

The following is a response on behalf of the Legal Services Commission (LSC) to the above consultation.

The Legal Services Commission (LSC) looks after legal aid in England and Wales. We also make sure that people get the information, advice and legal help they need to deal with a wide range of problems.

We work in partnership with solicitors and not-for-profit organisations to provide services to help people in need.

Our work is fundamental to social and legal justice. Legal aid clients are often vulnerable and socially excluded people, who may have a variety of problems such as:

- debt
- housing
- welfare benefits
- issues related to crime.

We are a non-departmental public body sponsored by the Department for Constitutional Affairs (DCA) - now the Ministry for Justice.

My apologies that this response does not fully answer the many detailed questions raised in your consultation paper. I have only just been made aware of this paper and I note that consultation closes today.

The Legal Services Commission (LSC) arranges the provision of legal advice and information by:

- quality assured contracts with face to face providers (including solicitor's offices and not for profit agencies such as Shelter and Citizens Advice Bureaus). These face to face providers must obtain quality standards including an independent assessment of the quality of their advice via the Commission's peer review process
- its website clsdirect.org.uk which receives over 3M visits annually and has recently been extended to include an on advice tool for debt
- the production of a range of leaflets, including debt advice, of which over 2M a year are distributed
- the provision of a nationally based telephone advice service for social welfare law, including debt. We receive over 65,000 calls a month
- the building of in debt relationships with other organisations such as a Consumer Credit Counseling Service

In addition, the Ministry for Justice is considering taking forward the Cabinet Office's report by Varney which recommends the coordination of Government helplines.

I note the reviews intention that you "seek to distinguish generic financial advice from debt advice with generic advice being more comprehensive and less specialised than advice focused on those with debt problems". This demarcation point will be useful for us to debate. My team are in touch with your people to arrange a meeting where we can discuss how we can work more closely.

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