

Legal lifeline for people in need

- New funding to support vulnerable people affected by pandemic
- Investment in free legal advice follows £5.4 million emergency grant last year
- More than 70 not-for-profit providers will benefit

An additional £2 million is being invested in the Community Justice Fund (CJF), which supports more than 70 not-for-profit organisations providing legal help to those who have lost their job, been caught in rent arrears, or built up debt as a result of Covid-19.

The extra money follows a £5.4 million government grant for the initiative last year. It will enable specialist organisations to further invest in technology to allow remote access to services through platforms such as Zoom and Teams, hire more staff and ensure their vital services remain available despite the challenges posed by the pandemic.

The move will also ensure a greater number of people can access support to resolve their issues more quickly, and away from the courtroom – helping to alleviate pressure on the justice system.

Justice Minister, Lord Wolfson QC, said:

We have made supporting vulnerable people a priority throughout the pandemic and I'm delighted this extra funding will ensure more of them get the expert help they need.

Through close partnership with the legal advice sector such as this, this government is ensuring no-one is left to face their problems alone.

The CJF is a joint initiative between leading social justice organisations including Advice UK, Law Centres Network, Citizens Advice, the AB Charitable Trust, Indigo Trust, and Paul Hamlyn Foundation.

The new funding will be allocated over the next 12 months, providing timely support for the sector which has seen demand for its services increase over the pandemic.

Clare Carter, Interim Chief Executive of the Access to Justice Foundation, lead partner of the Community Justice Fund, said:

Specialist not-for-profit legal advice agencies have been a lifeline to people in need of expert legal advice during the pandemic.

“The sector has worked tirelessly to support the increasing number

of people in need of help, whilst facing severe financial, resource and service-delivery challenges.

Through our work with the Community Justice Fund, we know that these services are still operating under immense pressure as the impact of the pandemic continues to be felt and more people seek affordable, good-quality legal advice.

We would like to thank the Ministry of Justice for this significant contribution to the Community Justice Fund, which will enable us to provide further funding and support to the sector at this time of great need.

Notes to editors

- [Emergency funding to support most vulnerable in society during pandemic – GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)
- Following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, MOJ and DCMS provided £5.4 million to not-for-profit providers of specialist legal advice, through the COVID-19 Specialist Advice Services Scheme (CSASS) grant.
- The funding comprised of £2.8 million from HMT, via DCMS, and £2.6 million from MOJ's budget. We awarded £3 million to law centres, via the Law Centres Network (LCN), and £2.4 million to specialist legal advice organisations through the Community Justice Fund (CJF), The CJF is a joint initiative between leading social justice organisations including Advice UK, Law Centres Network, Citizens Advice, the AB Charitable Trust, Indigo Trust, and Paul Hamlyn Foundation.
- The CJF is administered by the Access to Justice Foundation (ATJF) and it is designed to provide support to not-for-profit specialist legal advice organisations.
- The CSASS grant has helped organisations prevent closure and remain operational to provide specialist legal advice services following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The grant also helped organisations to procure equipment to enable, and adapt to, remote service delivery; and to increase capacity to meet the demand for legal advice services.