

ANNEX 1

Low Commission's methodology for surveys of local area services and MP surgeries

Surveys of local area services

A survey form was developed for use in local areas. The aim of this exercise was to collect real-time evidence of how the reductions in legal aid and in local authority funding are impacting on advice agencies and their service users in five areas. The exercise involved collecting data from before and after April 2013. The five areas where the survey was conducted were: Royal London Borough of Kensington and Chelsea; Bristol; Gloucestershire; Tameside; and Swansea and Neath Port Talbot.

The questionnaire covered the following:

Income
Income for 2010/11 and 2011/12 Funding sources
Expected income for 2012/13 Funding sources

Staff
Generalist advisers during 2012/13
Specialist advisers (other than those shown below)
Advisers who are solicitors/barristers
Support staff
Managers

Full time equivalent volunteer staff 2012/13
Generalist advisers
Specialist advisers (other than those shown below)
Advisers who are solicitors/barristers
Support staff
Managers

The type of advice work done			
Asylum	Yes/No	Employment	Yes/No
Community care	Yes/No	Housing	Yes/No
Debt	Yes/No	Immigration	Yes/No
Education (including SEN)	Yes/No	Welfare benefits	Yes/No
Other categories of law, not mentioned above			

Provision			
Information	Yes/No	Casework	Yes/No
Advice	Yes/No	Representation in legal proceedings (on the court record)	Yes/No
Judicial reviews	Yes/No	Do you provide advocacy in court or before tribunals?	Yes/No
Advocacy – which courts/tribunals?			
Outreach? If so, where?			

Number of your service users by category for 2012/13			
Asylum		Employment	
Community care		Housing	
Debt		Immigration	
Education (including SEN)		Welfare benefits	
Other categories of law, not mentioned above			

Number of ‘one off’ enquiries and number of cases dealt with in 2012/13 by category of law			
Asylum		Employment	
Community care		Housing	
Debt		Immigration	
Education (including SEN)		Welfare benefits	
Other – state			

Any new trends in advice provision in 2012–13, for example a decrease in one category or an increase in another?

Any statutory or private practice organisations providing social welfare law advice or representation in the Borough:

How is the current economic situation and funding climate affecting your work?

MP surgeries surveys

The Low Commission asked the Young Legal Aid Lawyers (YLAL) to carry out a follow-up study to assess the impact on MPs following the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders (LASPO) Act 2012 which came into force on 1 April 2013. To do this, YLAL returned to those MPs who had taken part in YLAL’s original survey of 45 MPs and caseworkers across England and Wales, conducted in 2011.¹ YLAL asked them to answer a series of five supplementary questions using an online survey tool. Twenty-nine of the original MPs and caseworkers agreed to take part in the follow-up survey. YLAL have published the results in their report *Nowhere else to turn: one year on* (August 2013).²

YLAL stress in the introduction to their survey report that their findings are necessarily just a snapshot and that the survey was only conducted four months after the cuts; they also highlight the various welfare reforms that were taking place in the same period, which could also result in increased demands on MPs’ surgeries. The survey involved asking five supplementary questions to get a picture of changes in demand for advice since 1 April 2013.

1 *Nowhere else to turn: The impact of legal aid cuts on MPs’ ability to help their constituents*, March 2012, available at: www.younglegalaidlawyers.org/Nowhere-else-to-turn-part2.

2 Available at: www.younglegalaidlawyers.org/Nowhere-else-to-turn-part2.