



Justice Committee

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The Right Honourable Dominic Raab MP
Deputy Prime Minister
Lord Chancellor & Secretary of State for Justice

By email only

16 November 2021

Dear Dominic,

Thank you for your letter dated 2 November responding to the Committee's report on the Future of Legal Aid. We are also grateful to you for sending through the Memorandum, which we have now published as the Committee's Fourth Special Report of this session.

We appreciate that a number of significant reviews on legal aid have not yet published their final reports: Sir Christopher Bellamy's report for the Criminal Legal Aid Independent Review (and the Government's response), the internal review of the sustainability of civil legal aid and the review of the Legal Aid Means Test. We recognise that the fact that these reviews have not been published to some extent constrains the Government's ability to respond to the 43 conclusions and recommendations in our report. However, given that the Committee's report was published on 27 July, we are disappointed that your department has sent us a response which contains so little substance.

We recognise that the Government is expected to respond to Select Committee reports within two months of their publication, and should consult the Committee should they need an extension to that deadline. In the future, in situations where the Committee has reported on a subject where the Government is awaiting the publication of another review or report, we should be willing to agree to a reasonable extension to the deadline to allow it to substantively respond to our conclusions and recommendations rather than send through a holding response. We should not, of course, wish to extend indefinitely, and I have written to you separately about the continued delay in providing a full response to the 2019 Committee's Report on Bailiffs.

In relation to this response, we ask that the Government commit to sending a further response to our Report once the Independent Review of Criminal Legal Aid (and the Government's response) and the review of the Legal Aid Means Test have been published. We will also be asking the Ministers responsible for legal aid, Lord Wolfson of Tredegar QC and James Cartlidge MP to give evidence to the Committee in January to speak to the Government's response.

Yours sincerely,

Sir Robert Neill MP

Chair
Justice Committee