

Young Legal Aid Lawyers

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Review of Civil Legal Aid Team

Ministry of Justice

By email: danielle.watson1@justice.gov.uk

Dear Review of Civil Legal Aid team,

We write in response to your email on 4 March 2024 in which it was explained that, in essence, publication of the findings from the Review of Civil Legal Aid (including the Government's response to the call for evidence) is being pushed back from March 2024 to July 2024. We know that the new 'phased' approach means that the Review will publish some reports in March and May 2024.

We are writing to express our disappointment that the publication of ROCLA's final report has been delayed by up to four months. Four months may not seem like a long time to those in Whitehall, but for legal aid lawyers, for firms and not for profit organisations that offer legal aid, and most importantly, for individuals currently unable to access legal help and assistance, it is four months too long.

The decision to delay publication – and in turn the provision of policy recommendations – for this length of time is at complete odds with the scale of the crisis that [we](#), and [many, many](#), others, have provided evidence of in our submissions to the Call for Evidence, as well as the findings of the, already published, ROCLA Provider Survey.

In our response to the ROCLA Call for Evidence, we urged the MoJ and government more broadly to recognise the consequences of non-action and expressed our worry that 'if this review does not result in material and imminent positive changes to civil legal aid, those working within the sector will be forced to conclude that this is an issue those in power do not take seriously.'

The decision to delay publication has deepened our concern. We are worried that MoJ has not grasped the scale of the crisis: the sheer amount of unmet need, the expansion of legal aid deserts across the country, and the inability of individuals to access justice.

We fully appreciate the need to carefully consider the evidence submitted to ROCLA, however, the responsible way to push back publication would be to introduce interim measures - such as an urgent uplift in legal aid rates - to prevent the crisis in civil legal aid from deepening whilst the review is on-going.

In your email you invited questions – to that end, we ask:

1. Why was a phased approach not adopted at the outset of ROCLA? What has changed that necessitates this phased approach?



2. What consultation was done in making the decision to delay publication and shift to a 'phased approach'? Was the Stakeholder Advisory Group consulted on the decision?
3. What assessment, if any, has MoJ done on how the delay in publication, and therefore the delay in the implementation of any policy proposals, will impact on the health of the civil legal aid sector?
4. Given the delay, will MoJ commit to implementing an urgent, interim up-lift in fees?

We look forward to hearing from you.

Kind regards

YLAL