



Ministry
of Justice

Alex Chalk MP
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of
State for Justice

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

MoJ ref: Sub 77602

23 April 2020

Dear Bob,

LAUNCH OF £3.1 MILLION LEGAL SUPPORT FOR LITIGANTS IN PERSON GRANT

I am pleased to inform you that a new two-year grant, which will invest £3.1m in support for litigants in person has now got underway. The commencement of the new grant is part of the vision set out in the Legal Support Action Plan to strengthen the breadth of support to people accessing the justice system, and look at different ways of intervening earlier to prevent their problems from escalating.

The Action Plan initially aimed to increase funding to the Ministry of Justice's (MoJ's) existing Litigants in Person Support Strategy (LIPSS), which has already provided close to £8m of funding for organisations providing services to litigants in person since 2015. The Action Plan's commitment was to enhance what has already been achieved under the LIPSS, by providing £3.1m of additional investment in support for litigants in person over a two-year period. Following further work and engagement with the sector after the Action Plan was published, we decided to meet this commitment through the creation of the new Legal Support for Litigants in Person Grant, of £1.55m per year. While the LIPSS works to draw together national organisations behind a single strategy, the new grant will make direct awards to individual services, which will help us to increase our understanding of how litigants in person move through the justice system.

I completely recognise the challenges being faced by organisations in the advice sector due to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. I know that the fantastic legal support provided by advice sector organisations across the country is going to be even more important over the coming weeks and months, to help people deal with the problems they are facing. The work already undertaken to

establish the grant has been done in line with the objectives of the Action Plan, but we will remain as flexible as possible as we continue to deliver it.

This flexibility will be particularly applied to how we work with frontline advice sector organisations to scope new or expanded services. We will also remain open to adapting some of the goals of the grant, in order to look at where we can potentially support services that are specifically responding to the impacts of COVID-19.

Evaluation will also be central to the new grant, ensuring value for money and helping the MoJ build up our evidence base to make a robust case for sustained future funding. To measure the success of individual funded support services, we will work with each advice sector organisation in receipt of this funding to agree an evaluation approach that works for them, and is proportionate to their experience and capacity. We recognise that the impact of COVID on the advice sector and support services will need to be taken into account carefully.

We are delighted to be partnering with the Access to Justice Foundation to deliver the new Legal Support for Litigants in Person Grant. The MoJ already enjoys a productive working relationship with the Foundation through our work with them to deliver the LIPSS, but we are very pleased to be taking this partnership on a step further. We believe that, over its lifetime, our partnership approach to this new grant will serve as an exemplar for how we as a department can work even closer with the undoubted experience and expertise present within our advice sector.

Working closely with the Foundation, we will engage with those advice sector organisations who are likely to receive funding through the new grant over the coming months, being responsive to their need and retaining a flexible approach which I have outlined above. The Foundation will invite applications from organisations and work directly with them to design and finalise proposals for new and expanded support to litigants in person. The launch of the grant means that this process is now formally underway. I will continue to keep you and the Committee updated on how this work progresses.

I am placing a copy of this letter in the Libraries of both Houses.

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

ALEX CHALK MP