



Ministry
of Justice

Alex Chalk MP
Parliamentary Under-
Secretary of State for
Justice

Sir Robert Neill MP
Chair of Justice Select Committee
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

MoJ ref: TN82692

29 October 2020

Dear Sir Robert,

MINISTRY OF JUSTICE FUNDING FOR NOT-FOR-PROFIT PROVIDERS OF LEGAL ADVICE

I wrote to you at the start of Covid-19, to let you know about £5.4m Ministry of Justice secured to support not-for-profit providers of specialist legal advice throughout the pandemic. This letter provides an update on the progress of this funding.

To expedite its delivery, funding was split between the Law Centres Network and the Access to Justice Foundation's Community Justice Fund. These organisations have since been distributing it to the frontline organisations that need it, and we delivered the final payment to the Access to Justice Foundation's Community Justice Fund grant on the 28 September. I am pleased to report that 65 eligible advice providers have received grants through this scheme so far, and the Community Justice Fund has supported many more besides this.

I recently met with two recipients of the Covid-19 Specialist Advice Service Support grant, Shelter Cymru and South Wales Law Centre to discuss how the grant has helped them deliver services during the pandemic. I was impressed with the dedication of staff I met with and the way they had continued to support people during the crisis.

Shelter Cymru received a total of £83,881 from the Access to Justice Foundation's Community Justice Fund and reported that monies received from Ministry of Justice's fund has helped them to mitigate loss of income since 1st April and keep their services at full capacity. Allowing people in Wales to access specialist housing advice and legal representation during the pandemic, especially in areas where they are the only provider.

South Wales Law Centre reported that monies received from Ministry of Justice's fund, has helped staff to work effectively, securely and comfortably from home following investment in IT infrastructure, including laptops and smart phones. It has Increased accessibility through extended opening hours for phone enquiries and advice via email and webchat. Administration tools to support advice services were developed and additional training was provided to upskill staff in response to shifting demand.

In addition, South Wales Law Centre was able to prepare their premises for re-opening to the public, investing in the equipment and supplies necessary to ensure COVID security for staff, volunteers and clients.

The Covid-19 Specialist Advice Service Support grant has helped the not-for-profit advice sector organisations in local communities across the country to continue to provide crucial support in helping people resolve their legal problems by enabling them to address immediate cashflow issues and to adapt their services to social distancing restrictions. We will continue working with our sectoral stakeholders to monitor the pandemic's continuing impacts on advice sector going forward.

I thank you for your interest in this area, and I hope this update was useful.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alex Chalk'.

ALEX CHALK MP