

Andy Slaughter MP
Chair of the Justice Committee
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

MoJ ref: Sub 127461

18 September 2025

Dear Andy,

UPDATE RE: LEGAL AID AGENCY CYBER-SECURITY INCIDENT

Following my letter to you on 26 June regarding the cyber-security incident affecting the Legal Aid Agency (LAA)'s digital platforms, I am writing to provide you with the latest update on service restoration.

I am pleased to say that the LAA Portal – the identity control system used by providers to connect to services – has been successfully replaced by Sign into Legal Aid Services (SiLAS) and providers are now being onboarded. This will allow providers into the LAA systems as they are restored. This week sees the restoration of crime systems access to legal aid providers, and access to civil systems will follow over the course of the autumn. I have provided more information on the provisional timetable below. I also set out below the steps taken to date to ensure business continuity for legal aid providers.

As you are aware, we implemented a range of emergency contingency measures in response to the criminal cyber-attack on the LAA's digital systems. Alongside these measures we set up an incident webpage with regularly updated guidance, and a public helpline for those concerned about the data breach.

On 27 June, the Government introduced "The Criminal and Civil Legal Aid (Amendment) Regulations 2025" (SI). This made operational changes to support the LAA's business continuity, particularly as some digital services, especially those related to civil legal aid, remained offline. These amendments were designed to ensure that LAA caseworkers could continue to process high-profile and complex matters whilst the platform was offline, and delegated more straightforward work to legal aid providers.

The changes introduced by the SI were complemented by changes to the legal aid tables of delegated authorities, issued by the Director of Legal Aid Casework (DLAC) through a non-legislative process.

As some LAA digital systems have continued to remain offline, all continuity measures will need to remain in place until such point that we are satisfied they are no longer required. In order to support legal aid providers for civil legal aid applications, we have introduced a further extension to the time and cost limits for emergency representation. On 27 June the standard time period was extended from eight to 16 weeks and the cost limit was increased from £2,250 to £4,500.

On 2 September, the time limit for emergency representation granted under Delegated Functions was increased from 16 weeks to 24 weeks, and the cost limit has been increased from £4,500 to £6,750. This change will be applied retrospectively to any emergency representation cases where the LAA has yet to make a substantive decision.

At the same time, we have made significant progress towards restoring our services. The expected timeline for phased restoration of the LAA's systems for external access is as follows:

- From this week, Crime Apply and Submit a Crime Form will be available, enabling providers to apply for criminal legal aid and bill for crime higher work. Billing for crime higher work has been in place since 9 June;
- From late September, we will begin to roll out Civil Apply, enabling providers to apply for civil legal aid and bill for civil licensed work; and,
- From later in the autumn, services that enable providers to bill for civil controlled work and crime lower work are expected to return.

This timetable is subject to security testing. It will be necessary to operate contingency processes concurrently alongside some restored/replaced systems for a period to ensure a smooth transition for providers. Where systems are ultimately replaced by new systems these will meet government security requirements and will provide an improved user experience which has been developed through consultation with providers.

I am grateful for the continued patience and engagement of legal aid providers and professional representative bodies throughout this process of recovery.

Whilst the threat from cyber-crime can never be completely eradicated, I am confident that the changes we are putting in place will significantly boost the system's resilience against any future attack.

In parallel to recovery, I am also pursuing options to accelerate the transformation programme to replace restored systems with modern, resilient, and flexible technology. This is vital for putting the service on a secure footing for the future and making it easier for users both to access and provide legal aid services. Legal aid lawyers repeatedly tell me how much of their time is taken by having to input and navigate slow and outdated systems. Building back a better, modern system which is fit for purpose will enable legal aid lawyers to get back to what they do best, namely, serving their clients.

I will continue to update the House regularly on this matter. I am depositing a copy of this letter in the library of the House.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sarah Sackman', with a fluid, cursive style.

SARAH SACKMAN KC MP
Minister Of State