Dear NAME OF MP

**Re: Legal aid cuts**

I write as your constituent to express my serious concern about new proposals for legal aid.

On 9 April 2013, the Government issued a consultation paper entitled “Transforming Legal Aid”. This proposes further significant changes and cuts to legal aid, closely following the considerable cuts introduced by the Legal Aid Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012 which came into force on 1 April 2013. The deadline to respond is 4 June 2013.

The Government would restrict the ability of individuals to choose their lawyer. It would give large contracts to firms or businesses for the cheapest bid irrespective of the quality of service. Small and medium-sized business will be at risk of closure and the incentive to provide high quality representation and client care will disappear as firms no longer have to compete to attract clients.

There will no longer be equality before the law. Legal aid in all civil cases will be subject to a discriminatory “residence” test. Many vulnerable people, including homeless families, victims of domestic violence and trafficked children will no longer be able to rely on the protection of the law. Under this proposal groundbreaking cases involving the accountability of the state for the actions of the armed forces abroad could not have been brought.

Legal aid will no longer be paid for the early stages of judicial review claims (unless the case passes

the “permission” stage). Without the help of legal aid judicial review will simply not be possible for

the majority. The ordinary citizen will no longer be able to hold the state to account.

Prisoners will no longer receive legal aid for many important issues such as whether they are

treated lawfully and humanely in the prison system or how they will be supported to avoid reoffending. These proposals are in direct conflict with the Government’s stated commitment to rehabilitating offenders and reducing crime.

There will be further cuts to the fees paid in criminal, civil, family and immigration cases. These

cuts threaten the quality of legal representation and the sustainability of the profession. The cuts

will hit low earning junior lawyers the hardest.

Cut to experts’ fees will make it very difficult to bring or defend cases which depend on crucial

expert evidence, such as child care proceedings or cases involving vulnerable and mentally ill people.

In my view, if these changes are brought in there will be fewer people able to access the help they need, and there may no longer be quality lawyers able to provide that advice. [Insert other personal comments/case studies]

I would like to ask if you would be willing to:

* Meet with me to discuss the proposals
* Raise my concerns with the Ministry of Justice
* Support the [Early Day Motion speaking out against competitive tendering](http://younglegalaidlawyers.us2.list-manage.com/track/click?u=04264ff5b3fb54dc761944ebb&id=1fd6bdcac2&e=f84b06e1a6" \t "_blank), lodged by Elfyn Llwyd MP
* Be ready to pray against or support amendments to the secondary legislation by which these proposals will be implemented in Autumn 2013.

Thank you for your time in reading this letter. I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

NAME

ADDRESS WITH POSTCODE