Justice Committee

Friday, 12 June 2026

Sarah Sackman KC MP
Minister of State for Courts and Legal Services
By email only

Additional written evidence relating to 9 June oral evidence session

Dear Sarah,

The Justice Committee is grateful for the oral evidence you provided on 9 June 2026 in relation to our access to justice inquiry. We also thank your officials, Jane and Farah, for their time and contributions.

The Committee would like to request some follow-up written responses, both in relation to points where we think there are still gaps in the evidence, and points which we did not have time to cover fully in oral evidence. These are set out by subject below:

1. Criminal duty solicitor schemes

a. Regarding crime duty solicitor schemes, we cited data around the decreasing numbers of active duty solicitors, and whether recent increases in certain legal aid fees had had an impact on arresting this decline. Could we please clarify:
    1. Whether the MoJ or LAA has undertaken any modelling or workforce planning regarding the number of active duty solicitors which are required to ensure consistent national coverage?
    2. Jane told us that there had been a small increase in crime providers following the uplift. Is there available information on numbers of active duty solicitors and whether this decline has been stabilised?
    3. Can you confirm the current duty solicitor coverage by scheme, including where duty solicitors have arrangements to cover neighbouring schemes, or where schemes have been merged due to limited duty solicitor numbers?

2. Legal aid contract coverage

a. In oral evidence, Jane represented that there were 21 areas with no housing or debt provision, and Jane represented that there were 9 areas in family with a shortfall. Could you please provide up-to-date information, for all areas of law, on which procurement areas do not meet minimum provision requirements?

House of Commons
Palace of Westminster
London
SW1A 0AA

Justice Committee

3. Government funded training

a. In oral evidence, you referred to initiatives to help grow the legal aid provider base, both in the criminal context through 100 match funded pupillages, and in the civil context through trainee schemes funded through the Legal Aid Agency. Could you please clarify:
    1. For the match funded pupillages: how much funding has been allocated; what is the amount match funded per pupil; is MoJ funding directly with specific chambers or through the Inns of Court; how is it distributing the funding (e.g. geographically, etc.); and what is the intake year of the funded cohort?
    2. For the trainee schemes: how much funding has been allocated; how many trainees will be funded; and how is the funding distributed (e.g. geographically, by area of law, etc.)?

4. Legal Aid Agency cyber attack

a. We have heard substantial evidence during our inquiry of the impact ongoing contingency measures, and associated additional unpaid work, have had on legal aid providers. What monitoring is either the MoJ or LAA doing on how this is impacting both legal aid provision and provider sustainability?
b. It has been represented to the Committee that LAA's lack of contingency planning worsened the impact of the cyber attack, since processes and workarounds had to be devised on the fly. What assurance can the LAA provide that it now has sufficient contingency plans in place if further incidents were to occur?

We look forward to receiving your response. Could I please ask for a response to these questions by **Thursday 25 June?**

Yours sincerely,

Andy Slaughter MP

Chair, Justice Committee

House of Commons
Palace of Westminster
London
SW1A 0AA