



Bar Council response to the Ministry of Justice, civil legal aid: housing and Immigration consultation

About the Bar Council

1. We represent nearly 18,000 barristers in England and Wales, promoting:
 - Fair access to justice for all
 - The Bar's specialist advocacy and advisory services
 - The highest standards of ethics, equality and diversity across the profession
 - Business opportunities for barristers at home and abroad
2. The independent Bar Standards Board (BSB) acts as our regulatory arm for barristers and specialised legal services business.

The value of the Bar

3. A strong and independent Bar serves the public and is crucial to upholding justice. As specialist, independent advocates, barristers help people maintain their legal rights and duties, often supporting the most vulnerable in society. The Bar is vital to the efficiency of both criminal and civil courts. Its pool of talented people from increasingly diverse backgrounds provides a significant proportion of the judiciary, on whose independence the rule of law and our democratic society depend.
4. This is our response to the Ministry of Justice consultation paper "*Civil legal aid: Towards a sustainable future. Proposals for Housing and Immigration fee increases and exploring contract reform*" Originally laid in January 2025, Withdrawn and re-laid in February 2025, CP 1268.¹

Overview

i.) The proposed rate increases are less than inflation and less than the Government pays for other legal work

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/civil-legal-aid-towards-a-sustainable-future>

5. Sarah Sackman KC MP, Minister for Courts and Legal Services, in her Foreword to the Consultation writes:

“when this Government took office, we inherited a legal aid system creaking under pressure after years of neglect.

[...] We are determined to nurse this critical sector back to health, rebuilding a legal aid system that is sustainable, effective and efficient, and that helps people to address their legal problems as quickly and as early as possible.”

6. We agree with this assessment and objective. The fee increases proposed in this consultation are a small, welcome first step. But much more is needed to achieve the above aim.

The Consultation states:

“The current hourly rates for civil non-family work were last updated in 1996”. (Page 7).

“This consultation proposes increasing all legal aid rates for Housing and Immigration work up to a minimum hourly rate of £65.35/£69.30 (non-London/London). Where this new minimum rate would not represent at least a 10% uplift to a given rate, the rate will be uplifted by 10%.” (Page 5).

“The proposals result in an effective overall uplift to total spend of 30% to Immigration fees, 21% for Housing fees, 16% for Debt fees, and 42% for HLPAS [Housing Loss Prevention Advice Service] fees.” (Page 19).

7. Consumer Price Index (CPI) inflation from 1996 to today has been an increase of 96.8%.² The proposed increases, whilst welcome, fall far short of bringing fees back to 1996 levels in real terms.

Minister Sackman states that the fees proposed in this consultation:

“will support a more sustainable legal aid market in the long term, by remunerating at a rate which allows providers to attract and retain the best and brightest legal aid professionals.” (Page 3).

8. When the Government instructs civil barristers in non-legal aid work, these are the rates that the Government pays:³

² <https://www.bankofengland.co.uk/monetary-policy/inflation/inflation-calculator>

³ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/attorney-generals-panel-counsel-practical-information>

London A panel	- £150 per hour
London B panel	- £125 per hour
London C panel	- £100 per hour if over 5 years call. - £75 per hour if under 5 years call.
Regional A Panel	- £137.50 per hour
Regional B Panel	- £112.50 per hour
Regional C Panel	- £75 per hour.

9. It is not clear how the Government paying half the rate for doing legal aid work than it does for doing non-legal aid work, encourages “the best and brightest” to do legal aid work.

10. The above are the new rates from April 2025 which have had a 25% uplift applied following representations made by the Administrative Law Bar Association (ALBA). This needs to be contrasted with the proposed increases in legal aid for advocacy. In immigration, the rate of pay for advocacy in the First-Tier Tribunal is one of the rates that will only be increasing by 10% - whether it is paid as a fixed fee, as an escape case or an hourly rates case.⁴

11. Housing and immigration law are complex, requiring practitioners to master intricate statutory frameworks, evolving case law, and detailed procedural rules. Judicial recognition of this complexity is commonplace and compelling. For example, in the homelessness decision of *Norton v Haringey London Borough Council* [2022] EWCA Civ 1340, Laing LJ observed at paragraph 63: *“This appeal illustrates what is already well known, that housing law can be highly complex....”* Such judicial commentary underscores that effective representation in housing cases demands specialist knowledge, considerable experience, and continued professional development from practitioners.

12. In addition, the inherent vulnerability of many clients in housing and immigration law cases adds significantly to this complexity. The Civil Procedure Rules explicitly recognise vulnerability as a relevant factor when assessing proportionality and costs (CPR 44.3(5)(f)), acknowledging that vulnerable parties often require more intensive legal support. Clients facing homelessness, eviction, or housing disrepair and those seeking advice on asylum and immigration claims which are in scope are frequently

⁴ Fixed fees in table 4(c) of the Remuneration Regulations are based on an underlying hourly rate of £65.79 per hour which is also the hourly rate paid for immigration and asylum CLR escape cases and is being increased by the minimal 10% to £72.35 per hour for escape cases (table 8(a)) and only £69.30 per hour (11% increase in London, £68.90 or 10% increase per hour for non-London) for hourly rates cases – table 8(c).

disadvantaged by limited resources, language barriers, disabilities, or mental health issues, necessitating additional time and care from legal aid professionals. Therefore, adequate remuneration for legal aid practitioners should reflect not only the technical complexity but also the increased demands arising from client vulnerability, ensuring a fair, sustainable, and effective legal aid system in line with the Government's stated objectives.

13. It should also be remembered that fees paid to self-employed barristers are not the equivalent of a salary. From those fees the barrister pays staff and office costs, other expenses required to work. Remuneration does not include sick pay, maternity leave, pension, annual leave etc.

ii.) There needs to be amendments to the scope of legal aid

14. Page 7 of the consultation states: "To access civil legal aid, an applicant's legal matter must either be in scope for legal aid or qualify for exceptional case funding." We continue to argue that the reductions in the scope of civil legal aid introduced by the Legal Aid Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012 (LASPO) need to be reversed.⁵

15. For example, bringing immigration cases based on the right to private and family life in Article 8 ECHR back into scope would remove a significant amount of bureaucracy for the LAA and providers in the Exceptional Case Funding (ECF) scheme, in a context where the overwhelming majority of applications are granted. It would also ensure that counsel are able to be paid for their full work on appeals which raise both in and out of scope issues (e.g. asylum appeals frequently also raise Article 8 issues).

iii.) There needs to be amendments to the fee structure and billing process

16. In immigration and asylum matters, we believe that counsel should be paid hourly rates for advocacy and preparation rather than a fixed fee which does not adequately remunerate for the work involved in preparing complex asylum and human rights appeals. Whether a case escapes the fixed fee depends on the work done by both solicitors and counsel, and on solicitors preparing and submitting claims for escape fees in a timely manner. This can result in counsel unfairly losing out by only being paid the fixed hearing fee where they have done a substantial amount of preparation for a hearing. As the consultation paper acknowledges, the "swings and roundabouts" principle has been undermined by the removal from scope of most areas of immigration by LASPO, meaning that only complex cases remain in scope.

⁵ <https://www.barcouncil.org.uk/resource/bar-council--laspo-has-failed.html>

17. Advocates should always be paid for travel and waiting time regardless of whether the appeal escapes the fixed fee. The need for this is increased by the shortage of expert immigration counsel in all regions, meaning that it is frequently necessary for counsel to be instructed to attend Tribunals far from the region where they are based.

Response to specific questions

Question 1) Do you agree with our principles for setting fee levels within civil legal aid? Please state yes/no/maybe/do not know and provide reasons.

18. The Government principles are on page 14 of the consultation:

- “1. Ensure a sustainable housing and immigration legal aid market by remunerating at a rate which allows providers to attract and retain legal aid professionals and enables providers to innovate and try different delivery models.
2. Ensure high quality provision is available to those who are eligible and encourage early resolution where appropriate.
3. Reduce the number of different rates being paid, paving the way for future simplification of the fee schemes which will make it easier for the LAA to maintain their digital systems and reduce the complexity of submitting claims for providers. This is intended to streamline and accelerate the processing and payment of bills.
4. Pay a fair price to incentivise efficient delivery models whilst delivering value for money for the taxpayer.”

The principles outlined in the consultation are fundamentally sound and reflect a positive step towards strengthening the civil legal aid sector.

The rates proposed in the consultation are too low to achieve those aims.

The proposals need to be extended further to fully address critical considerations currently absent from these guiding principles.

19. Regarding Principle 1, it rightly aims to attract and retain legal aid professionals. However, it misses the crucial ambition of actively attracting high-calibre talent into legal aid practice. It is not enough merely to fill roles; the aim should be to entice and retain top-tier professionals who might otherwise pursue alternative, more lucrative areas of law. Without a

deliberate emphasis on securing this higher level of expertise, there is a risk of reinforcing a two-tier system where those most in need of specialist legal advice do not receive representation from the most capable legal minds.

20. Principle 2 rightly emphasises the importance of high-quality provision and early resolution, but it fails to address the additional demands posed by client vulnerability. Vulnerable clients often require extensive professional time and resources, as recognised in the Civil Procedure Rules (CPR 44.3(5)(f)). Any commitment to quality and early resolution must resource the additional complexities arising from vulnerability, to enable equality of treatment.
21. Principle 3, aimed at simplifying fee structures, is sensible. However, simplification should not lead to a 'one-size-fits-all' approach, undervaluing complex cases, deterring specialists whose expertise is critical to client outcomes. Simplification must be balanced with a graduation of fee that recognises genuine complexity and specialisation.
22. Principle 4 rightly emphasises the importance of achieving efficiency and value for money. However, efficiency should not come at the cost of quality, thoroughness, or fairness. The principle of a "fair price" must reflect the realistic cost of providing specialist legal aid services, particularly when dealing with vulnerable clients facing complex legal challenges. A narrow focus on efficiency risks incentivising shortcuts or overly simplistic delivery models, compromising service quality and effectiveness. A genuinely "fair price" must strike a balance with rewarding efficient and innovative service delivery, while also ensuring sufficient resources and time for legal aid professionals to adequately meet the needs of their clients, thus truly safeguarding value for money for taxpayers.
23. In summary, while agreeing broadly with the principles proposed, they must go further by explicitly committing to attracting high-quality talent, adequately resourcing the representation of vulnerable clients, advancing equality and maintaining fee structures sensitive to the complexity of cases. Below is a suggested amendment of the four principles:

1. Ensure the sustainability of the housing and immigration legal aid market by remunerating providers at rates capable of attracting, developing, and

retaining outstanding professionals, thereby fostering specialist expertise, innovation, and quality in service delivery.

2. Ensure high-quality provision is available to those who are eligible, encouraging early resolution where appropriate, and explicitly recognising the additional resources and expertise required to effectively support vulnerable clients and advance equality.

3. Streamline and accelerate the processing and payment of bills. Simplify the number of different fee rates, whilst retaining graduation of fees to reflect specialist expertise.

4. Pay a fair price that incentivises efficient and innovative delivery models without compromising the quality and comprehensiveness of legal services provided to clients, ensuring true value for money for taxpayers.

Question 2) Do you agree that we should increase the fees paid for Housing and Immigration work? Please state yes/no/maybe/do not know and provide reasons.

24. Yes. The Government itself recognises clearly in pages 14-15 of the consultation that current fee levels are unsustainable, having not increased since 1996 despite significant inflation and escalating practice costs. While the proposed increases are welcome, they remain inadequate to fully address the deep-rooted issues identified.

25. Firstly, inflation since 1996 has risen by 96.8%. The proposed uplifts, (up to) 21% for Housing and (up to) 30% for Immigration, fall significantly short of rectifying the decades-long erosion in the real-terms value of fees. Without a more substantial increase, providers will continue to struggle with financial viability, reducing capacity and ultimately harming the quality and accessibility of legal aid services.

26. Secondly, beyond mere inflation, the nature of Housing and Immigration legal aid work has become more complex. Statutory frameworks have become more detailed, and judicial decisions more nuanced, heightening the demands on practitioners' specialist knowledge and skills. This complexity is recognised by senior judiciary as above. Fair remuneration must reflect not only rising operational costs but also the increasingly sophisticated and specialist demands placed upon legal aid practitioners.

27. Thirdly, housing and immigration clients frequently present additional complexities due to vulnerability. The Civil Procedure Rules recognise that vulnerability must be explicitly accounted for when assessing proportionality and costs (CPR 44.3(5)(f)). Clients often face language barriers, mental health issues, disabilities, and socio-economic disadvantages requiring significantly more practitioner time and resource. Proper recognition of this additional workload and complexity through higher fees is therefore not only justified, it is essential for equitable and effective access to justice.
28. Fourthly, there is a critical need to attract and retain skilled practitioners within legal aid. The consultation identifies sustainability as a primary goal. To achieve this, remuneration must be sufficiently attractive compared to alternative areas of law. Without competitive remuneration, high-quality talent will continue to leave or avoid the legal aid sector entirely, weakening the quality and consistency of legal support available to vulnerable clients.
29. Fifthly, increased fees would save taxpayer resources in the long term by enabling earlier, more effective resolution. Early legal support prevents problems escalating into more costly and resource-intensive disputes, litigation, or public-sector intervention, such as homelessness and social welfare reliance, which cost much more to taxpayers. Investment now in sustainable fees is not merely beneficial for practitioners, it represents long-term economic prudence and efficiency for the public purse.
30. Finally, addressing sustainability in legal aid is a matter of social justice and equality. The Government's own stated commitment to fairness, access to justice, and supporting the most vulnerable depends on adequately funded legal aid provision. Continuing to underfund legal aid is inconsistent with these stated values.
31. Therefore, while the proposed increases represent a positive initial step, a significantly greater uplift is required to genuinely create sustainability, attract skilled talent, adequately address complexity, meet client needs, and deliver genuine value for taxpayers in the long run.

Question 3) Do you agree that fees for Housing and Immigration work should be increased to a minimum hourly rate of £65.35/£69.30 (outside London/inside London)? Please state yes/no/maybe /do not know and provide reasons.

32. No. While the proposed minimum hourly rates (£65.35 outside London, £69.30 inside London) represent a modest improvement, they remain insufficient to achieve the stated objectives of sustainability, quality, and

fairness set out by the Government. As noted in our response to Question 2, the current proposals fall far short of rectifying decades of erosion in fee levels and fail adequately to account for complexity, overheads, and vulnerability.

33. To deliver genuine sustainability, the rates must be set at levels that reflect realistic expertise and client vulnerabilities. Given that legal aid hourly rates have been static since 1996, a more substantial correction is urgently required.
34. As stated above, the rates currently paid to barristers instructed directly by the Government in non-legal aid work (ranging from £75–£150 per hour depending on seniority and region) shows that the Government recognises the necessity of substantially higher remuneration to attract suitably skilled professionals. The significant disparity between legal aid and non-legal aid rates that the Government pays, undermines the objective of building a robust, sustainable, and fair legal aid market.
35. Additionally, it is instructive to compare the proposed legal aid hourly rates with those independently assessed for private litigation costs. In December 2024, the Master of the Rolls announced⁶ the updated Guideline Hourly Rates in civil cases from 1 January 2025. They range from £139 per hour for a trainee solicitor / paralegal outside of London, to £566 per hour for a Grade A London Band 1 solicitor. This shows how significantly undervalued legal aid remuneration remains compared to market rates independently assessed as reasonable by the courts themselves. Such a disparity undermines any claim that the proposed rates represent a "fair price."
36. Accordingly, to achieve a genuinely sustainable and fair legal aid market, it is essential to revise these hourly rates substantially upward, at least to reflect the upper end of the Government in non-legal aid work and implement regular independent reviews linked to a recognised index, ensuring parity with broader market rates and attracting high-quality legal professionals.

Question 3a) If the fee is already above this rate, do you agree that rates should be increased by 10%? Please state yes/no/maybe /do not know and provide reasons.

37. No. While a 10% increase is welcome, it remains insufficient. As previously detailed (see answers to Questions 2 and 3), fees have fallen significantly behind inflation and independent market assessments. A larger, inflation-

⁶ <https://www.judiciary.uk/related-offices-and-bodies/advisory-bodies/cjc/current-work/costs/>

adjusted uplift and regular independent review mechanism is essential to achieving genuine sustainability, fairness, and the attraction of high-quality legal professionals.

38. Regarding the hourly rates paid for advocacy for all categories of immigration work, the proposed increase is in almost all cases only the minimal 10% (the only exception being out of London hourly rates cases under table 8(c) which are increased by 11%). According to the rationale in the consultation paper, this does not even begin to address the increase in the cost of living since 1996, since the additional 10% is intended to “actively incentivise providers to take up and expand their legal aid offer” (p18).
39. The rationale for the average £60 hourly rate focuses on the providers who directly contract with the LAA and who will undertake the full range of work under the contract. It does not address the position of counsel, for whom rates paid for advocacy will comprise the substantial part of their remuneration.

Question 4) Do you agree that the minimum hourly rates for Controlled and Licensed Work should be the same? Please state yes/no/maybe /do not know and provide reasons.

40. No. The consultation states:

“We intend that the proposed fee increase will encourage early advice and early resolution where appropriate, by harmonising the minimum rates for Controlled Work with that for Licensed Work.” (Page 18).

We agree that there should be fair and reasonable funding for early advice and resolution. We do not agree that more complex work should be paid the same as less complex work.

41. There should be graduation in the fee scheme that pays for expertise. The current scheme allows for enhancement to hourly rates for Licensed Work depending on factors including complexity, the degree of competence, skill or expertise demonstrated in the work, and whether it was done with exceptional speed. This is the appropriate way to compensate more complex work and should apply to all levels of legal service.
42. However, the question posed in the consultation is unclear. The consultation paper does not propose harmonising (“making the same”) hourly rates for Controlled Work and Licensed Work. As most Civil (Non-Family) Licensed Work is already paid more than the proposed minimum hourly rate (or would be with a 10% uplift), Licensed Work will be increased by 10%. This

means that although Licensed Work will continue to be generally paid at a higher rate than Controlled Work, it will become relatively less well paid.

Question 5) Do you agree that our proposed rates will enable legal aid providers to undertake increased volumes of legal aid work? Please state yes/no/maybe /do not know and provide reasons.

43. No. The proposed rates, though modestly increased, remain too low to significantly impact capacity or incentivise providers to take on higher volumes of legal aid work. As explained in previous answers (particularly Questions 2 and 3), the current proposals fail to adequately address longstanding underfunding, inflation-related erosion in fees, and disparities with market rates. Without more substantial increases, providers may continue to find it economically unsustainable to expand their legal aid caseloads, meaning the intended outcome, increased provision, will likely not materialise.
44. To genuinely increase volumes of legal aid work, providers must first be confident that additional work is financially viable and appropriately compensated.

Question 6) Do you agree that increases to Immigration should be implemented first? Please state yes/no/maybe /do not know and provide reasons.

45. No. The Government should provide sufficient IT resources to the Legal Aid Agency (LAA) to enable them to update their systems to bring in the increases together.

Question 7) Do you agree with simplifying the fee system by harmonising the fees identified? Please state yes/no/maybe/ do not know.

If you would like to give specific feedback on each proposal, please structure your answer as follows:

7a) Feedback on harmonising 'travelling and waiting time' and 'attendance at court, conference or tribunal with Counsel' at 50% of the hourly rate for 'preparation and attendance' in Immigration and Housing and/or;

46. No. The consultation rightly states:

"A significant theme within the responses to the Call for Evidence and reports from RoCLA was the complexity of the fee system and the difficulties this causes for legal aid providers." Page 21.

47. However, the bureaucratic difficulties barristers face is not from the number of fee rates. It is the LAA's requirement for extensive submission of evidence to justify standard fee claims. The current system often demands multiple layers of justification, including applications for prior authority and routine appeals against unjustified reductions ('taxing down') by LAA staff who may not fully understand the nuances and complexity of the legal work undertaken. This results in avoidable administrative work, diverts professional time away from client facing activities, causes delays in payment, and adds to overall costs.

48. The LAA should streamline the billing and authorisation processes, provide clearer guidelines, ensure greater consistency in decision making, and limit bureaucratic interventions to genuinely complex or exceptional cases. This would reduce unnecessary friction, improve efficiency, and ultimately support better service delivery to vulnerable clients.

7b) Feedback on uplifting all 'routine letters out and telephone calls' in Immigration and Housing to the highest value present after the uplift occurs.

See previous answer.

Question 8) Do you agree that we have correctly identified the range and extent of the equalities impacts for the increases in fees for providers set out above? Please state yes/no/maybe/don't know and give reasons. If possible, please supply evidence of further equalities impacts as appropriate.

49. No. Paragraphs 18-20 of the Equalities Impacts statement deals with barristers. What it does not address is whether the proposed fee increases will be sufficient to encourage those entering the Bar from socio-economic backgrounds that do not have private incomes and begin their careers with a large student debt, to make a reasonable income out of housing and immigration legal aid work; or whether they will feel it necessary to move to privately funded work as soon as possible.

50. A recent paper from Dr Rose Holmes (Bar Council Head of Research) and Prof Martin Chalkley and Alice Chalkley (consultants to the Bar Council) submitted to the MoJ⁷ states:

"In our submission to the Review of Civil Legal Aid (RoCLA) we established that:

⁷ Page 3: "Advocates Graduated Fee Scheme (AGFS) and Equalities. Paper for Criminal Legal Aid Advisory Board (CLAAB), 27 February 2025".

“Each 1 per cent increase in legal aid (as a proportion of fees) reduces total fee income by £611. So that says that moving from say 40 per cent to 50 per cent legally aided work reduces total fees by £6,110 on average.”⁸

51. That is, that an increased reliance on public funding effectively acts as an individual financial penalty.

52. The latest data suggests that this financial penalty for public service has increased to over £800 for each 1 per cent increase in reliance on legal aid.”

Question 9) Should we remove or reduce limits to the number of Controlled Work Matters where the client does not attend the provider’s office to make an application for Controlled Work? Please state yes/no/maybe/do not know and give reasons.

Question 9a) Thinking about the limit on Controlled Work applications that can be delivered remotely, in what ways does this affect your ability to deliver face-to-face and remote advice, based on client need? You may choose more than one:

- i) it is sufficient (explain why)**
- ii) it creates problems (explain why)**
- iii) other (please specify)**

53. Do not know. We leave this to The Law Society to respond.

Question 9b) If there were a removal or reduction in these limits, do you anticipate that in the areas in which you provide legal aid help and advice, your firm or organisation would:

- i) Provide more advice remotely? By what approximate percentage?**
- ii) Provide less advice remotely? By what approximate percentage?**
- iii) Not change the overall percentages for your provision of remote advice?**
- iv) Unsure/do not know.**

Please also provide any data or evidence you may have in relation to your answer.

54. This question is directed at individual solicitor firms. The Bar Council therefore does not have a comment.

Question 10) RoCLA evidence included feedback that providers are best placed to determine when clients need face-to-face advice, and where remote advice is appropriate. However, there is a risk that providers may move towards remote

⁸ Page 9: <https://www.barcouncil.org.uk/static/bcc380ef-8b6e-4375-b312483890b4a093/Bar-Council-RoCLA-data-submission-February-2024.pdf>

advice provision in a way that leaves clients who need face-to-face with difficulty finding a provider. When ensuring greater flexibility to provide remote advice, what measures or safeguards would help ensure that clients are not turned down or de-prioritised, because they require face-to-face?

55. The option of remote advice, in addition to face-to-face advice, can offer a flexibility of benefit to many clients. But an overly remote-focused approach could mean that vulnerable clients with more complex needs might be de-prioritised due to the greater time, resources, or logistical challenges associated with face-to-face advice. Many housing and immigration clients have language barriers, mental health difficulties, disabilities, or limited technological access, which severely restrict their ability to effectively engage remotely. Such clients need equal access to justice.
56. There should be sufficient funding for providers to maintain robust face-to-face services, particularly in geographical areas that risk becoming 'advice deserts' if remote provision were to become dominant.
57. In short, while remote services have a valuable place in modern legal aid provision, robust safeguards are essential to ensure that face-to-face services remain fully accessible for those clients whose circumstances make them necessary.

Question 11) Which categories or areas of law do you practice in (or have experience in), that you have drawn from when answering questions 9 and 10?

58. This question is directed at individual solicitor firms. The Bar Council therefore does not have a comment.

Question 12) Would you want the contractual requirement for permanent office locations to be reduced or removed? Please state yes/no/maybe /do not know and provide reasons.

59. Removing overly prescriptive contractual requirements regarding offices should provide more flexibility in service delivery models. However, completely removing the requirement to have an office might reduce access to justice for vulnerable clients who require face-to-face meetings, as outlined above.
60. While greater flexibility is welcome, safeguards are essential to ensure providers maintain sufficient physical presence, particularly in areas at risk of becoming underserved, so that clients requiring in-person support continue to have reliable access. An optimal approach might therefore involve a reduced

but clearly defined requirement for a physical presence, combined with flexible working arrangements that do not compromise quality, accessibility, or fairness for clients.

Question 13) Does the requirement for a permanent office provide sufficient flexibility for the availability of civil legal aid advice based on your experience of client need in any category of law?

61. This question is directed at individual solicitor firms. The Bar Council therefore does not have a comment.

Question 13a) Where the requirement doesn't provide sufficient flexibility, in your experience, what is the impact on delivery of legal advice to clients?

62. This question is directed at individual solicitor firms. The Bar Council therefore does not have a comment.

Question 14) If there were a change to the requirement for a permanent office, what measures or safeguards would help ensure we meet the need for clients to have access to face-to-face civil legal advice in a safe, private and accessible environment be ensured?

63. This question is directed at individual solicitor firms. The Bar Council therefore does not have a comment.

Bar Council

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