



Statement on the Post-Implementation Review of the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012

Young Legal Aid Lawyers (YLAL) is disappointed at the continuing delay in the publication of the post-implementation review of the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012 (LASPO) by the Ministry of Justice.

The government repeatedly promised that it would review the impact of the cuts to legal aid made by Part 1 of LASPO within five years of the Act coming into force in April 2013. This review should therefore have been completed by April 2018 at the latest.

YLAL urges the Ministry of Justice to ensure that the review is in-depth and meaningful, that it includes quantitative and qualitative evaluation of the impact of the swingeing cuts to legal aid implemented by LASPO, and takes into account the serious and legitimate concerns of those practising in the legal aid sector.

To take just one example, the number of people who received publicly-funded early legal advice in civil law – including family, community care, debt, employment, housing and welfare benefits – fell from 573,737 in 2012-13, the financial year before the cuts came into force, to 140,091 in 2016-17.

It has now been almost six years since LASPO came into force, and the review of its impact has still not been completed. During that time, hundreds of thousands of people who would previously have qualified for legal aid have not received it, as a direct result of LASPO. For everyone affected by LASPO, justice delayed is justice denied.

In these circumstances, the on-going delay in the publication of the review is a matter of significant concern to YLAL. The impact of the cuts to legal aid is being felt by ordinary people, who are cut off from effective access to the justice system every day.

YLAL hopes that, in light of the forthcoming review, the Ministry of Justice recognises that the restrictions on legal aid implemented by LASPO have obstructed access to justice very significantly, and that meaningful measures are therefore required urgently to address this injustice.

Young Legal Aid Lawyers

5 February 2019

www.younglegalaidlawyers.org

ylalinfo@gmail.com

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