

Dear XX MP,

I am emailing you to seek your urgent support in responding to a current consultation about proposed funding changes to (Criminal) Legal Aid,

I hope that you agree that it is important to ensure that all citizens have an equal opportunity for properly funded representation, regardless of ability to pay. People accused of criminal offences risk their reputations and livelihoods as well as their liberty, and just as they are prosecuted by the State so they should (subject to means) be defended with State support to ensure justice prevails with a fair hearing.

Of course we are going through a difficult time in balancing budgets, but despite this Political Parties have made positive ongoing commitments toward the NHS, and in a democratic society many would say that it is as important to commit to supporting Legal Aid, a part Of the welfare State that is substantially cheaper compromising only a tiny portion of public expenditure.

Our Criminal Justice system has sustained substantial cuts for many years and is now under threat from further proposed funding changes devised by the a ministry of Justice (MOJ) which are the subject of consultation.

### The Consultation

You may have heard that the Ministry of Justice recently conducted a consultation into their proposed changes, which was found by the High Court to be fundamentally flawed and "so unfair as to result in illegality". As a result they have been forced to consult again.

<http://www.legalvoice.org.uk/2014/09/22/so-unfair-as-to-result-in-illegality-justiceontrial-report/>

It was also discovered the MOJ had with-held crucial evidence which shows (as did some of the disclosed evidence) that their proposals are unworkable.

Now a new consultation is taking place with an unfeasibly short time-table of three weeks to respond, with the deadline being midnight on 15th October.

The consultation has every appearance of being a "sham" with the MOJ "ticking the box" to show they have consulted, before ignoring the consultation responses to railroad through their disastrous proposals as soon as possible. However, I hope that a strong response may lead the MOJ to think again, and our prospects of success are higher if we can demonstrate broad support, and particularly so if there are Parliamentary concerns raised about the current proposals.

### My plea for your support

My purpose in writing to you therefore is to ask for your support by either responding to the consultation or writing to the MOJ stating that you have concerns about the current proposed changes which should be dropped or delayed until after the Election allowing time for more considered and sustainable Proposals on funding to be considered.

A useful summary of the evidence relied on by the MOJ, and the need for a strong response, is in this article by experienced solicitor (and former LCCSA president) Paul Harris:-

<http://reality-of-bvt.blogspot.co.uk/2014/10/the-tuesday-truth.html>

### Option A Responding to Consultation

Although the consultation is aimed primarily at practitioners and may appear to require knowledge of current business practices within legal aid practice, there is no exclusivity of consultee.

By responding through the CLSA/LCCSA hub here:- <https://www.lccsa.org.uk/transforming-legal-aid-crime-duty-contracts-consultation/> you will find useful notes which can inform your answers, and there is no requirement to respond to all questions.

*By replying through the hub, legal aid representative bodies (LCCSA and CLSA) will know you have responded, and will tweet your support to their followers, as well as making sure members in your constituency know of your support.*

### Option B Responding by Letter or email

Alternatively, you may prefer to simply raise concerns about any of the following:-

The short consultation process following the Judicial Review

The unseemly haste with which the current proposals are being forced through

The real prospects of legal aid firms in your constituency collapsing if the reforms are carried through

The impact on justice and risk of miscarriages of justice if costs are further driven down leading to a decline in quality representation.

Such an email should be sent to [LegalAidReformMoJ@justice.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:LegalAidReformMoJ@justice.gsi.gov.uk)

(If possible, please put in the header "consultation response:-Transforming Legal Aid:Crime Duty Contracts"

*Please copy me into your email, and I will ensure that all the members of the representative bodies (LCCSA and CLSA) in your constituency are advised of your support.*

I am happy to provide any further information you may require, or you can contact the LCCSA direct for further material or to arrange a personal briefing via their website [www.lccsa.org.uk](http://www.lccsa.org.uk)

I take this opportunity to thank you for any support you can offer to Legal Aid, and I look forward to receiving your prompt reply.

Yours sincerely

\*\*\*\*\*