

£5.4 million to support legal advice sector during the COVID-19 pandemic

The money will be distributed to those most in need through not for profit organisations and Law Centres across England and Wales.

We are already seeing an increase in people seeking advice for social welfare cases during the coronavirus outbreak and this is expected to further increase demand from the legal support sector.

This funding will therefore help organisations to continue to provide vital legal advice throughout the pandemic, increase capacity, and deliver services remotely.

Justice Minister, Alex Chalk said:

Law Centres and charities in the advice sector play a vital role in helping people access justice and resolve their legal problems. That is why they should be supported to continue to operate safely and effectively during the Covid-19 pandemic

This additional £5.4 million support fund will help do just that – giving providers the support they need to boost remote capability and help as many people as possible during these challenging times.

Funding allocated to the Community Justice Fund will be administered by the Access to Justice Foundation and the Law Centres Network will oversee funding earmarked for law centres.

This is in addition to a recently signed grant agreement to provide more than £3.1m in funding to organisations that support unrepresented defendants in the courts, known as Litigants in Person.

Specialist legal advice providers focuses mainly on areas of social welfare law, for example housing, debt, employment, discrimination and special educational needs.

Chief Executive, The Access to Justice Foundation, Ruth Daniel said:

We are delighted with this support for specialist social welfare legal advice agencies who are providing essential help to people and communities at this difficult time. The Community Justice Fund will work in partnership with the sector to support organisations with their response to the current challenges they are facing and aims to help the sector to emerge from it stronger and more

resilient than it was before the crisis.

The Law Centres Network, Chair, Helen Rogers said:

We thank the government for this vital support, which will allow Law Centres to continue to defend people's homes, lives and livelihoods. The pandemic's uneven impact is a grim reminder of the deep inequality in our society that affects every aspect of life. This support recognises the key role of legal assistance in reducing inequality and bringing justice for all.