

Terms of Reference: Legal and Advice Sector Roundtable – Responding to Covid-19

Problem statement: The current economic and public health crisis and global impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has short and long-term consequences, presenting a wide range of social and legal issues for people in their everyday lives and a huge challenge to advice and free legal services and support organisations in addressing legal need.

Purpose: The Roundtable brings together legal and advice organisations and representative bodies from the voluntary and legal sectors, providing a collective breadth of update and perspective not available elsewhere. It helps define our shared priorities and strategy and brings some of the existing work and resources together, shining a light on key issues and their potential resolutions. Articulating urgent issues, identifying potential solutions and supporting the sector to respond to those needs collectively is our key 'anchor' for both the roundtable and its subgroups.

Intended aim: Improving access to justice for those without means and the most vulnerable, through the improved sustainability and effectiveness of legal and advice organisations, working collaboratively, to deliver effective services to meet demand, address underlying legal needs and the policy drivers of those needs..

Our Objectives:

1. to identify legal needs arising from the pandemic;
2. to monitor and review the impact, considering and highlighting issues and challenges, for providers of legal information, support, advice and representation;
3. to consider responses and recommendations to help address the above needs, including potential policy recommendations (to Government and others);
4. to inform and support the mobilisation and co-ordination of the advice sector, legal aid, charities, volunteer lawyers and legal professionals, for people with legal and advice needs;
5. as part of that mobilisation, to encourage sector-wide collaborations, initiatives and technology and data driven solutions - sharing information, resources and learning.

How we operate

- a) Legal and advice sector led, responding to issues the sector highlights;
- b) The Steering Group (informal) – meets weekly (on average) to support, administer and be accountable;
- c) Roundtable meetings – every three to four weeks: convening of wider community, led by legal and advice sector, with invited contributions, centered on legitimacy, credibility, authority;
- d) Sub-groups (issue specific, 'task and finish' oriented) – focusing on key themes raised by Roundtable and progressing actions; addressing overall Roundtable objectives and purpose;
- e) Sharing resources more publicly within the 'community/sector' e.g. via LiP Network website, circulating meeting notes by email update, cascading via networks;
- f) Connecting, learning, contributing and cascading; enhancing not replacing.

Sub groups and current areas of focus:

- **Policy:** (i) Review the policy landscape relevant to the legal needs that the sector seeks to address, and the engagement of civil society in the policy and legal needs issues raised by the health crisis; (ii) Identify, make recommendations, facilitate or lead appropriate co-ordinated actions and responses (for example preparing briefings and communications to policymakers, MPs and stakeholder) on relevant policy issues;
- **Sustainability:** (i) Identify what needs to be done to ensure the sustainability of the sector; (ii) Identify current activity to address this and help share and enhance it; (iii) Plan how to take sustainability forward both within the short, medium and long-term;
- **Ways of deploying and accessing services:** (i) Collaborate to ensure that those that we seek to serve are able to access advice and support; (ii) Identify where organisations can work together to ensure capacity is evenly distributed; (iii) Explore and implement (if demand warrants) what systems and platforms can be used to help facilitate this.