



## **Legal and Advice Services**

A Pathway to Regeneration

# LEGAL AND ADVICE SERVICES:

## A Pathway to Regeneration

A paper by the Department for Constitutional Affairs  
and the Law Centres Federation



*Community  
Legal Service*



LAW CENTRES FEDERATION



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## FOREWORD

Legal and advice services are one of the hidden success stories of the post-war welfare state. In my Tottenham Constituency I see every day the profound difference that they can make to peoples' lives. That is why I am delighted to introduce 'Legal and Advice Services – A Pathway To Regeneration', which sets out a compelling story about how legal and advice services can become an even more powerful force for social change over the coming years.

'Legal and Advice Services – A pathway out of Social Exclusion' was published in November 2001 as a collaboration between the Law Centres Federation and the Department for Constitutional Affairs (or the Lord Chancellor's Department as it was then). We have worked together again to produce this new document and were pleased to welcome the Legal Services Commission as a contributor to this new edition. I would like to thank everyone who has contributed to this paper.

In a sense, the collaborative approach to writing this document underlines the importance of one of its central messages: the value of working together. Real problems don't come neatly packaged up, and the document highlights the imperative for effective co-ordination and co-operation between government departments and agencies if social exclusion is to be addressed systematically.

The Community Legal Service (CLS) encourages partnership working between suppliers of legal services in all sectors, and the Community Legal Services Partnerships model this approach at the local level. The CLS relies on the support of a whole web of partner agencies, from other government departments, to local authorities, the Legal Services Commission, the Community Fund, voluntary and not for profit agencies and private practice solicitors. Without their support, we could not provide the comprehensive services needed to make a real impact on social exclusion.

The document recognises that effective legal services must be grounded in, and responsive to, the local communities they serve, articulating their needs and concerns, as well as promoting regeneration and development. It calls for policy initiatives at both central and local government level to be "advice proofed" to ensure that people have the access to the advice and support they need.

But the most powerful conclusion I take from 'Legal and Advice Services – A Pathway To Regeneration' is the enormous potential contribution that legal and advice services can make in tackling social exclusion. It provides many illuminating and inspiring examples of the practical ways in which the Community Legal Service is pursuing this through the work of Law Centres, advice services and other agencies, and through the dedication of the people that work in them. As much as anything, this document can be read as a

tribute to their efforts. I hope that their stories may galvanise government and service providers into developing new and proactive ways for legal and advice services to promote social cohesion and inclusion. Too often at present, legal services are seen as reactive, a way of solving problems once they have happened rather than a way of providing the support and social fabric that might prevent them from happening in the first place.

Addressing social exclusion remains at the heart of the government's agenda. I hope after reading 'Legal and Advice Services – A Pathway To Regeneration' you are as enthused as I am about the part legal and advice services can play in achieving that.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'D. Lammy', with a large circular flourish at the beginning and a horizontal line extending to the right.

**DAVID LAMMY MP**  
**PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY**  
**DEPARTMENT FOR CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS**

# An Introduction



The first *Pathways* document – ‘Legal and Advice Services: A pathway out of Social Exclusion’ – was published in November 2001 as a joint paper by the Law Centres Federation (LCF) and the Department for Constitutional Affairs (DCA), formerly the Lord Chancellor’s Department.

It was well received in both Whitehall and across the voluntary sector, showing, as it did, how the legal and advice sector underpins and supports so many aspects of the fight against *social exclusion*. It is also a tool to implement social change.

### Social Exclusion – a definition

In their report “Preventing Social Exclusion” published in March 2001, the Social Exclusion Unit defined social exclusion as “a shorthand term for what can happen when people or areas suffer from one or a combination of linked problems such as unemployment, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime environments, bad health and family breakdown”.

The first ‘Pathways’ document identified three areas for further action:

- To develop a set of **measurements** to be used to value the contribution of the Community Legal Service (CLS)
- To conduct a **survey of central government spending** on legal and advice services
- To ensure Community Legal Service Partnerships (CLSPs) form **strong links with other Government Departments** and programmes at a local level.



“For many years Law Centres have been providing valuable support to many of the country’s most deprived neighbourhoods and communities. Wherever Law Centres have been established they play a vital role in helping to tackle social exclusion.”

**Lord Goldsmith, the Attorney General.**

The first ‘Pathways’ document also helped to improve the access to advice providers to other Government Departments (OGDs), allowing them to explain the role that legal and advice services has to play in:

- tackling **Social Exclusion**
- assisting them to achieve their own **Public Service Agreement targets** to this end.

The interlinked nature of the problems associated with social exclusion mean a number of Government Departments are involved in tackling the issue. The **Social Exclusion Unit** (SEU), based in the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, takes the lead and co-ordination role. The Department for Work and Pensions has a fundamental role in dealing with long term unemployment. The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister is developing policies to improve social housing. The work of these departments and other organisations working in the field is underpinned by the services of legal and advice information agencies, including those provided by the CLS.

### **Working together**

Since the publication of the Pathways document, strenuous efforts have been made to maximise the potential of joint working between Departments. Some examples of the work currently underway are described in Chapter 2.

Much of this work has come to the fore through recognition of the rewards and advantages of closer co-operation. To capitalise on all such linkages, the DCA facilitates an **Inter-Departmental Working Group** as envisaged in the first Pathways document. Through this, representatives of ten key Government Departments are working together to identify areas of their advice services where there are overlaps or gaps.

## Inter-Departmental Working Group – the members

Department for Education and Skills

Inland Revenue

HM Customs

Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

Department of Trade and Industry

Office of the Deputy Prime Minister

Veterans Agency (Ministry of Defence)

Department for Work and Pensions

Department of Health

Department for Constitutional Affairs

Members of the working group have recognised that the range of services for their natural customers has expanded, due to the need to cover areas outside of the main departmental responsibilities. A clear picture of the extent and nature of these services is needed to better utilise resources, and to regulate and organise a **co-ordinated government response** to problem solving. A report outlining the group's initial findings was produced in Autumn 2003.

But there is still much to be done to ensure Government Departments become fully aware of how vital it is for people (especially those with multiple problems) to have regular and easy access to good quality independent legal advice and information. This awareness should contain an element of **capacity building** – an on-going process of continuous development and learning for people directly involved in this area of work. This process should be built into all social equity programmes, in order to break the mould of preparing elegant solutions and plans to relieve distress without proper thought to the advice services that need to be included. Local people need to be equipped and motivated to solve their own problems. This will enable them to be able to contribute to the regeneration of their local communities. Chapter Three gives further details on this issue.

## Regeneration

May be defined as:

*“the difference and improvement made to a community by the addressing of, and action taken to deal with, the underlying issues and concerns that contribute to its social, economic and environmental problems”*

Those working in the legal advice and information sector believe that knowing one’s **rights and responsibilities** and how to enforce them is a crucial (even essential) element in any programme trying to help the disadvantaged. This is why we are now strongly arguing that all such programmes – from whichever Department – should be **“advice proofed”** in the same way that policies are currently “rurally proofed” to ensure that policy is adjusted to take account of the circumstances of those it is intended to help. This means that all new central and local government policy initiatives should address the issue of how, where and when those affected by the changes will receive advice, guidance and appropriate training in order to receive the most benefit. It is now accepted that all Departments and agencies must work together in a joined up way to solve the problems of social exclusion. Universal access to high quality legal advice and information is fundamental to this **holistic approach** with the CLS and the partnerships forged from it as a major element.

At any one time almost one million people in public and private organisations seek help in trying to deal with problems that the socially excluded and marginalized face every day. These problems include the major issues of debt, poor (or non-existent) housing, inability to access the right benefits, mental illness, and worse still these often come in clusters making life increasingly difficult. We now know from the evidence provided by **the first National Periodic Survey of Legal Need** that as well as those already seeking help, another one million people with similar problems do not feel able to take any action to help relieve their distress. In the case of 250,000 of these people, they fail to take action because they are too frightened of repercussions from individuals or organisations impacting on the problem, such as their landlord, their partner, the police or the state.

## The National Periodic Survey of Legal Need 2003

This survey was undertaken by the Legal Services Research Centre and two of its main objectives were:

- To develop a greater understanding of advice-seeking behaviour; and
- To provide a broad empirical base upon which civil justice policy can develop in the years ahead.

Some of its key findings were:

- The belief that nothing could be done, fear of taking action and worries of damaging a relationship were more common than worries about cost.
- Justiciable problems do not occur in isolation and five problem clusters were identified.
- 1 in 3 of the respondents had experienced a problem which required (or could have required) a legal remedy in the previous three and a half years.
- Vulnerable groups experience more frequent and more serious problems than other respondents.

The CLS works to alleviate their distress, not only by helping those who request it, but crucially to make it easier and safer for those who are too frightened to come forward and seek the help they need. The survey shows **many people are not even aware** that a remedy to their problems does exist. The CLS and its working partners want to reach out to these people too. At local level, a key way of doing this is through CLS Partnerships and the implementation of their individual Strategic Plans. These plans examine and set out the priority categories of advice where this need is largely unmet.

### The role of innovation

In many areas local needs are being addressed by focused projects such as those funded by the **Partnership Initiative Budget** (PIB). Over one hundred and forty separate PIB programmes have been launched across the country. These ally local legal and advice providers to a wide range of other agencies. They seek fresh, smarter ways of informing individuals of their rights and enabling them to enforce these rights, and will test and pilot new methods of helping people to this end. The most successful ideas will be replicated elsewhere.



In response to the Government's Crime and Disorder prevention strategy, Oldham Council established a Domestic Violence Forum. The Forum aims to encourage victims to report domestic violence, and service providers to adopt a multi-agency response, to ensure that individual needs are met. It has four sub groups: training and policy, funding, children and ethnic minorities, and Oldham Law Centre convenes the latter. This group is working to raise awareness of the help that is available, in particular to illiterate and housebound Asian women. It works with local service providers to make services more accessible and has produced tapes in relevant languages to pinpoint where to find help, not only on domestic violence but also on the financial problems, housing and children's issues that may result from it. A key partner is the local NHS Trust who ensure the tapes are available in venues that women are likely to visit, such as doctor's surgeries.

## Partnership Initiative Budget – An example

Supported by the Islington CLS Partnership, the Islington Schools Advice Project was launched in January 2002 with PIB funding of £211,000. Working with school staff and parents, Islington Law Centre provides a housing and welfare benefits advice service targeted at low-income families in nineteen schools in the borough. This initiative has been particularly successful in targeting those groups or individuals who have not used advice agencies before. Indications are that 63% of users fall into this category, with 93% of users not having English as a first language.

The achievements of the eight Local Authority **CLS Beacon Councils** in raising both the standards of CLS organisational delivery and in promoting the CLS amongst other Local Authorities have been exceptional. They have also produced an information video to promote the role and responsibilities of Local Authorities in taking forward the CLS and how it can benefit both the authorities and the public they serve.

In the 21st Century, everyone should be aware of his or her rights and responsibilities or be unsure of how and where they can get the help they need to assist them in solving their problems. This help needs to be both reliable and of a consistently high standard and for this reason the **CLS Quality Mark** was introduced.

A major part of the CLS, the Quality Mark has helped to regulate the advice sector, giving it a common standard of operation to which organisations can aspire. It has also enabled funders, other than those in Central Government, to agree grants and contracts with a much greater confidence and assurance of quality. Detailed information on the various levels of the Quality Mark and the types of organisation involved can be found in Chapter 2.

As can be seen, significant progress has been achieved in the 2 years since the first Pathways document was published, but all organisations involved are aware that there is still much to do. The links already made need to be widened and deepened; and other links need to be pursued inside and outside Whitehall, around the wider voluntary sector and within Local Authorities.



Through its work with the local Community Legal Services Partnership, Leicester Law Centre secured a grant from the City Council to commission research into the training needs of workers (both paid and voluntary) in the community-based organisations who provide advice services to their user groups. The research identified a need for a standard training course, supported by placements within quality-marked advice agencies, to help increase the provision of advice services and provide a route into advice work as a career option. It also revealed considerable gaps in the provision of basic legal advice and information, particularly for the new communities within the city, and a need for funding to support the development of advice services tailored to the needs of these groups.

The Law Centre has now established formal training courses in welfare benefits, employment rights, housing and immigration which are delivered to paid and volunteer staff from local advice agencies.

It is hoped that this second Pathways document will not only celebrate what has been achieved by those who are committed to the growth and breadth of the CLS (these achievements are already considerable), but that it will also act as a plea to those who are not yet involved. Adding their expertise and knowledge to the 11,000 plus groups and organisations that are already helping to make life easier and better for those that need help can only benefit the individuals and communities concerned.

Details of the organisations currently involved with the Community Legal Service can be obtained via its website [www.justask.org.uk](http://www.justask.org.uk) and a list of key contacts is provided in Annex 1 of this document.



## Employment Outreach

The Employment Outreach Service being developed by Islington Law Centre as part of the council's neighbourhood renewal "Business, Jobs and Training" theme, brings together the Law Centre's specialist employment unit with representatives of the Chamber of Commerce, JobCentre Plus and the council's regeneration unit.

The project recognises the central importance that helping people to retain work has in tackling poverty and building sustainable communities and it provides outreach sessions in community locations across the borough to achieve this aim. The Service has a range of four venues every week including a library, community centre, the Islington African Project and Muslim Welfare House. It also includes weekly advice workshops at the new Goswell Centre and provides access to job search, training and advice in the south of the borough. Specific sessions aimed at people with disabilities run in partnership with Disability Action Islington. The Service is developing training, promoting good practice and offers workshops for individuals who want to represent themselves at Employment Tribunals.

# The Community Legal Service Today



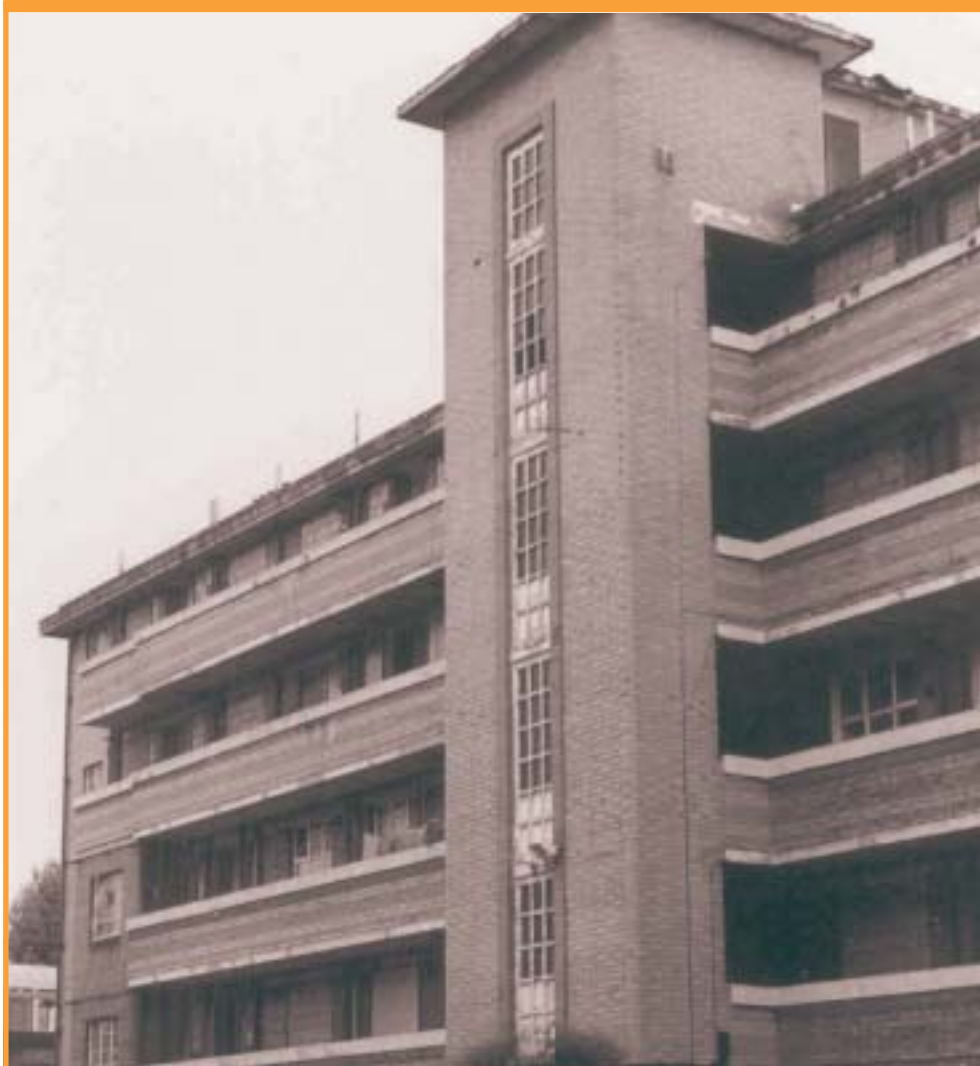
The previous chapter set out the need for legal advice and the role it can play in tackling social exclusion and regeneration. This chapter will consider the role that the Community Legal Service has to play in ensuring that this advice is dispensed to people who need it.

The CLS is a Government initiative which aims to improve access to legal and advice services, particularly among those sections of society most in need of assistance. The CLS is the statutory responsibility of the **Legal Services Commission**, a Non Departmental Public Body, sponsored by the **Department for Constitutional Affairs**. It works in conjunction with Local Authorities and other stakeholders.

Conceived in the context of policies on social inclusion and regeneration as described in Chapter 1, the main focus of the CLS is to tackle the problems that most impact on people's daily lives. This means advice and help on a range of areas of law such as:

- Housing
- Debt
- Welfare Benefits
- Employment
- Education
- Community Care
- Immigration
- Mental Health

These are sometimes referred to as the '**social welfare categories of law**'.



## Duty Solicitor Schemes

Coventry Law Centre is one of many Law Centres taking part in a pilot instigated by the Legal Services Commission to run duty solicitor schemes in County Courts to cover all housing possession actions. The Law Centre's housing team provide emergency advice and representation at the court for those without representation and facing a possession action by their landlord.

This scheme helps many clients who have particular difficulties, such as mental health, literacy and language problems or who suffer alienation from the legal process that prevents them from accessing advice at an earlier stage. These clients often have other related problems, such as changes in circumstances, housing benefit problems, unclaimed disability benefits, and multiple debts, that can affect the court's decision. The Law Centre is able to identify these issues and gain time to address the causes. Since the scheme began there has been a marked reduction in the number of suspended possession orders resulting in more clients being able to remain in their homes, a key requirement if other problems are to be resolved.

The CLS covers a broad spectrum of activity, ranging from the provision of **information leaflets** right through to **specialist advice and representation** at court.

The CLS Quality Mark was introduced to ensure a consistent standard of help is available to the public.

The Quality Mark (QM) is the accreditation that underpins the CLS and the Criminal Defence Service. It indicates to members of the public that they can be confident of receiving an assured standard of service.

The QM can be awarded at three levels reflecting the services provided and currently over 11,000 organisations (from lawyers to doctor's surgeries) hold the award.

### • The CLS Quality Mark – the three levels

- |                        |  |
|------------------------|--|
| <b>1. Information</b>  | <b>e.g. libraries, JobCentre Plus Offices, GP surgeries</b>              |
| <b>2. General Help</b> | <b>e.g. Citizens Advice Bureaux, student advice agencies</b>             |
| <b>3. Specialist</b>   | <b>e.g. solicitors, Not for Profit organisations such as Law Centres</b> |

In addition some Local Authorities and other funders now require advice agencies to hold the QM as a **condition of funding**. In its capacity as the funder of legal aid, the Legal Services Commission only contracts with organisations holding the Specialist QM.

One of the key requirements of the QM is for agencies to refer on clients they themselves cannot advise to another CLS provider able to give the relevant advice. Quality Marking gives them the confidence to do so and strong local **referral networks** are being developed by CLS partnerships as a result.

### Funding and Best Value

The CLS is an initiative in line with Best Value, with its emphasis on quality, value for money and evidence-based practice. A Best Value Performance Indicator (BVPI) has been implemented which seeks to ensure that Local Authorities concentrate their funding on advice services on those organisations who hold the CLS Quality Mark.

## Partnership and joined up working

*“Our vision for the Community Legal Service is founded on partnership. Working with others, we can gain a real understanding of people’s needs, develop high quality services, and ensure that funding is used to best effect in tackling social exclusion.”* Clare Dodgson, Chief Executive, Legal Services Commission.

As we saw in Chapter 1, initiatives are being set up at a number of levels to benefit those needing legal advice. The first Pathways document identified forging of strong links between the CLS and other Government Departments and programmes as a key aim.

The CLS aims to improve **access to justice** for the whole of England and Wales. As there are many important links between the CLS and other initiatives, the Department for Constitutional Affairs and Legal Services Commission have been working with central government and national and umbrella organisations to explore further ways of joint working at this level.

For example, partnerships are evolving in central government between:

- **Department for Work and Pensions** (JobCentre Plus and the Pensions Service). The London Region of JobCentre Plus has devised guidance for its front line staff on CLS showing how it can help remove the barriers that may prevent their clients returning to work. The LSC has also worked with the Pension Service to devise a suitable method for it to achieve the Quality Mark.
- **Department of Trade and Industry**. Together with the Legal Services Commission the DCA is working with the DTI in order to integrate the CLS into the DTI’s development of **Consumer Support Networks and Consumer Direct**. Joint working is also underway to explore options for a more unified system for the delivery of money and debt advice which incorporates a single **telephone gateway** through which people can access the most appropriate advice agency to resolve their problem.
- **Department for Education & Skills (Connexions)**. Joint pilot projects between local Connexions Partnerships and CLSPs include the Walton Prison Friendly Faces Project in Liverpool, where the CLS, Greater Merseyside Connexions Partnership and HM Prisons work together to help provide prisoners with access to guidance and support to help them with life “outside”.

- **The Department of Health, the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.** These together with Help the Aged, Age Concern and the Elderly Accommodation Council jointly worked on a booklet, "Housing Advice and Information for Older People" for front line staff and volunteers who work with older people.

In the legal and advice sector, collaboration with such bodies as the **Law Society, Legal Aid Practitioners Group** and **Advice Services Alliance**, plus 'user' representative organisations such as **Youth Access** and **Better Government for Older People**, has greatly enhanced joint understanding of the perspectives of different CLS partners.

### Regional and local initiatives

**Community Legal Service Partnerships (CLSPs)** bring together funders, providers and users of legal advice and information, usually configured in line with Local Authority boundaries. They typically include:

- The Legal Services Commission;
- Local Authorities (many with dedicated CLS officers);
- legal aid solicitors in private practice;
- Law Centres, CABx and independent advice agencies;
- organisations working for and with particular client groups, such as Age Concern, MIND and DIAL UK;
- funders and charities (such as Shelter, the Coalfields Regeneration Trust or Lloyds TSB Foundation); and
- community groups and users themselves.

### Community Legal Service Partnerships (CLSPs)

- **Over 99% of the population of England and Wales is now covered by a CLSP.**
- **It is expected that the Lord Chancellor's target of 100% coverage by Spring 2004 will be achieved.**
- **Nearly 83% of these partnerships have published their first Strategic Plan for advice services in their area.**



Streetwise Community Law Centre in Bromley works in partnership with key groups to provide an holistic service to young people by improving access to information, advice, casework and legal representation. Through these relationships the Centre is gaining recognition as a model for what can be achieved by developing “joined up” services.

The South London Connexions Partnership has been particularly active, investing in the Centre to help develop services and linking in other government departments and their agencies to ensure those aged 13-19 make a smooth transition into adult life. Streetwise provides telephone and email advice and consultancy to Connexions Personal Advisers and trains the Advisers on social welfare rights issues. It works with independent Youth Information Advice and Counselling Services to improve access to advice and representation services by undertaking appointments at the premises of partner organisations and providing second tier advice and support. Local hostel providers are offered talks and workshops and ad hoc advice surgeries for the young people who live there.

As part of Youth Action, the Law Centre is very much part of the Youth Service in Bromley – working alongside youth workers and receiving referrals from them. In 2003 they were awarded Partnership Initiative Budget funding to develop a full Youth Access Law Centre, and build up the capacity of local organisations to undertake advice and casework for young people.

The Strategic Plans produced by the partnerships map out the need for advice services in each category of law for the partnership in question. The plans highlight the current provision in respect of those needs and identify a list of priority areas where unmet need exists.

It is intended that these plans should feed in to community plans and the work of **Local Strategic Partnerships (LSP's)**.

In a similar way to the linkages formed at a national level by DCA and the LSC, CLSPs form linkages at a local level. These include joint working with **Consumer Support Networks (CSNs), Connexions** and **Supporting People**, an initiative of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister. Working jointly at a local level helps to ensure that the correct organisations are involved as part of the local referral networks for legal advice.

### Direct services to the public

In addition to numerous local services, led by CLSPs, there are a number of national activities designed to help the public directly. These include:

- The award winning multilingual website **[www.justask.org.uk](http://www.justask.org.uk)**. This allows users to search for information about legal rights provided by around 300 carefully selected advice and information websites, as well as giving on line versions of CLS leaflets and a directory of legal aid lawyers and advice agencies;
- The CLS Directory Line, a telephone service which holds information on local legal aid lawyers and advice agencies. This is of particular benefit to members of the public who do not have easy access to the Internet; and
- CLS leaflets on a range of topics including welfare benefits, debt, and employment.

### Access to information

While information and communication technology is seen as an important means through which governments can combat social exclusion, levels of access to the internet depend strongly on income. According to the Government's Expenditure and Food Survey (EFS), over the period January to March 2002 around 10.7 million households in the UK (42%) could access the internet from home. The survey also showed that people in the three lowest income groups had the lowest household access – between 11-15%.

This information illustrates that internet provision alone is not enough to address legal need for those most in need, so the CLS uses a range of other methods to promote its message, including one-to-one telephone advice lines and information leaflets.

## Legal Information Website

Coventry Law Centre's website, the first legal information site to receive the Legal Services Commission 'Quality Mark for Websites', is fully accessible to blind, partially sighted and other visually impaired users. It uses speaking browsers and specialist adjustments to enable them to access the site and view its contents. It contains information on contacting the Law Centre, how to get advice and details the full range of the Law Centre's leaflets. The Law Centre reports that use of the internet continues to grow, with the site demonstrating the role of technology in expanding the services and help necessary to overcome the barriers that disabled people face in accessing legal advice.



## Telephone Helplines

In 2001 Avon and Bristol Law Centre set up their telephone helpline to enable people to make direct contact with specialist advisers. There are help lines for each of their specialist areas of work and they provide a first point of contact for individuals needing legal advice. This service ensures that an ever-increasing number of people are able to receive assistance from advisers, something that would not have happened if only drop-in or appointment sessions were offered. It has proved to be a very effective use of the Law Centres' resources.

## The Legal Services Commission as a funder

### Contracts

The LSC uses the CLS Fund to buy legal aid services for the public under a contracting scheme. At present, the Commission issues the following types of contract:

- General Civil Contract – covering **Solicitors** and **Not for Profit** providers such as **Citizens Advice Bureaux, Law Centre's** and other independent advice agencies. The contract reflects the differences in the terminology and methods of delivery used by these types of suppliers.
- Mediation Contract
- Pilot Contract

To hold an LSC contract for funding, providers must have achieved the relevant level of **Quality Mark**. Taken together, the contracting and Quality Mark schemes enable budgets to be strictly controlled and help ensure quality of service.

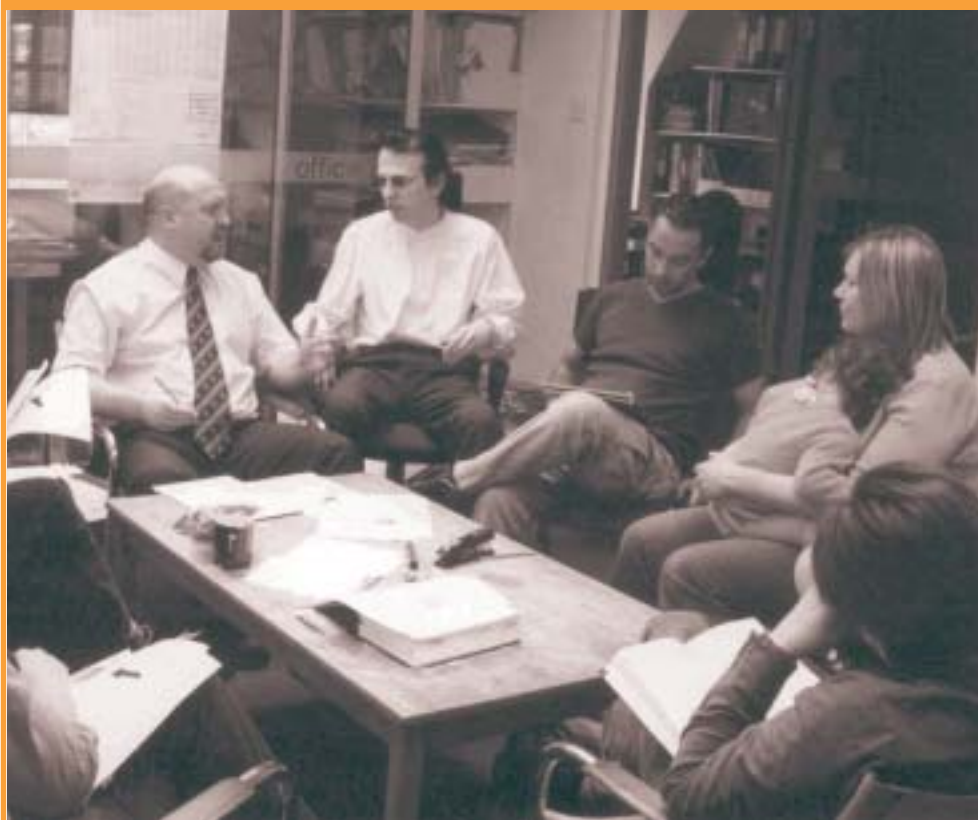
### Community Legal Service Partnership Initiative Budget (PIB)

As previously stated, more than one hundred and forty projects have been funded by the first two rounds of the PIB with a total value in excess of £20 million. Many of the Round One projects have been up and running for over a year. They are approved on a joint funding basis and will last for no more than three years in total.

The PIB focuses on getting services to priority groups and the Round Two projects specifically relate to:

- Community Legal Education Projects; and
- Projects that develop or promote links between Community Groups and Legal Advice Providers.

An example of a Round Two project can be seen in Chapter Three.



To coincide with the setting up of Brent's Community Legal Service Partnership (CLSP) the Brent Community Law Centre organised an advice conference. The conference, attended by a wide variety of local voluntary and community groups, elected delegates to sit on the steering group of the Brent CLSP to ensure that the interests of the voluntary and unfunded community sector were addressed. This conference highlighted the need for strategic planning in local advice services and resulted in the creation of the Brent Advice Services Alliance (BASA) to take this forward and to ensure that the work of the partnership would be directed according to the priorities of the community.

BASA works now as an information network; identifying and campaigning on issues of common local concern, instigating and participating in forums for improved local policies and practises, raising awareness of and responding to consultations and local initiatives. The Law Centre plays a key role in co-ordinating and supporting BASA, using its key position to keep the community informed of local developments and change. It also provides independent analysis and advice on issues and consultations as they arise.

The local community face overwhelming demands to participate in partnerships and meetings and give input into diverse and varied consultations. Properly funded and used to its potential, an organisation like BASA helps to give meaning to these consultations.

# A Pathway to Regeneration



Legal and advice services combat deprivation and tackle the processes and structures that can cause people to become socially excluded. They provide a service that is not just geared to individual needs, but one that is concerned with the economic and social health of the whole community.

The Community Legal Service (CLS) makes the road to **sustained renewal** possible. Legal and advice services provide the building blocks for this regeneration.

### Targeting Services for vulnerable people and communities

#### Barriers to Social Inclusion

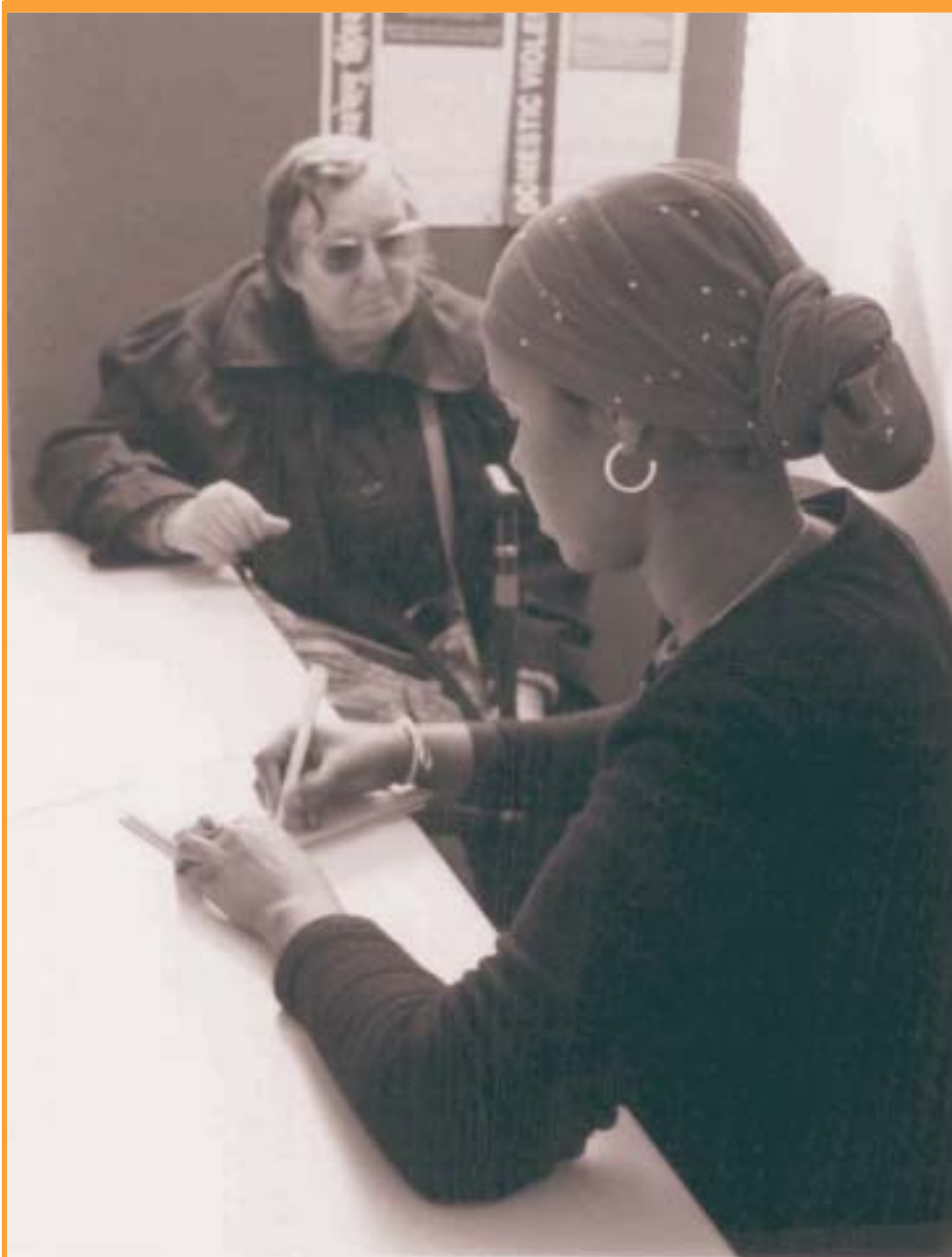
CLS partners and providers work with, and on behalf of, some of the most deprived and disadvantaged groups in society. Many clients are in poor health, suffer from mental disabilities or are disadvantaged by literacy or language difficulties. Users of advice services often feel disconnected from society, having experienced prejudice or discrimination.

Often the clients who experience the worst injustices and face the greatest problems are already the most alienated and vulnerable. **'In Too Deep'**, a study by Citizens Advice, found that nearly 40% of clients who sought help on debt problems felt that they could not cope, many reporting relationship breakdown, depression and feelings of isolation. One client reported:

*"My illness, depression and stress has been exacerbated by my debt problem. As a result I cannot get well enough to go back to work to earn money to pay the debt."*

#### Lifting the Barriers

Assisting people to resolve problems helps to remove the barriers that prevent people having the opportunity to participate fully in community life. Many people feel overwhelmed with difficulties – getting **independent** advice at the right time is a way out of the nightmare. It can be the first step towards feeling confident enough to seek meaningful training and employment and contribute to the social and economic well being of the area.



As part of the 'Supporting People' programme Law Centres are working with local hostels to provide general counselling and support to people who may be vulnerable because of age, mental health issues, violence in the home or illness. Support costs are paid from a central fund held by the Local Authority. The Law Centre also advises local supported advice providers on legislation in respect of housing and related benefits and this has led to a large increase in the amount of transitional housing benefit being paid and significant improvements in the services being offered.

**“Independent advice plays an important part in efforts to reduce social exclusion. Local area studies being carried out to inform the Social Exclusion Unit’s project on mental health show that people really value independent advice services. For some, they can open up opportunities that people were not previously aware of; for others they can provide guidance and support through complicated procedures, whether that be negotiating debt repayments, applying for welfare benefits or challenging eviction decisions.”**

**Claire Tyler**  
**Director – Social Exclusion Unit**  
**Office of the Deputy Prime Minister**

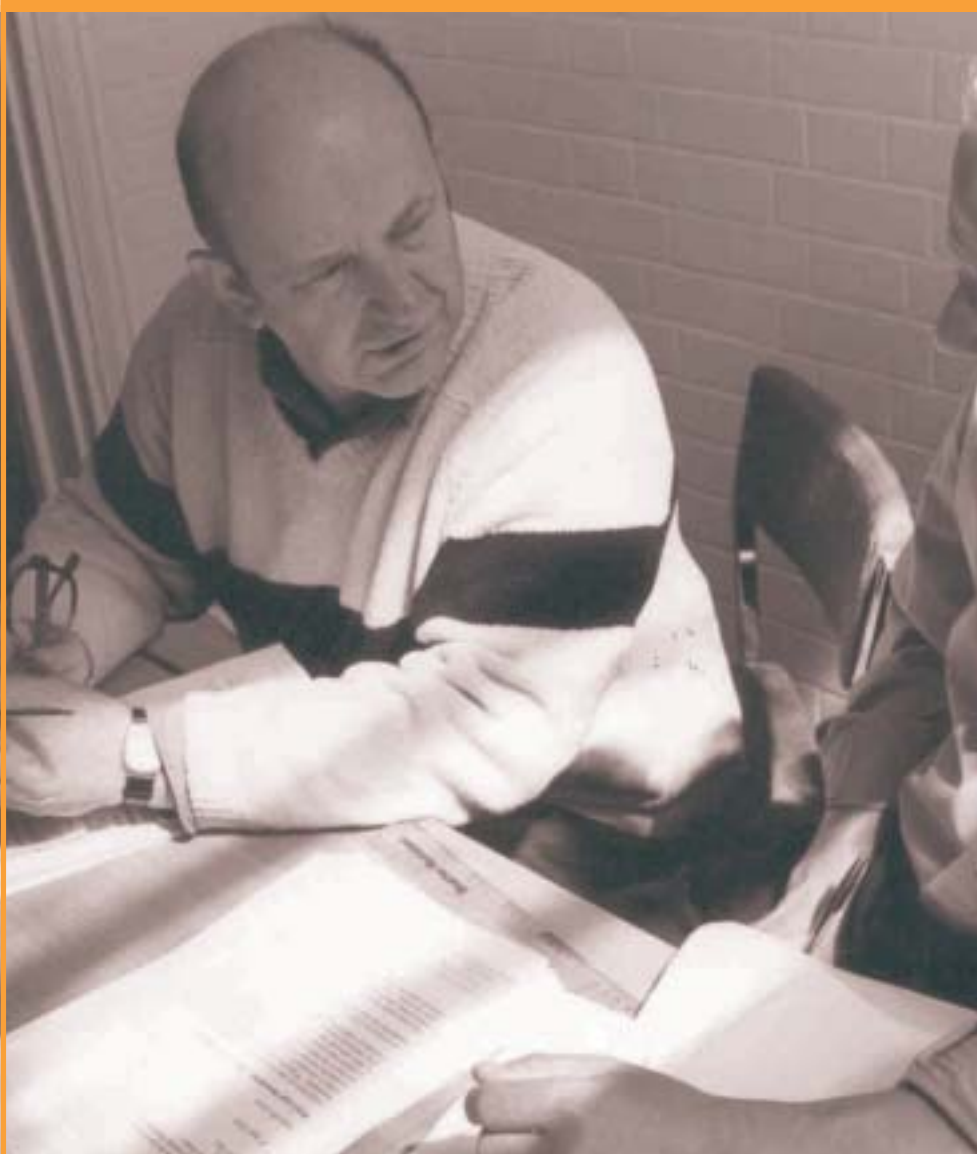
The CLS provides independent advice to help to:

- Manage and reduce outstanding debt
- Increase income by helping people claim benefits
- Improve opportunities to gain employment and remain in work
- Win redress for those experiencing discrimination
- Increase access to education and training and improve educational attainment
- Reduce homelessness and improve housing conditions
- Access help and support from social services, health and other public services.

### **Hidden Barriers**

The National Survey of Periodic Legal Need has shown that people often believe that nothing can be done to solve their problem or are unaware that there may be a legal solution. Law Centres see evidence of this on a day to day basis. One Law Centre manager observed:

*“Before anyone accesses legal advice they need to realise that they have a legal problem. This often happens without specific recognition on the part of the client: ‘someone at work is being racist to me’ rather than ‘I have a potential claim under the race discrimination legislation’. However, particularly when it comes to dealings with the state, many people think nothing can be done.”*



### **Tribunal Representation**

**Bernardo, a shop manager in a large retail chain, needed to take four different medications after suffering a heart attack, to enable him to conduct a normal and healthy life. Under the stress of an exceptionally heavy workload, he became breathless, experienced chest pains and had to take a special inhaler spray. To prevent this stress occurring he asked to transfer from his shop, which was one of the busiest in the company, to a smaller, quieter branch. The company refused to comply with his request and he eventually resigned. After taking advice he decided to pursue a claim for constructive dismissal and discrimination against the company under the Disability Discrimination Act.**

**Central London Law Centre took on his case a few weeks before the hearing was due and Bernardo was awarded a settlement of £23,000 and a “letter of regret” from the company.**

There are many reasons why people do not seek advice. These range from physical and language barriers to ignorance of the law and legal systems, ill health or lack of motivation due to feelings of helplessness or depression, or an inability to articulate the problem. Often the need for advice occurs when there is some kind of significant life crisis – divorce and relationship breakdown, unemployment, leaving or moving home, or retirement – times when people are least able to cope.

### Why people fail to seek help

The National Periodic Survey highlighted reasons for people taking no action to resolve their justiciable problem. Overall in 19% of cases no action was taken. However in five categories (mental health, medical negligence, police treatment, personal injury and domestic violence) 40% or more of the respondents experiencing the problem took no action. The belief that nothing could be done (67% of those with mental health problems), not wanting to damage a relationship or being too scared (25% of those with police treatment or domestic violence problems) were the major reasons for not acting.

### Reaching Out to the Community

Community based legal and advice providers aim to make their services as **accessible** as possible in order to encourage people to seek early help and assistance. They want to create access for all sectors of the community, for example those who share a common background or concern, age, culture, faith, or an issue such as disability.

Several initiatives are taking place to improve access with advice providers going out into the community to provide help. Specialist outreach advice sessions are held at neighbourhood centres, day centres, residential homes, youth centres and doctor's surgeries.

Access to specialist and general advice over the **telephone** is growing. This provides specialist advice to people when they need it, meaning that with just one call clients can speak to a solicitor or adviser who specialises in that area of law. In many cases problems can be dealt with over the phone without the need for an appointment or further help.



Chrissie, a single mother facing eviction, approached Brent Community Law Centre for assistance. Having been on benefits for many years she had returned the previous year to full time study to improve her prospects of finding employment. With the award of a student grant she applied for reassessment of her housing benefit. More than six months later her housing benefit claim remained outstanding and her rent account was in arrears by several thousand pounds. For many months she attempted to handle the case herself. By the time she arrived at the Law Centre she faced the loss of her home, was in massive debt, her relationship had broken down, her mental health was suffering and she was about to give up her course because she couldn't cope any longer.

Following the Law Centre's intervention the council agreed to move Chrissie to more suitable, affordable accommodation and her housing benefit was sorted out, enabling her to continue successfully with her course. Her housing benefit problems did recur but this time round she contacted the Law Centre at an early stage, enabling early intervention and protection of her new tenancy.

In other cases the problem is more complex and requires further assistance and possibly representation to be dealt with. Then the helpline allows the adviser to make a proper assessment of what the client needs and to make an appointment, an appropriate referral, or to give ongoing support and assistance by phone. This type of initiative is especially effective for rural communities where distance creates a particular barrier to accessing services. Recent initiatives in Norfolk, Northumberland and North Wales offering telephone advice services on debt, welfare benefits, housing, employment, immigration and education are taking this work forward.

### Stopping the Conveyor Belt

The ability of people to access early advice stops problems escalating or multiplying. Problems often cluster together – the emergence of a problem in one area of life leads to related problems appearing in others. The National Periodic Survey identifies five **problem clusters**, where specific problem types typically occur in combination. These include a family problems cluster (domestic violence, divorce, post-relationship and problems relating to children) and a low income housing cluster (rented housing, homelessness, unfair treatment by the police and being the subject of legal action). Access to legal and advice services can stop this conveyor belt effect and break cycles of disadvantage, helping to prevent exclusion being passed down from generation to generation.

Finding the ‘root’ cause is part of the **‘holistic’** approach taken by some advisers – one where the causes of difficulties are explored and different types of remedies discussed to find the most effective solutions. The underlying problem of school truancy for example, may well stem from family breakdown, arising from health problems, which in turn arose from unsafe housing or working conditions.

Generalist advice providers are needed to give initial advice and information. Crucially the network of first line advice agencies need access to specialist legal agencies to which to refer complex cases and obtain specialist advice, support and training.

## Opportunities for All

*“You cannot successfully regenerate areas until you have begun to tackle homelessness or problems of low achievement or problems at school. When people become social excluded not only do they often not know their rights and responsibilities, they often don’t know how to access help. It is difficult to regenerate an area unless there is good access to legal services.”* Barbara Roche MP.

One of the key roles of the legal and advice sector is their ability to ensure that the foundation blocks are in place for neighbourhood renewal. Ensuring that public services reach **excluded** groups is vital for the success of all regeneration programmes.

In their Quinquennial Review of Citizens Advice Bureaux the DTI made the following comment on the role advice services play in the modernisation of public services.

*“The CAB service provides advice by outreach or referral to specific groups of people who are clients of public services, for instance health service users, people referred by social services or the Probation Service, or people in prison. This seems likely to help these other service providers as well as the individuals concerned... Furthermore, because the problems people bring may be contributory factors in their ill health, social problems or offending behaviour, dealing with these underlying problems may also have preventative effect and so reduce the need for public services downstream.”*

Working with and on behalf of clients who have problems with accessing health or social services, education or decent housing demonstrably improves the standards of these services for all.

## Policies to meet Real Need

Individual casework highlights instances where local policies and practices are breaking down or failing on the ground. This knowledge can be used by CLS partners to work with central and local government and the private sector to help **target policies** and make them work, ensuring that rights intended by Government are reaching those most in need.

The legal and advice sector has an important role to play in helping Government meet policy objectives, such as increasing access to housing, healthcare and education, and the eradication of child poverty. The sector can also help Government initiatives such as **Sure Start** or **Connexions** work on the ground and play a part in the achievement of Government Department Public Service Agreement Targets (key result areas agreed with Treasury as part of each spending round). For example, legal and advice services have contributed to the **Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)** and the **Department of Trade and Industry (DTI)** joint target for increasing the employment rate, and also to the **Office of the Deputy Prime Minister's (ODPM)** target for decent social housing.

Advice agencies can help Government publish information and guidance that is most likely to meet the needs of vulnerable people living in deprived areas. In addition to the series of centrally produced CLS leaflets (as mentioned in Chapter 2) individual legal and advice sector providers produce a wide range of leaflets.

Advice providers have a vital role to play in ensuring that people know about government information and in directing them to useful sources of advice. The Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS) provides leaflets for employers and workers and have a range of advisory handbooks and leaflets. Advice providers can also refer employers to ACAS Equality Service, which advises businesses on a wide range of diversity and equality issues, or to one of their many helplines.

Organisations within the CLS aim to work in partnership with local government to help make policies and procedures meet community needs. For example, there have been widespread problems with the administration of housing benefit schemes resulting in many claimants facing severe delays before housing benefit is paid. Often tenants find themselves facing possession action before their claims are sorted out. Thus legal and advice providers offer help not just to the client. Community Legal Service Partnerships may have a role to play in bringing the backlog to the attention of the relevant section of the Local Authority. The continued development of legal and advice services is vital to keeping services **relevant** and able to respond to new and emerging needs in the community.



**Ms Chung's son suffers from Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder making him unable to concentrate and learn normally. He displayed disruptive and challenging behaviour, especially in classroom situations and she was keen for him to attend an independent school. The local council refused, giving him instead three hours per week of classroom support, not enough to achieve the improvements she had hoped for. She consulted her local Law Centre who advised that, while it was unlikely that his condition was serious enough to justify an independent school place, an appeal should go to the Special Educational Needs Tribunal. This challenge resulted in the County Council agreeing to double the amount of classroom support provided for him at his current school.**

## Capacity Building in Local Communities

The legal and advice sector helps build capacity for local people to engage with and participate in the decisions that affect the well-being of their communities. It does so in several ways, including:

- By directly involving the community in service delivery;
- By the approach taken to solving individual problems; and
- By supporting and working with local groups and promoting common issues.

## Involving the Community in Service Delivery

Most advice agencies in the voluntary sector are based in the community. They aim to be accountable to the communities they serve and almost always it is local people who are elected each year onto their management committees. This gives people valuable skills that increase their capacity to contribute to community and local life through their experience of running a voluntary organisation and by the skills they learn along the way. These skills are then cascaded into other areas of influence and can include:

- Acting as community representatives and articulating community concerns;
- As employers, understanding human resources issues and funding requirements;
- Understanding and implementing equal opportunities policies;
- A better understanding of legal issues and remedies; and
- A greater awareness of public services and democratic processes.

With these firm links in the community, legal and advice agencies have been able to build a relationship of trust.

## Working with local groups on common issues

Based in the community, advisers quickly become aware of problems as they arise on the ground. They are able to pick up on local trends and identify where **local policies or practices** are breaking down or failing. One effective solution is to use legal expertise to support groups and local networks that share problems. Examples include:

- Non-unionised employees being exploited;
- Tenants experiencing similar problems on a particular estate, or
- Health care services failing a particular group.

Working with others who share common problems can build up new links in the community and provide mutual support in the future should other similar issues arise. It can involve:

- Advice and education about the law as it affects them;
- Assisting groups to arrive at a consensus as to how their problems may be resolved;
- Investigating alternative courses of action; and
- Support and encouragement for the group to take action, including assisting in formulating collective instructions.

This work creates the channels through which the community can have a voice while the benefits of working in this way helps providers of public services and employers understand where their policies are failing. Consequently they can expand their knowledge of how the community reaches decisions and how changes can be made. It also enables local people to take part in the **democratic processes** and effect lasting change.

## Supporting Community Based Solutions

Access to justice is more than just access to the courts and the legal system. It encompasses a number of other distinct facets that are described in the following pages.

## Legal Education

Legal education forms part of the overall strategy to empower individuals and local communities. It helps to redress the balance between those who are articulate and able to defend their rights for themselves and those who have been marginalized in society.

Legal education makes people aware of what their rights are, how systems work and how the law directly affects their lives. It can give people confidence to deal with new problems as they may arise in the future.

Legal education programmes arise either from direct knowledge of the need for advice gained from casework, or from external factors, such as:

- The introduction and interpretation of new legislation;
- Responding to and complementing local and central government initiatives;
- Changes to policies, such as a local public housing tenancy agreement; and
- New issues arising in the community, such as access to health services.

Legal education covers a range of activities such as:

- Training for user groups, (lone parents, support organisations, Women's centres) and statutory providers (social services and housing departments, etc.);
- Targeted take-up campaigns for welfare benefits employment and other rights;
- Talks at schools, youth clubs, community centres, etc;
- Producing leaflets about the law on subjects most relevant to the local community;
- Making information available on the internet; and
- Contributing to local publications and newsletters.

Legal education was one of the two key themes of Round Two of the Partnership Initiative Budget, and there are many projects of this type that are taking place. Information is made as accessible as possible and tailored to meet particular community or statutory sector needs.

### **The Tamil Relief Centre – Community Legal Education Scheme**

**In Round Two of the PIB funding of £48,615 has been made available to provide legal education, information, guidance and practical support for refugees and people from minority ethnic groups living in North London. The project, led by the Tamil Relief Centre, provides an Information Officer to work in partnership with statutory, voluntary and community organisations to help raise awareness of local advice services amongst these socially excluded groups.**

### **Using the Local Infrastructure**

Many CLS partners work to build up links with those in the community who provide **informal sources of advice**. Tenants associations, community leaders, faith or cultural groups will often be the first port of call for the most marginalised in our communities. People who would otherwise be unlikely to access formal sources of advice, for example, because of language barriers or lack of confidence, are able to receive support and help in trusted environments.

Legal and advice agencies can offer groups:

- Support and guidance on good practice when offering advice to their members;
- Education and training;
- Interpretation and guidance on local policies;
- Specific advice and representation; and
- Assistance with constitutional and legal issues.

## Bringing Specialist Legal Skills to the Community

The skills and experience of community lawyers are vital to making the Community Legal Service an effective resource. The ability to represent clients in the courts and tribunals is an essential part of protecting and enforcing individual and community rights.

Law Centres and many other advice providers have had a long tradition of representing clients at tribunals. Priority is often given to discrimination cases and to those where the client does not have access to union representation or where the case is especially complex.

The ability to make legal challenges and to litigate is important, but is only one method legal advice agencies use to achieve a positive outcome. Cases against public bodies will often involve challenging the failure of systems and can often highlight problems which if resolved lead to positive changes **improving the lives of everyone**, both locally and nationally.

The Community Legal Service needs the support not only of the Legal Services Commission, but also of other Government Departments, Local Authorities and charities. With complementary funding, legal and advice services can represent vulnerable clients, work with public and private service providers and tackle the root causes of social exclusion.



Workers from a computer production company sought advice from their local Law Centre on their employer's right to reduce their working hours without agreement. The changes would effect some 200 production and assembly workers, 90% of who were Asian and spoke little or no English. They had been threatened with dismissal if they refused to accept the changes. The company had a poor reputation for industrial relations and the workers were not unionised. Many were too frightened to stand up to their employer for fear of losing their jobs.

The Law Centre wrote to the company management encouraging them to reconsider their decision, citing the impact of the loss of labour both on the work force, the company itself, and the local community. It distributed copies of this letter amongst the affected workers. Subsequent discussions with the company led to withdrawal of the proposed changes. To try to prevent a recurrence of the situation and its effect on such vulnerable workers, the Law Centre organised a joint meeting with union representatives. Following confidence building discussions with the staff, the majority joined the union and the company granted the union recognition.

### The Way Forward



#### What next for the CLS?

The CLS has already been cited as an example of *good practice* in policy and programmes in the Department of Work and Pensions UK National Action Plan on Social Inclusion 2003/5.

This good practice will be enhanced by a number of initiatives already underway which will develop the future provision of publicly funded legal advice and information.

First, the **Independent Review** of the CLS will consider how effective the CLS has been in meeting its aims. Conducted by Matrix Research and Consultancy it will report its findings in April 2004, focussing on three main areas:

- the effectiveness of Community Legal Service Partnerships
- the impact of the CLS to date
- the adequacy of existing management information concerning the CLS.

The recommendations of this review will inform the future development of the CLS to a significant degree, identifying areas for improvement and suggesting ways in which it can work better.

A second review will consider the effectiveness of aspects of the current contracting system. This Review (entitled the **Review of Demand, Supply and Purchasing Arrangements for Legal Services**) will cover issues surrounding supply, demand, contracting, remuneration and incentives and is due for publication in Spring 2004. The profitability of publicly funded legal service work, the number of firms seeking contracts and whether remuneration is sufficient to attract and retain an adequate supply of legal services in the medium term, will be among the issues to be considered as part of the Review. The Review will assess the future demand for legal services given the changes taking place in the justice system and the numbers of suppliers that will be required to meet identified demand. Finally the Review will consider the current purchasing and remuneration structures and assess whether they will be able to maintain the necessary level of supply.

A number of initiatives are in hand to encourage solicitors to become involved in publicly funded legal services for the first time. £1.5 million has been made available to encourage prospective practitioners by providing support for 100 training contracts and 100 grants for tuition fees. All 200 grants under the scheme (entitled '**Developing Legal Aid Lawyers**') have been awarded.

Of course, the CLS is only one source of advice available to the public. The Department for Constitutional Affairs is facilitating an **Inter-Departmental Working Group** on advice provision and its current membership is detailed in Chapter 1. Initially they will map out provision by, and on behalf of, central government departments, seeking to identify any gaps and duplications. This mapping exercise will adopt a customer focus, in line with government ethos of designing services around the needs of the customer, not the provider. The scope of the study may be extended to consider (for example) advice provided by local government and by the independent advice sector. The ultimate aim is to find ways that advice provision can be improved, specifically from the customer's point of view. The group has drawn up an initial list of areas where current advice provision could be improved.

An annual evaluation of the projects funded by the first two rounds of the **Partnership Initiative Budget** (described in more detail in Chapters 1 and 2) will be carried out by the LSC. The first evaluation took place in September 2003 and concentrated on projects funded in Round 1, many of which had been running for approximately 12 months at that time. This evaluation aims to identify the most successful; projects and consider whether (and how) parallel initiatives should be instigated in other parts of England and Wales where similar conditions exist.

DCA and LSC will continue to work closely with the **Neighbourhood Renewal Unit** to help smooth the way for the increased involvement of CLSP's in their appropriate Local Strategic Partnerships (LSP). This will ensure that advice services are incorporated into core Neighbourhood Renewal policies at a local level. A spin-off of this collaboration has concerned the Neighbourhood Statistics Website. The Neighbourhood Renewal Unit has funded the Legal Services Research Centre (via DCA) to produce datasets demonstrating the availability of advice services and the usage of these services, at local level. This dataset will sit alongside those produced by other government departments. Taken together they will form a valuable resource to service deliverers and policymakers alike.

## The Neighbourhood Renewal Unit

Part of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister this unit aims to tackle deprivation and exclusion by:

- **Attacking the core problems of deprived areas such as weak economies and poor schools**
- **Harnessing the power of all sectors to work in partnership**
- **Focusing existing services and resources explicitly on deprived areas**
- **Giving local residents and community groups a central role in turning their neighbourhoods around.**

The first follow-up to the **National Periodic Survey of Legal Need** will be carried out during 2004. The precise content of the questions are being considered currently. It is important for this second survey that many of the questions posed in the first survey are retained in order that comparisons can be made of the findings of the surveys and key trends identified. In the first survey people living in temporary accommodation were surveyed in greater detail; the sections of population to be selected for in-depth study in the second survey will be chosen shortly.

DCA has a place on the steering group of the Impacts and Trends project, which is being conducted by the **Social Exclusion Unit** (SEU). This study, aims to evaluate the impact of the range of current national policies implemented in order to tackle social exclusion. DCA membership of this group ensures that the part that legal and advice services have to play in tackling social exclusion is highlighted in the findings of the report and recommendations for future SEU activities.



### Advicenow

The Advice Services Alliance initiated the Advicenow project, which aims to develop learning resources on legal rights and responsibilities on the internet. Law Centre employment workers have contributed both their legal experience and training skills to create informative and interesting materials to encourage users to find out more about their own rights and to be downloaded by advisers for use as a training resource with other groups in the community. A wide range of topics affecting the working public is covered, such as holiday pay and contracts of employment. While the project is co-ordinated from London, its electronic nature has enabled advice workers across the country to participate.

### Conclusion



**The Community Legal Service is a key element in combating social exclusion and promoting the regeneration of deprived areas. The Government is aware that there is a need for even greater co-operation between its departments and key external agencies like the Legal Services Commission, local government and the legal and advice sector.**

This is because it is crucial that people have the appropriate advice and support which can help them avoid, manage and escape from social exclusion. Legal and advice services are fundamental to the creation of a rights based culture – they promote citizenship and encourage people to take part in the democratic process and promote access to justice in local communities.

They can develop capacity in the community and give local people a voice. They can build confidence, empower, promote independence and employability and help create and support cohesive, vibrant and inclusive communities.

This document attempts to illustrate and explore the potential role of legal and advice services in regeneration and social change. Consideration should be made as to how and whether these efforts can be mainstreamed and built into a comprehensive strategy based around joined up government.



# Contact Details and Useful Addresses

For further information relating to issues in this publication you may like to contact the people and organisations listed below.

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Website: www.citizensadvice.org.uk

## **Other useful website addresses**

<a href="http://www.connexions.gov.uk">www.connexions.gov.uk</a>	Website of Connexions – aimed at 13-19 year olds
<a href="http://www.dwp.org.uk">www.dwp.org.uk</a>	Website of the Department for Work and Pensions
<a href="http://www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk">www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk</a>	Website of JobCentre Plus
<a href="http://www.justask.org.uk">www.justask.org.uk</a>	Legal Services Commission website to provide information for the public on how to access quality assured providers of legal advice and information.
<a href="http://www.lapg.co.uk">www.lapg.co.uk</a>	Website of the Legal Aid Practitioners Group
<a href="http://www.lgiu.gov.uk">www.lgiu.gov.uk</a>	Website of the Local Government Information Unit
<a href="http://www.lsrc.org.uk">www.lsrc.org.uk</a>	Website of the Legal Services Research Centre
<a href="http://www.neighbourhood.org.uk">www.neighbourhood.org.uk</a>	Website of the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit
<a href="http://www.socialexclusionunit.gov.uk">www.socialexclusionunit.gov.uk</a>	Website of the Social Exclusion Unit
<a href="http://www.statistics.gov.uk">www.statistics.gov.uk</a>	Website of the National Statistics Office

## **Information lines**

For CLS directory enquiries: 0845 6081122  
For CLS information leaflets: 0845 3000343

# Glossary of Terms

### **Advice Proofed**

All new central and local Government policy initiatives addressing the issue of how, where and when those affected by the changes will receive advice.

### **Beacon Councils**

The Beacon Council scheme identifies excellence and innovation in local government and aims to share good practice so that local authorities can learn from each other and deliver quality services to all. Each year has specific themes. 2002 themes included the Community Legal Service. More information available on [www.idea.gov.uk/beacons](http://www.idea.gov.uk/beacons)

### **Best Value Performance Indicator (BVPI)**

BVPIs are national measures of performance by local authorities set by central government. It is one of a series of checks aimed at continuously improving local government performance through a programme of reviews and inspections that measure performance in exercising specific functions. There is a specific BVPI in respect of the CLS, measuring the amount that Local Authorities spend on quality marked advice.

### **CLS Partnerships (CLSPs)**

Partnerships bringing together funders and providers of legal and advice services who act together to improve access to (and delivery of) these services in their local community.

### **Connexions**

A service for young people launched in April 2001. It is aimed at giving 13 to 19 year-olds “the best transition to adulthood” and involves personal advisers going into schools, colleges and communities to steer young people towards goals and guide them to relevant services.

## **Department for Constitutional Affairs (DCA)**

Created in June 2003 from the former Lord Chancellor's Department and responsible for the policy elements of the Community Legal Service.

## **Inter-Departmental Working Group on Advice Provision**

Formed following the recommendations of the first Pathways document, this group of (currently) ten Government Departments aims, by working together, to identify areas of improvement to advice provision from a user's perspective.

## **JobCentre Plus**

An agency of the Department for Work and Pensions that integrates the work previously provided for people of working age by social security offices and Job Centres under one roof. This linkage results from the recognition of the role of benefit take up and employment in social inclusion.

## **Justiciable Problem**

An issue which may require a legal remedy, possibly including a court, tribunal or other hearing.

## **Law Centres Federation**

The LCF acts as the co-ordinating body and a voice for individual Law Centres, encouraging the development of publicly funded legal service for the most disadvantaged in society.

## **Legal Services Commission**

An executive non-departmental public body created under the Access to Justice Act 1999 to replace the Legal Aid Board. It is responsible for the development and administration of the Community Legal Service and the Criminal Defence Service.

## **Local Strategic Partnerships**

Overseen by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM), these partnerships bring together the public and private sector with voluntary, business and community groups with the aim of finding local solutions to local problems in the regeneration of deprived neighbourhoods.

## National Periodic Survey of Legal Need

A survey conducted by the Legal Services Research Centre to determine, by public response, an understanding of advice seeking behaviour. The information obtained will be used to inform the development of future civil justice policy. The full report will be published by the end of 2003. The first follow up survey will be conducted in 2004.

## Neighbourhood Renewal Unit

Government programme overseen by the ODPM, charged with implementing the Neighbourhood Renewal strategy, the Government's plan for regenerating deprived parts of the country. Its aim is to ensure that within 10-20 years no one should be seriously disadvantaged by where they live. (*see also Local Strategic Partnerships*).

## Outreach

Initiatives to provide advice to the public in venues more closely suited to their needs e.g. community centres, health centres, schools.

## Partnership Initiative Budget

This budget, part of the Community Legal Service Fund, enables the development of innovative new projects that have a direct impact on peoples access to advice and information in local priority need areas.

## Public Service Agreement Targets (PSAs)

As part of the spending review systems all Government Departments agree to a set of objectives and targets with HM Treasury known as Public Service Agreement Targets as part of their financial settlement. These targets link department budgets to performance of key priorities.

## Rurally Proofed

The process of subjecting existing and proposed policies and practices to audit in respect of their impact on people on low incomes in rural areas. This policy is the responsibility of the Countryside Agency.

## **Social Exclusion Unit**

Set up by the Prime Minister in December 1997 to help reduce social exclusion by producing “joined-up solutions to joined-up problems”. The SEU works with Government Departments to research, implement and promote policies that tackle social exclusion and poverty. It is part of the ODPM.

## **Strategic Plans**

Long-term planning to combat issues specific to local circumstances. In a CLS context, these are plans drawn up by each CLSP to set out the priorities from provision of advice in their locality.

## Further Reading

The following publications give further understanding and background to the issues raised in this document. Further information can be found at the websites indicated.

### **'In too Deep' – Citizen Advice May 2003**

[www.citizensadvice.org.uk/policy](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/policy)

### **Citizens Advice Annual Report 2002/3**

[www.citizensadvice.org.uk/publications/ihtml](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/publications/ihtml)

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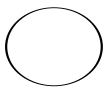
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