alliance to promote the need for properly resourced civil legal aid services as well as the Lord Chancellor's recent acknowledgement that there has been a 22% reduction since 1997 on the amount spent on civil legal aid and calls on the Government to take urgent action to restore funding levels adequate to ensure access to civil justice for ordinary people.

At the end of this parliamentary session, the EDM had 27 supporters.

ADR

The Advice Services Alliance has published another edition of Update on Alternative Dispute Resolution news.

ADR - only part of the solution

The "Update" reports that the use of ADR has not increased in the way that was anticipated. Hazel Genn, now carrying out research at the DCA, has concluded that in England pre-action protocols have influenced pre-issue dispute resolution behaviour, in that more cases are being resolved before an application is made to court. Cases that are not settled at an early stage are moving more rapidly through court proceedings. The report comments that mediation is not a particularly popular option, nor necessarily a cheaper options. Hazel Genn suggests that mediation and other ADR options can only be a supplement to traditions settlement processes, not a substitute for them. If ADR is to be encouraged, it should be part of a "flexible and proportionate dispute resolution landscape."

Copies of Update are on www.ADRnow.org.uk. Or call 020 7378 6428 for more information.

Law Centre News

In Sympathy - Steve Beinoras

The Management and Staff of Nottingham Law Centre were extremely shocked and saddened by the sudden death of their Senior Debt Advisor, Steve Beinoras, on 13th May.

Steve, aged 42, had worked at Nottingham Law Centre since February 2000 and was a valued member of the team. Prior to his employment at the Law Centre, Steve had worked as a debt adviser in various community and advice centre settings in Nottinghamshire for years and was extremely well respected and liked by colleagues and clients.

Steve was committed to tackling injustice and worked hard for all his clients. He constantly challenged the bad practice of creditors, bailiffs and council officials and fought against injustice. A few months prior to his death he had a significant success in a case against Nottingham City Council in relation to bailiff practice.

Steve's death has left a huge void in debt advice in Nottingham that will be difficult to fill. He leaves a partner and two young children.

Bright Project

The Bright Project, based at Avon and Bristol Law Centre, aims to improve the standard of benefits and legal advice given directly by Black and other Minority Ethnic (BME) voluntary sector organisations in Bristol for the benefit of local BME communities.

It is a one off capacity building project to:

- * Integrate Black-led advice and information services into mainstream advice provision
- * Improve the quality and quantity of advice sessions for BME communities in Bristol
- * Address the particular own language advice needs within BME communities and reduce the need for interpreting services
- * Address the specific needs of refugee communities
- * Improve the co-ordination of BME agencies working together on advice services
- * Ensure effective networking and develop referral systems between BME agencies and other advice providers

Contacts: Lucia Gillespie, Bright Project Liaison Officer 0117 916 7709 and Kate Stobie, Bright Project Development Officer 0117 7720

Legal Aid Lawyer of the Year 2005

Congratulation to **Anna Skehan** at Islington Law Centre who was named Immigration Lawyer of the Year at the Legal Aid Lawyer of the Year awards on 23rd June by a panel of judges chaired by Cherie Booth QC. Anna has specialised in working for the victims of people-traffickers.

This is the third year of the awards, organised by the Legal Aid Practitioners Group and the Independent Lawyer.

Coventry Law Centre

Coventry Law Centre published the fourth edition of *"In Touch"* last month where they celebrated the success of their new community care service.

The service began last May with funding from the Big Lottery which enabled them to employ a specialist worker, Bob Murray. Bob has now been joined by Ellen Leslie, a trainee solicitor and Bindi Budesha, one of the employment workers at the Law Centre who will also be taking on some cases.

Coventry Law Centre report in their newsletter that they have obtained funding from the Legal Services Commission to fit a hearing loop in their reception area. They also have a portable hearing loop which can be set up in any of their interview rooms.

A copy of their newsletter can be downloaded from their website: www.covlaw.org.uk

Wiltshire Law Centre

Wiltshire Law Centre has recruited Ronan Mulqueeny to work in areas of welfare benefits and housing law. Recently they have agreed with the Legal Services Commission that Ronan can deal with mental health law under a new contract awarded to them.

Ronan is a member of the Law Society's Mental Health Review Tribunal Panel. In addition to representing clients in hospital, Ronan will also be able to offer advice and assistance to those who have been released from hospital and have issues with the after-care service provided to them in the community.

Sadly, following funding cuts across the voluntary sector by Swindon Borough Council, the Law Centre has been forced to stop giving employment law advice with the loss of two part-time posts.

Bury Law Centre

Bury Law Centre has now moved to:
8 Bank Street
Bury BL9 0DL
Telephone number stays on 0161 272 0666.

LawWorks

Sue Bucknall, the Chief Executive of the Solicitors Pro Bono Group resigned last month. The LCF and the SPBG have been partners running the LawWorks project since its inception and Sue will be very much missed.

Robert Gill from the Department for Constitutional Affairs has been seconded as an interim manager until the recruitment process is finalised.

Youth Matters

The long awaited Green Paper on services for young people was published on 19th July. The papers sets out a new strategy for *"providing opportunities, challenge and support to young people"* between the ages of 13 and 19. The Government's vision is to see services integrated around young people's needs. There are four key challenges :

- * how to engage more young people in positive activities and empower them to shape the services they receive
- * how to encourage more young people to volunteer and become more involved in their communities
- * how to provide better information, advice and guidance to young people to help them make informed choices about their lives
- * how to provide better and more personalised intensive support for each young person who has a serious problem or gets into trouble.

One of the proposals is to introduce 'opportunity cards'. These would provide discounts on a range of things to do and places to see. In addition, each local authority will have an 'opportunity fund' to be spent on local projects that young people want. The paper proposes to invest £40 million over two years for local authorities to develop new approaches to youth facilities with a focus on deprived neighbourhoods.

(Continued over....)

Their third challenge is to provide better support to young people *"as they make decisions about their careers, education, health and other issues."* The paper proposes that there should be clear minimum expectations of the information, advice and guidance (IAG) that each young person and their parents should receive. Responsibility for commissioning IAG and the funding that goes with it will be devolved from the Connexions Service to local authorities, working through children's trusts, schools and colleges. Young people at risk of 'poor outcomes' are to receive *"via someone they know and trust, an integrated package of support which meets their needs."*

The paper aims to give every young person who needs support in a number of overlapping areas, a nominated lead professional who will be a single point of contact. Support is to be provided in a coordinated, convenient and integrated way. *"We will make it easier for young people to access services by encouraging co-location in schools, voluntary drop-in and health centres, youth facilities and advice shops."*

Current funding programmes are to be merged, so that local authorities working through children's trusts can use the funding more flexibly to tackle the needs of young people in a holistic way.

The closing date for comment is 4th November. Subject to the consultation, the reforms should be completed by April 2008.

Labour Party Conference

The LCF is linking up with Legal Action to hold a fringe meeting on civil rights and young people. The meeting will take place on Tuesday, **27th September** at the Royal Albion Hotel in Brighton at 6.30. Our speakers are **Maria Eagle**, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for children, Young People and Families at the Department of Education, **Alison Hannah**, Director of Legal Action Group and **Emma Day** from *Street/legal* at Enfield Law Centre.

Everyone is welcome....

For those of you with passes into the conference centre, please visit us on Stand 89 in the Rainbow Room.

Employment News

Age discrimination consultation

The government's draft regulations on age discrimination were published on 14th July and will be out for consultation until 17th October. The new legislation will come into force on 1 October 2006 implementing the final strand of the European Employment Directive (Council 2000/78/EC).

Under the proposed regulations:

- * direct and indirect age discrimination in recruitment, promotion and training will be unlawful unless it can be objectively justified;
- * employment benefits linked to length of service will be allowed if the benefit is intended to reflect greater experience, reward loyalty or increase the employee's motivation; the employer believes there will be a business benefit in rewarding experience or loyalty or increasing motivation; and the employer applies the length-of-service criterion to staff in similar situations;
- * under an exemption to the above rule, a length-of-service requirement of five years or less for employment benefits will be lawful ("the five year exemption"); any length-of-service requirement that mirrors a similar requirement for a statutory benefit, or is less than the statutory requirement, will be lawful (an example is the two-year requirement for entitlement to redundancy pay);
- * the lower (18) and upper (65) limits for statutory redundancy pay will be removed, but the two-year qualifying period will remain and the amount of redundancy pay will continue to be based on length of service;
- * the calculation of redundancy pay will no longer be based on a multiplier of one week for some employees, half a week for younger employees and one and a half weeks for older employees; the multiplier will be the same for everyone regardless of age, but it has not yet been

decided whether the multiplier will be one week or a different amount;

- * will be a national default--not compulsory--retirement age of 65, and a retirement age below 65 will be unlawful unless it can be objectively justified;
- * employers who currently have a retirement age below 65 will have to meet the objective justification test, or increase it to at least 65;
- * the default retirement age will be reviewed in 2011;
- * employers will have to give written notification to employees between six and 12 months before their intended retirement date;
- * with this notice, the employers will have to tell employees that the employee has the right to ask to continue working beyond retirement age, and the employer must consider this request (but there will be no duty on the employer to grant the request);
- * the current upper age limit (65) for unfair dismissal (see below) will be removed, and the age bands for the calculation of unfair dismissal basic awards will be harmonised in the same way as for redundancy pay;

The draft regulations, consultation document and a summary at www.dti.gov.uk/er/equality/age.

The Law Society has published a short guide to provide an introduction to the new legislation and outlines some basic steps which can be undertaken to ensure that their members are age inclusive. The Guide is under Regulation and Professional Conduct on their website: www.lawsociety.org.uk.

TUPE

The government has announced that implementation of new TUPE (Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment)) is being put back to at least April 2006 (from October 2005), as a result of the large number of responses to their consultation.

Workplace Survey

The DTI and ACAS published their workplace employment relations survey in July. The research found that the proportion of employers offering flexible working has increased significantly. Term time working for example was up from 14 to 28% and homeworking up from 16 to 28% since 1998.

The survey also found:

- * Only a half of the employees were employed in workplaces with a recognised trade union. 34% were union members.
- * Only 18% of workplaces with 10-24 employees had recognised unions in 2004 compared with 28 % in 1998. In workplaces with 25 or more employees, recognition remained stable at around 39% (it was 41% in 1998).
- * Only 45% of workplaces with recognised unions have on-site representatives. This is a reduction from 55% in 1998.
- * 8% of workplaces reported that an employment tribunal claim had been brought against them in the preceding year - this is up from 6% in 1998.
- * 23% of workplaces did not have formal equal opportunities policies. There had been some improvement as the figure for 1998 was 36%.

This is just a sample of quite interesting findings. For more see *"Inside the Workplace. First Findings"* which is available from the DTI website: www.dti.gov.uk/er/inform. The survey will be completed next spring.

The Pay Gap

The EOC has carried out research into equal pay and have found that two-thirds of organisations have yet to carry out an Equal Pay Review and have no plans to do so. Part-time women earn 40% less per hour than full time men - the same gap as 25 years ago. Full time women earn 18% less. The EOC is calling for a new duty on employers to take action on all causes of the pay gap. Where the equality check found an organisation at risk of breach of the Equal Pay Act, the obligation would require them to undertake a full Equal Pay Review.

Disability News

Independent Advocates

The Department of Health has announced that *"vulnerable people who lack capacity to make their own decisions"* will be supported and represented by a new Independent Mental Capacity Advocate (IMCA). The Department said, *"The IMCA service will mean that certain people who lack capacity - this may include people who suffer from dementia, Alzheimer's disease, brain injury or a very severe learning disability - will be helped to make difficult decisions such as medical treatment choices or changes to residence. It is aimed specifically at those people who do not have relatives or friends to speak for them."*

The consultation includes questions about :

- * the main functions of the IMCA;
- * how to define "serious medical treatment" - one of the triggers for involving an IMCA;
- * whether to extend the service to cover other groups of people or different circumstances.

£67.5 million has been set aside to fund the scheme which is planned for implementation in April 2007. The consultation is available on www.dh.gov.uk and closes on 30th September 2005.

Mental Health Bill

The revised draft Mental Health Bill published last September is continuing its controversial progress through parliament. The Department of Health say that the Bill aims to provide improved safeguards for patients and a better legal framework for the treatment of the small minority of people with mental health problems who need to be treated against their will.

On 13th July, in response to a report from the Pre-Legislative Committee, Ministers said that they accepted in full or in part over half of the Committee's 107 recommendations. They reaffirmed the Government's commitment to ensuring that the Bill provides the right framework to provide treatment to protect people with a mental disorder from harming themselves and others.

Among the recommendations the Government has accepted are:

- * The guiding principles will appear on the face of the Bill. This means that those principles will be relevant to all aspects of the Bill provisions. They will help raise awareness and reduce stigma.
- * An exclusion for substance dependency. This tightens the conditions for compulsion, meaning that clinicians will not be able compulsorily to treat people whose sole mental disorder is dependency on drugs or alcohol.
- * Improvements in patient rights, for example, in relation to advance decisions and statements, Tribunal involvement in psychosurgery, patients' rights to decide whether advocates can see their records and patients meeting with advocates in private.
- * Improved rights for victims of mentally disordered offenders. More consideration must be given to victims' evidence statements when a court or tribunal is considering how to deal with mentally disordered offenders.

Rosie Winterton MP said:

"The Bill is designed to provide the right treatment for the right people at the right time."

"The Bill sits within the context of the Government's wider programme of reform and developments in mental health services and additional funding, which aims to achieve modern services which help people with a mental disorder early enough so that fewer people reach crisis level."

"I thank the Committee for their detailed report, which we have studied carefully. I welcome the Committee's support of a number of key features in the draft Bill, in particular the plan to allow compulsion in the community and the introduction of new safeguards for patients such as advocacy services and safeguards for children who are not being treated under compulsion because of their parents' consent."

"Although the majority of mental health patients pose no danger to themselves or others, the

Government has a duty to protect people with serious mental health problems from harming themselves or other people. The Bill introduces a number of new safeguards for patients' rights and we are confident that the Bill's provisions will mean that compulsory treatment will be used only when essential. Compulsion will only be used as a last resort.

"For the first time, the legislation will allow people being treated under compulsory powers to be in the community, where there is less of a risk of social exclusion. It also provides a diversion from prison for offenders with mental health problems."

Mental Health Tribunals

Clause 6 of the draft Bill abolishes the Mental Health Review Tribunal (MHRT) system currently provided under the Mental Health Act 1983 and replaces it with a Mental Health Tribunal. The Tribunals will provide judicial authority for the use of formal powers for all cases beyond 28 days not authorised by the courts. The Government have stated that the introduction of tribunals will provide a :

"[...] single procedure [which] will be clearer and simpler to understand; will ensure that patients' applications are considered by an independent judicial body with specialist expertise and will avoid the duplication of the current system".

The tribunals are meant effectively to sweep up and unify the safeguards provided by a range of different provisions and arrangements under the current Act. For example, the power currently invested in nearest relatives to discharge a patient under sections 23 and 25 of the 1983 Act without a tribunal will be replaced by a right of the patient's nominated person to apply to the tribunal for discharge. The nominated person will not be able to order a discharge without a tribunal decision.

The tribunals will provide the legal authority for compulsory treatment beyond 28 days for all cases. Its functions will include:

- a) making orders for assessment and treatment;
- b) reviewing cases, and authorising the discharge or transfer of patients;
- c) determining the status of a patient as resident or non-resident;
- d) dealing with applications concerning nominated persons;
- e) authorising specific treatments such as ECT; and
- f) making determinations in cases involving children.

The Government has estimated that there would be 41,900 tribunal hearings under the draft Bill, compared with a current combined total of 22,800 MHRTs and hospital managers' hearings.

The Government have drawn a distinction between appeals against earlier tribunal decisions and applications for a review of a case. The Bill establishes a separate Mental Health Appeal Tribunal to hear appeals on points of law, which will consider whether an earlier decision was lawful.

The demand for representation at Mental Health Tribunals and Appeal Tribunals is likely to increase - another up and coming challenge for Law Centres.

Law Centres Federation

Annual Conference & AGM

Law is Local

**Jurys Hotel, Birmingham
11th and 12th November 2005**

Keynote Speaker

**Bridget Prentice MP
Parliamentary Secretary,
Department for Constitutional Affairs**

Conference Fees:

***£130 for two days including overnight accommodation
£50 Day Rate***

More news next month...

Immigration News

Asylum Support Appeals Project (ASAP) launch

The Asylum Support Appeals Project (ASAP) was officially launched on 29th June 2005 in Croydon, after the Big Lottery Fund agreed to fund this groundbreaking project earlier this year.

Many asylum seekers whose housing and welfare support has been terminated or withdrawn by National Asylum Support Services (NASS) are unable to appeal due to the lack of public funding for asylum support appeals. The dire consequences of this lack of access to legal advice are immediate eviction, loss of welfare support and destitution.

London MEP **Claude Moraes** said '*Asylum is one of the top three political issues in Europe and it's important that there are people and organisations like ASAP with the courage to represent their interests*'.

Sehba Storey, the Chief Asylum Support Adjudicator, reported that appeals have already increased in number and are likely to rise further during July-August due to NASS initiatives and new rights of appeal. It is further expected that NASS will soon withdraw support from 60-70 former asylum-seekers with children who have failed to leave the UK voluntarily.

Mulat Tadesse Haregot, Chair of Hammersmith and Fulham Refugee Forum highlighted the mutual benefits of joint working between lawyers and refugee community organizations, a central aim of the project.

Solicitor **Sue Willman**, Chair of ASAP welcomed participants who reflected the diversity of support for the project, from refugee community leaders to barristers from Doughty Street, 6 Kings Bench Walk and Two Garden Court Chambers who have provided free representation. She thanked the Big Lottery Fund and other supporters including Advice UK, the Evelyn Oldfield Unit and the Law Centres Federation, London Unit. Following the launch, the City Parochial Foundation has also announced its support to the project.



Sue Willman, Claude Moraes MEP, Mulat Tadesse Haregot and Sehba Storey (right to left) at the launch of ASAP on 29th June

As from August 2005 ASAP will provide free legal advice and representation for asylum seekers at ASA appeals (Monday and Thursday mornings) and run a second-tier advice line as well as training for refugee community organisations and other advice agencies. ASAP advice line (020 8684 5972) is open Monday 2.00 - 4.00 p.m. Tuesday 10.00 -12:30 p.m. and 2.00 - 4.00 p.m. Wednesday 10.00 - 12:30 p.m. and Thursdays 2.00 - 4.00 p.m. (closed on Fridays).

For more details please contact: **Eiri Ohtani**, ASAP Co-ordinator, Eiri@asaproject.org.uk, tel 020 8684 5873

Immigration Workers Workshop with the Legal Services Commission

On June 10th, the LCF in liaison with the LSC, held a workshop for Law Centre immigration caseworkers in Manchester. There were 17 participants from 12 Law Centres in the Midlands and the North of England.

There were 3 representatives from the LSC's Immigration and Asylum Team who made a presentation on the 2004 immigration specification including CLR applications and extensions, key rules and changes relating to the single tier process, accreditation, and devolved powers. There was a general recognition that it had been a tough time for immigration practitioners, that Law Centres made a significant contribution to the delivery of immigration services and that the LSC wanted to learn what the key issues are for Law Centres and try to address them.

The key issues and action points from the day were:

- * The 1,100 hours benchmark for NFP hours is no longer realistic for immigration in light of all the changes introduced over the last 2 years. LSC to consider issues raised;
- * LSC to send further details about Devolved Powers application procedures and details of the benefits of devolved powers;
- * LSC to consider reviewing the £250 NFP disbursement limit, particularly in relation to counsel fees;
- * LSC to reconsider the way 'rejections' of funding requests (CLR) are dealt with;
- * LSC to review the issue of supply in areas outside London;
- * LSC to review its service delivery to Law Centres and confirm emergency procedures for applications.

The feedback from the day has been positive. The LSC are planning to run a follow up workshop within a year.

Migration Routes to the UK

The Home Office introduced the Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Bill on 22nd June and had its second reading on 5th July. An outline of what was envisaged was in the May edition of the LCF newsletter. Accompanying the Bill is a Home Office consultation paper on the introduction of a more selective points-based system for managed migration which was published on 19th July. The main aims are to :

- * improve public confidence in the system and fill skills gaps;
- * attract highly productive and highly skilled workers and students;
- * attract investment and improve productivity and flexibility in the labour market;
- * ensure people leave at the end their stay.

The new points-based system would include a web-based self assessment programme. Under the scheme only migrant workers in the top two tiers, for skilled and highly skilled workers, will be allowed to settle in the UK after five years.

Limited Leave

The Government also announced that they intend to replace immediate indefinite leave to remain for refugees with an initial grant of five years' limited leave that would be subject to review. The policy is due to take effect from **30th August**. Tony McNulty MP said, *"If there is a significant and on-temporary change in conditions in a country, we would consider whether this should, in line with the Convention's cessation clauses, trigger a case by case review of the position of all or some refugees from that country with limited leave.*

"As is currently the case, any leave granted to refugees may be subject to review if the refugee through their own actions, brings themselves within the scope of the 1951 Geneva Refugee Convention's exclusion or cessation clauses. Refugees will continue to be entitled to use public services and to claim key mainstream benefits.

"Resettled refugees are in a different position from refugees who arrive in the UK as asylum seekers. They have often been outside their country of origin for many years and have no prospect of returning there. As a result of this special position, I consider it appropriate to allow resettled refugees to retain an immediate right to settlement.

"From 30th August onwards, beneficiaries of humanitarian protection will be granted five years limited leave, rather than three as at present. Similar policies on review will apply to them as to refugees with limited leave and they will also, from 30th August, benefit from immediate family reunion."

Critics have argued that the proposal to deny refugees indefinite leave to remain is a step backwards. A spokesperson from the **Refugee Council** said :

"We don't understand why the government is intent on introducing a measure that puts at risk other good work on helping refugees to integrate. Not one single reputable, independent experts thinks this proposal will do anything but damage the chances of victims or persecution rebuilding their lives in the UK."

The Refugee Council report that they intend to write to MPs asking them to support an Early Day Motion calling on the government to rethink their plans.

NRUC

National Register for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (NRUC) was set up this month. It has been set up to assist local authorities and provides a central database with information on all unaccompanied asylum seeking children. Information about the register is at www.nruc.gov.uk.

Accreditation

As you will know accreditation becomes mandatory on 1st August. The Law Society is currently undertaking a review of the scheme and welcomes comments from practitioners. Please contact Jenny Rawstone by email: Jenny.Rawstone@lawsociety.org.uk or by telephone on 020 7320 9535.

Housing News

Housing Tribunals

A stimulating meeting of the LCF Housing Working Party took place on 20th July at Islington Law Centre. Helen Carr from the Law Commission presented the latest ideas being discussed to tackle what has been called "*housing unhappinesses*". There is clearly a motive to reduce costs but this is not the whole story. The Commission want to look at the broader picture - at what are the most effective ways of solving problems. This could include ADR, changing managerial procedures and using court system - whether this be a housing court or tribunal. Housing workers stressed that the system must protect people's legal rights and that clients must have access to legal representation, especially in arenas where the other side are represented.

A consultation paper about the proposals is due out in the autumn and all housing workers are urged to take part in this important debate. Also up and coming is new legislation on tenure. A consultation on a new **Renting Homes Act** is being finalised and a Bill is likely to be published towards the end of the year.

Housing workers felt that it was useful to meet not only to discuss together these proposed changes, but also to share issues that arise in Law Centres. There was unanimous support to continue meeting regularly.

The next date for a meeting is **19th October** at the LCF offices on Warren Street. If you would like to join the Working Party please contact Jen at the LCF on 020 7387 8578.

Possession Actions

The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister published statistics this month showing that possession actions by social landlords more than doubled in the decade to 2003. By 2002/03 these were resulting in the eviction of around 26,000 tenants annually. The vast majority (93%) of such re-possession were triggered by rent arrears. The research speculated that the main reasons for the increases were due to :

- * increasing multiple indebtedness
- * the increased complexity of the Housing Benefit system
- * rising levels of tenant indebtedness which, due to its frequently low-paid and erratic nature, paradoxically increased tenants' vulnerability to serious rent arrears.

The level of possession actions peaked around 2002. The reasons given for this included improved arrears management on the part of social landlords and Housing Benefit changes.

The researchers found that the trend has been for eviction rates to rise fastest in the Midlands and the North. They commented that there is significant scope for improvement in communication between housing management and HB staff and in the provision of welfare benefits advice and debt-counselling services. Researchers interviewed tenants subject to possession actions. All tenants reported considerable emotional impact on themselves and their families. Where tenants had been offered the support of external agencies, including during court hearings, this had assisted them in understanding the process of legal action, had encouraged them to engage with this process and in some cases had resulted in the arrears being resolved through repayment arrangements prior to court hearings.

Rent Arrears Protocol

The Civil Justice Council is undertaking a consultation on a proposed pre-action protocol relating to possession proceedings for arrears of rent. Closing date for responses is 15th September.

Housing Benefit

The Department for Work and Pensions has published findings that claim that the new scheme piloting direct payments of Housing Benefit to tenants is proving a success. The scheme is being piloted in nine Pathfinder councils including Coventry, Leeds and Lewisham.

"In pathfinder councils testing the Local Housing Allowance, nearly nine out of ten tenants receive their Housing Benefit direct compared to four in ten in the current system. Nearly a quarter of those receiving their Housing Benefit direct, opened a bank account to have the benefit paid in, because the new Local Housing Allowance was introduced. Tenants who were paid directly are more likely to expect to move in to work compared to those whose benefit is paid directly to their landlord."

The impact of having Housing Benefit being paid directly to tenants was raised at the Housing Working Party. *Do you have you examples of where the system is failing ?*

New Law Centre Leaflet



Tower Hamlets Law Centre has published a new leaflet, *"Stock Transfer: Essential Reading Before you Choose"*. The leaflet outlines the differences between Assured and Secured Tenancies.

Welfare Rights

DWP Five Year Strategy

The Department of Work and Pensions has published it's Five Year Strategy. The major challenge for the welfare state they say is the aging population. By 2007 the number of people over State Pension age will be greater than the number of children and by 2025 more than half of pensioners will be aged 75 or over. Their aim is to have an employment rate equivalent to 80% of the working age population which means that more than 2.5 million more people in work than today. Those targeted are claimants of incapacity benefits and lone parents.

The strategy proposes a range of actions to overcome barriers to work. Alongside a fundamental reform of the benefits system they would like to :

- * improve workplace health and safety
- * improve the role of employers in the rehabilitation of their employees
- * improve back-to-work support from GPs and the wider NHS
- * extend employment advice and support
- * further develop disability rights.

Alongside the expansion of childcare and the improvement of the Child Support Agency, they will pilot an integrated offer for lone parents. The pilot will run in five areas, initially for 12 months. DWP have also announced their intention to pilot a new automatic payment of £20 a week, for lone parents with older children, if they participate in agreed work-related activities.

The Strategy sets out new measures for retirement, with the choice to work longer and incentives to defer claiming the State Pension.

Tax Credits

Government figures released last month show that problems with the tax credits system continue with nearly half of the tax credits awards in 2003/04 being either overpaid or underpaid. Three quarters of the underpayments which occurred - families receiving less tax credit than they were due - happened to families with incomes below £20,000.

The report by the Parliamentary Ombudsman, Ann Abraham, recommended that writing off all excess and overpayments caused by official error which occurred during 2004-04 and 2004-05 should be considered. In an emergency statement to MPs, Ms Primarolo said the government was already writing off overpayments which are attributable to departmental error. She said that she had asked HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) to suspend the recovery of overpayments where there is a dispute between the HMRC and the tax credit claimant.

Jobcentre Plus

The results of DWP commissioned research into the efficiency of Jobcentre Plus have been published. The research found that key services needed to be improved. "The provision of benefit information and advice, and the delivery of a meaningful and substantive work focus for some non-JSA customers were key areas for greater consistency."

The report can be downloaded from www.dwp.gov.uk/asd/

The Social Fund

David Blunkett MP suggested this month that the running of the Social Fund be handed over to voluntary or community groups! He promised an extra £210 million over the next three years, but added, "*In the longer term, we cannot stop there, but must look more widely at whether the fund should be operated by government or whether there is scope for greater partnership arrangements with third sector lenders.*"

The Commissioners' Office

The Commissioners' Office now incorporates Social Security Commissioners, Child Support Commissioners and the Pension Appeal Commissioners. The Social Security Commissioners have assumed jurisdiction for appeals against Pension Appeal Tribunal decisions and child trust appeals from the Appeal Service tribunals. The Commissioners' Office's address remains on the 3rd Floor, Procession House, 55 Ludgate Hill, London EC4M 7JW. www.ossccsc.gov.uk.

Shorts

Disability Rights Working Group

Next meeting

Thursday, 15th September
at Camden Community Law Centre
London NW5 at 2.00 p.m.

For further information please contact Jen
on 020 7387 8578

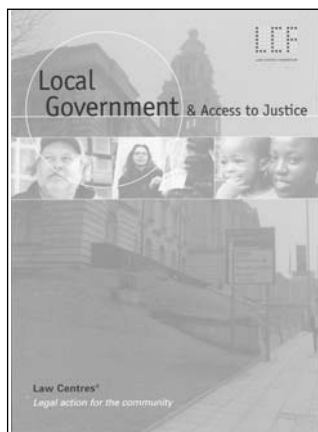
A Fair Deal for All

This is a new strategy published by the DTI to empower consumers. Key points include:

- * rolling out Consumer Direct, a telephone and internet advice service, across the country by spring 2006 to act as a single point of contact for consumer advice;
- * bringing in a clear single 'fair trading law' to further empower consumers by making it easier for them to understand their rights;
- * improving consumer protection by joining up Trading Standards work across regions, including establishing regional scambuster teams to tackle scams, with £1.5 million funding support, and,
- * making it easier for consumers to resolve problems by promoting Alternative Dispute Resolution services to avoid resorting to the court system.

The paper seeks to consult on amending part 9 of the Enterprise Act 2002 to make it easier for public authorities to release information to individuals and companies for use in civil court cases relating to consumer issues. It also introduces representative actions for consumers and the setting up of a new Consumer and Trading Standards Agency. One of the roles for the Agency will be to improve the performance of the Trading Standards Service, including the setting up of national minimum standards. The strategy is open for consultation until 31st October and can be found on the DTI website: www.dti.gov.uk.

New Leaflet



New LCF leaflet

“Local Government and Access to Justice”

Published: July 2005

The leaflet is a tool for Law Centres to introduce themselves to Local Government and new donors.

For copies of the Law Centre's leaflet, contact Lynn at the LCF at lynn@lawcentres.org.uk

ASBOs

In July the Youth Justice Board was reported that 700 young people have been jailed for offences involving anti-social behaviour order breaches since April 2004. Home Office figures show that the number of ASBOs issued to 10-17 year olds more than doubled from 514 in 2003 to 1,063 in 2004. A further study is to be published in the autumn.

Research conducted by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation suggests that the government should consider preventative action to tackle the underlying causes of anti-social behaviour. One of the authors, Professor Mike Hough, director of the Institute for Criminal Policy Research said the public wants, *"policy makers to balance tough enforcement through anti-social behaviour orders with strong, high-profile action to prevent problems and offer young people constructive alternatives to hanging around on the streets."*

Anti-discrimination and Relations with Civil Society

A new website has been set up by the European Commission on non-discrimination in the European Unit. It focuses on all aspects of the European Community Action Programme to combat discrimination and Community legislation related to fighting discrimination.

It also provides links to, and information on, agencies and bodies across the EU that can help both employers and employees to learn more about their rights and obligations in obtaining and ensuring equal treatment under European law.

Visit:

http://europa.eu.int/comm./employment_social/fundamental_rights/

Photocopier deal for LCF

Ethos Communications

LCF changed its photocopier supplier this year to Ethos Communications. They have supplied our head office with a Toshiba Studio 280 with finishing unit. The copier is linked into our computer network and has operated well in the six months we have had it.

Ethos sponsored LCF's conference last year. Carol Fowler from Ethos was going to attend the conference to demonstrate the company's products, but was unable to do so due to illness.

She assures LCF that Ethos will offer very competitive deals on new leases and can even in most cases save money on current photocopier leases.

If your Law Centres is contemplating changing your current photocopier it might well be worth contacting Carol.

Carol's email address is : carol.fowler@ethos-communications.co.uk or telephone her on 01245 392 164, mobile 07815 201 630.

Copies of Networking are on the LCF website: www.lawcentres.org.uk and go to Publications. A copy of this newsletter can also be emailed directly to workers and members of Law Centre Management Committees

Funding News

Debt Advice

The DTI is to launch a new programme of funding for face to face debt and money advice in England and Wales in the autumn. The £45 million allocated to the project will be paid over two years - £15m in 2006-7 and £30m in 2007-8. The long term aim is to provide a complete package of advice which increases the financial capability of clients *"decreasing the likelihood that they will find themselves in the same situation at a later date."*

The primary aim is to deliver an increase in the number of advisers, and in the number of hours of advice provided, within financially excluded areas and to disadvantaged social groups. In the proposed competition, the DTI are looking for proposals from partnerships of advice providers. *"These would show that organisations were going to be working together and achieving economies of scale and the benefits of collaboration. By this, we envisage partnerships of both large and small providers combining in regional bids - with a lead coordinating partner - to tackle their:*

- (i) areas of high financial exclusion and*
- (ii) disadvantaged social groups."*

The DTI has advised that advice agencies should give immediate consideration to this type of proposal, as bids from individual organisations are unlikely to be successful.

Further details about the project and the funding competition will be posted on www.dti.gov.uk they become available. You can email your contact details to f2fdebtadvice@dti.gsi.gov.uk to receive email notice of updates.

Comic Relief

Comic Relief has recently announced its funding priorities and funding cycles for the coming year. Refugees and Asylum Seekers are now one of the key areas of work for the next few years. Specifically they are targeting two themes with the Refugee and Asylum Seeking Programme:

- * Supporting Vulnerable Women
- * Building Community Links

Specific details can be found at: www.comicrelief.com/docs/grantapplications
Closing dates for the next two rounds are: 9th September 2005 and 13th January 2006

European Refugee Fund

Calls for project proposals were made by the Home Office this month. The Fund for 2005 - 2007 is administered by the Immigration and Nationality Directorate and funds projects *"aiming to provide reception services for asylum-seekers, including measures to support children and integrate refugees in the UK with particular focus on children and families."* Around £1.5 million will be available and must be matched with funds from non-European sources.

If you would like further information email sue.taylor15@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk. Applications must be submitted by email. The final deadline for applications is 9th September.

Consultancy and Training Fund

Charities Aid Foundation's programme this financial year focuses on a Consultancy and Training Fund and a Collaborative Fund. £1.2 million is available for the two Funds. CAF want to support the development of charitable organisations to make the most of their resources. They focus support on strengthening organisations by providing low-cost, high quality consultancy and support for training. They aim to provide a package of support that includes up to 20 days' consultancy with CAF Consulting and support for training costs. CAF will provide a grant of up to £10,000. Deadlines coming up are 30th September, 30th November and 31st January. The Grant Team can be contacted on 01732 520 334. For further information visit CAF's website at : www.cafonline.org/grants

ChangeUp

The Home Secretary has pledge £70 million for the ChangeUp programme to March 2008, on top of the £80 million already allocated to 2006. He also announced that a new agency, Capacity Builders, would be in place by April 2006 to provide leadership and co-ordination for work happening at all levels of infrastructure.

LAW CENTRES FEDERATION, LONDON UNIT

MANAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT TRAINING PROGRAMME LEVEL 3 (10 DAY COURSE)

The Law Centres Federation, London Unit has successfully teamed with the Directory of Social Change and the National Open College Network to develop an accredited Management Training Programme which will be made available from autumn 2005 to all London Law Centres.

The decision to implement the programme was taken last year following a review of the London Law Centres. The primary purpose of the Management Programme is to ensure that all Law Centres are equipped with core management skills to sustain their organisational growth and development.

The programme has been specifically tailored and designed to meet the training needs of individuals who currently manage or co-ordinate Law Centres or staff who are interested in management and wish to broaden their skills by receiving formal training and a recognised qualification to develop successful and confident working practices.

The course is intensive and highly practical covering the following essential topics needed to run an effective organisation:

- * An Overview of Management
- * Managing Staff and Volunteers
- * Communicating effectively as an organisation
- * Working with your Management Committee
- * Thinking and Planning ahead
- * Financial Management
- * Fundraising
- * Project Management/IT Strategy
- * Monitoring Your Progress
- * Managing Yourself

The course is heavily subsidised through ALG funding and candidates will only be charged a fee to cover running costs, these will be in the region of £250-£300 for the 10 + days. The programme is highly recommended and requires a commitment of either 1-2 days a week over a period of 6-10 weeks, this is dependent on applications. Places are limited and will be allocated on a first come first serve basis. The programme will also attract at minimum **40 CPD points**. For further information or to register an interest in attending the programme please contact **Minaxi Panchal** on **020 7255 9597** or e-mail : **minaxi@lawcentres.org.uk**.

Conferences

Human Rights Law Conference organized by Justice and Sweet and Maxwell. Speakers include Mrs Justice Cox who will deliver the keynote address, Keir Starmer QC, Lord Lester of Herne Hill QC, Richard Clayton QC and Harriet Harman QC MP. It takes place on 26th October at Church House, London SW1. £145 plus VAT for Law Centres.

For enquiries email: conferences@sweetandmaxwell.co.uk or call 020 7393 7859.

Racism, Violence and Human Rights. The conference has been organised by The Monitoring Group and takes place on 27th and 28th October at Friends House in London. If you pay before the 31st August the charge for two days is £70, thereafter £100. Accommodation is extra. Information on 020 8843 2333. The Monitoring Group is based at 14 Featherstone Road, Southall, Middlesex UB2 5AA. www.monitoring-group.co.uk.

Judicial Review - Trends and Forecasts Conference 2005 Conference organised by the Public Law Project and taking place on 12th October. The opening address will be given by Lord Justice Brooke QC. Speakers also include Lord Lester QC, Richard Drabble QC, Nigel Giffin QC and Amanda Finlay, Director of Legal Services at the DCA.

Developing Law and Justice Law Society Annual Conference and 50th Anniversary Commonwealth Law Conference taking place between the 11th and 15th September in London. £351.32 for one day. The Law Society Conference, Solicitors 2005 takes place on the 14th September. Information at www.commonwealthlaw2005.com

40 Years of Welfare Rights Conference organised by the Child Poverty Action Group to mark their 40th anniversary taking place on 8th September 2005. The keynote speaker is Prof. Peter Townsend. Fee: £85. Information can be obtained by emailing : jallen@cpag.org.uk

Training

Judicial Review and Social Security A course organised by the Child Poverty Action Group and taking place on 25th January 2006. CPAG has introduced two new courses : Tax credits: compliance, investigations, penalties and appeals and Council tax: protecting vulnerable taxpayers. For information about these and other courses contact CPAG on 020 7812 5217/5228 or email: training@cpag.org.uk.

The Disability Discrimination Act 2005: Delivering Equality in Employment? This seminar is being held on 15th November at the NATFHE Centre. London WC1. It has been organised by the Institute of Employment Rights and costs £45.00 for members. Information from Megan Dobney on 020 7498 6919 or email office@ier.org.uk or visit: www.ier.org.uk.

Mental Health and Housing One of many courses provided by Shelter and taking place on various dates in London and Manchester. £84.00 plus VAT for Law Centres. Call 020 7490 6720 for further information.

The Effective Supervisor 5th August in London. One of several courses provided by the Advice Services Alliance. Further information at www.asauk.org.uk/clsstraining.

Developing your negotiation skills and Developing your advising and interviewing skills. Two two-day courses provided by Shelter as part of their "Working with Clients" series and taking place in London. £224 plus VAT. Call 020 7490 6720 for further information.

Books

Community Care Practice and the Law by Michael Mandelstam and published by Jessica Kingsley Publishers for £39.95. Visit www.jkp.com or call 020 7833 2307.

Practical Monitoring and Evaluation £33.50 plus p&p Published by the Charities Evaluation Services. Information on 020 7713 5722 or email: enquiries@ces-vol.org.uk. www.ces-vol.org.uk.

Leaflets

Step by Step - How to make a complaint against the police. Leaflet published in different languages by the Independent Policy Complaints Commission. The Commission is based at 90 High Holborn, London WC1V 6BH. Contact details: 08453 002 002 (T) and www.ipcc.gov.uk.

State pensions for carers and parents (PM9) Guide published by DWP with examples of who can benefit from State Second Pensions. Copies can be ordered on 0845 7 31 32 33 or downloaded from www.pensionguide.gov.uk.

Reports

Bridging the Gap This report by the Legal Services Commission has found that members of BME communities were much less likely to take-up mainstream advice services than their white counterparts. The report can be downloaded from www.mewn-cymru.org.uk.

Making Partnerships Work This report by the Princes Trust with support from HM Treasury. includes a ten-step guide to building effective partnerships and suggestions about formal agreements. www.princes-trust.org.uk.

Helter Skelter: Families, Disabled Children and the Benefit System. This report by Gabrielle Preston from CPAG, launched on 20th July found that families with disabled children are susceptible to poverty because low income is compounded by high costs. The report investigates family's experiences of applying for DLA and how they use additional benefit income. Problems identified include lack of information about benefits and the lack of knowledge of officials making decisions which often results in benefits being downrated or removed.

Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman's Annual Report. This report showed that the Ombudsman had recorded an increase of 30% in the number of complaints made over the previous year. It states, *"Rising public expectations about the quality of public services, and increasingly well-informed users, mean that people are now more likely to complain if services are not up to standard."* The Ombudsman, Ann Abraham said that investigating complaints properly enables public bodies to learn from their mistakes and improve their services.

Law Centre Vacancies

South Manchester Law Centre

Housing Caseworker and Immigration Caseworker

South Manchester Law Centre has vacancies for an experienced Housing Caseworker and an Immigration Caseworker.

Both posts are long-term (at least 2 years) locum posts and are for 4 or 5 days per week.

Application deadline: 22nd August 2005

Salary: £23,368 p.a. (pay award pending) / 30 days holiday, flexible working hours

We are an equal opportunities employer.

Contact South Manchester Law Centre for an application form and information pack (state which post you are interested in) on 0161 225 5111 or email on admin@smlc.org.uk

South Manchester Law Centre
584 Stockport Road
Manchester
M13 0RQ

Luton Law Centre

Housing Solicitor

Luton Law Centre needs an experienced Housing Solicitor who is able to supervise a CLS Contract, and develop housing casework (CLS, Legal Aid and local authority funded).

Application deadline: 19th September 2005

Salary: £28,000 - £30,000 p.a. for 35 hour week.

6 weeks annual leave.

Flexible working arrangements, relocation allowance negotiable.

Contact Luton Law Centre for further details and application forms on 01582 482000 or email gsharp@lutonlawcentre.org.uk.

Barnet Law Service**Solicitor: Employment Law 3+ years PQE**

Barnet Law Service is a small, friendly, and forward-looking second-tier advice service, set in a peaceful residential area in north London. The Law Centre provides advice and representation in various areas of social law. An exciting opportunity has arisen with a vacancy for a full-time solicitor to work primarily on employment law and also to supervise the service. Must be 3+ years PQE, be IT literate and have knowledge of and experience in this area of law including representing clients at Tribunals.

Experience in Housing, Welfare Benefits or other areas of social law an advantage, as is experience in legal aid and LSC contracting.

Salary: £33,000 - £35,000 + p.a.

Contact Barnet Law Service for an application pack on 020 8203 4141 or email: bls@barnetlaw.co.uk

Administration Assistant

Administration Assistant needed for Barnet Law Service. 35 hour week. Typing, reception, organisational and IT knowledge and skills required.

Send CV to M. Sparrow at marilyn@barnetlaw.co.uk

Barnet Law Service 9, Bell Lane, Hendon, London NW4 2BP.

Tottenham Law Centre**Immigration Solicitor**

Tottenham Law Centre is seeking to appoint an Asylum & Immigration Solicitor who is dynamic, committed and has a good track record in LSC publicly funded work. Applicants must be accredited to LSC Level 2 Supervisor standard.

Experience of Community Care, Housing and Welfare Benefits law is desirable. The post is full time (35 hours p.w)

Application deadline: 31st August 2005 5.00 p.m.

Salary: £22,000 - £28,000 p.a. depending on experience

25 days annual leave (plus statutory bank holidays and 3 recess days).

Tottenham Law Centre is an equal opportunities employer and welcome applications from all sections of the community.

Contact Tottenham Law Centre for an application pack on tottenhamlawcentre@tiscali.co.uk

Tottenham Law Centre
754-758 High Road
London
N17 OAL.

LCF Staff

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