

Update following DSCC problems

A meeting took place yesterday afternoon with the LAA and a representative from the new DSCC provider HGS was in attendance.

It was a productive meeting in which the LAA acknowledged that the standard of service from the DSCC over the last week or so had not been acceptable and that lessons must be learnt about the lack of advance communication with the profession.

An explanation was given as to how the problems came about both from the LAA and HGS's perspectives and they outlined what has now been put in place to ensure the service meets the required standards.

A combination of unanticipated IT complexities, under-estimating the staffing levels required and the number of likely calls to be received in the transition period between companies appears to have caused the problems. The bulk of the delays stemmed from a "manual" contingency process put in place whilst the internal and external IT systems were being moved over.

Extra provision has been put in place from Monday (02.09.19) and for the rest of this week, and a training review is taking place imminently to identify common issues and provide extra training to call staff. The LAA will keep performance under close ongoing view until the service level agreements are consistently being met.

The Practitioner Groups have also been invited to attend the Call Centre locations and to meet the staff to share knowledge and experience of the work that we do.

With regards to billing, you will be able to bill cases without a DSCC reference number for all matters between 26.08.19 and 30.08.19.

If the outage has had a knock-on effect on your firm's SMP, 14 hours compliance or police station attendance compliance, the LAA has confirmed they will take a proportionate and reasonable approach over this time period. We suggest you keep clear records for audit purposes.

The DSCC should be answering calls on average within 30 seconds and deploying cases to us within 5 minutes in 95% of cases. If you continue to experience lengthy waits on hold or delays in deployment, please continue to raise these as complaints – see complaints procedure below.

The Website is now up and running. Please note that old bookmarks will not work and there may be some teething problems with some web browsers. This is being looked into.

Complaints:

Complaints already made:

Complaints already made via the dsc.enquiries@teamhgs.com email address or via us where a DSCC reference number was provided have been shared with the DSCC operational team for investigation. A Response should be received within the next fortnight.

Complaints without a specific reference number will be reviewed to identify general themes for training and improvement moving forwards.

Ongoing Complaints from now:

A dedicated separate complaints email address will be created imminently. We will share this with Members as soon as it is received. In the meantime, please follow the following procedure:

In the first Instance:

Raise immediate issues with a Supervisor if the call handler is not able to resolve.

To make a written complaint, please email dscce.enquiries@teamhgs.com putting "Complaint" in the subject heading and providing the DSCC reference number. You can also raise a complaint by telephone on 0345 543 8910.

To escalate the matter to the LAA, this can be done through your Contract Manager.

Any specific complaint regarding maladministration by the LAA can be made through the usual Ex-Gratia claims process, outlined at <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/legal-aid-agency/about/complaints-procedure>

Kerry Hudson

LCCSA Vice President