

2nd July

Dear Mr Gove

We write further to your letter dated the 30th June 2015 which we acknowledged by letter the same day.

We write to urge you to consider an urgent meeting with us.

We have always been concerned that the decision made by you (announced on the 10th June 2015) was done in haste. The simple fact of the matter is that at the time of the announcement you had been in post for less than four weeks and we are sure that you had many other more pressing matters with which to deal before turning your attention to the issue of criminal legal aid. With great respect there could not possibly have been sufficient time for you to have fully understood what is after all a very complex issue.

The only people capable of correctly advising you about the genuine effect of such cuts would be the grass roots solicitors themselves and the government's own experts. Within your four week tenure you have spent approximately sixty minutes with us and some time with others. We understand that there has been more than one meeting with the CBA/ Bar Council/ Circuit Leaders. Once again with respect whilst they might be well informed within their own limited field of advocacy they genuinely have no insight into the running of solicitors firms, the economics or the practicalities and in many cases only a limited understanding of the job we do. We are concerned that the decision to cut has been made on the basis of information that is either inaccurate or irrelevant. We have made this point before in our previous letters however make no apology for repeating the same.

We write again to re-enforce the point having read your letter dated the 30th June 2015 which contains a significant error. You refer to "the decision to implement the second 8.75% fee LGFS fee reduction." ( sic ) This is not an accurate reflection of the Statutory Instrument that you have put before parliament. Indeed the suggested cuts are far more damaging than that. It is perhaps this misconception that has led you to believe that the market could sustain such a cut. It is also unsurprising that you make that mistake when you consider that the Chair of the Criminal Bar Association made an identical error in a publicised piece the very next day. A substantial error by you both. It is, however, one that highlights a complete misunderstanding but yet goes some way to evidence the fact that you have not yet had time to explore alternative options prior to considering the effect of the cuts. We doubt whether you have had the opportunity to consider what effect the cuts will have and so it might assist you to consider the following information;

<https://www.lccsa.org.uk/the-new-contract-fees-considered-the-real-cost-of-the-cuts-steven-bird-birds-solicitors/>

We really do wish to meet with you and hopefully assure you that our offer to assist you is genuine. However we simply cannot engage whilst this latest cut is in force.

Yours sincerely

Bill Waddington and Jon Black