

# More support for those representing themselves in court

- new £3.1 million grant to enhance free legal advice and support
- jointly delivered by Ministry of Justice and Access to Justice Foundation
- major £500,000 investment already awarded to national projects

In a joint initiative with the Access to Justice Foundation, funding will be provided to not for profit organisations across the country to provide free legal support – ensuring better advice and clear guidance for those without legal representation in court. Crucially, alongside helping litigants in person to understand legal processes and their rights within them, they will also be provided with practical support throughout the duration of proceedings.

This is a key milestone in the [MOJ's Legal Support Action Plan](#), which is helping people resolve legal problems at the earliest opportunity.

MOJ has already awarded over £500,000 to national charities through this grant, delivering:

- an improved helpline that provides practical and emotional support to clients throughout the court process
- web-based legal advice that enables people on low incomes to access free legal advice sooner
- an online hub that offers a greater range of solutions to legal problems, including advice for remote hearings

Around £270,000 of the grant has been diverted for emergency support to several organisations providing vital expert advice to litigants in person, ensuring they can continue to offer their services during the coronavirus pandemic.

Justice Minister, Alex Chalk said:

This money will improve legal support for those representing themselves – helping them to navigate the justice system.

I am delighted to deliver this with our partners at the Access to Justice Foundation, and look forward to building similar partnerships to ensure people across the country have the necessary support.

Lord Goldsmith QC, Chair of the Access to Justice Foundation, said:

The Foundation is pleased to be working in partnership with the MOJ

to deliver this new funding that will further improve the experience of vulnerable people facing the legal process alone.

The new services covered by the national funding stream will help to ensure that litigants in person have routes to free or affordable legal advice and that people in need are able to access the right type of support, at the right time.

We look forward to continuing our work with the MOJ to distribute additional grants to support a wide range of projects at a local and regional level later this year.

Martin Barnes, Chief Executive of LawWorks, said:

We are delighted to receive funding to enable us to scale up and put on a sustainable basis our new Free Legal Answers website.

The website will help enable access to initial legal advice for people on low incomes, supported by a network of referral organisations and a growing number of solicitors willing to support people in need through pro bono volunteering.

## Notes to editors

- Please see our wider [Legal Support Action Plan](#)
- This new funding, known as the Legal Support for Litigants in Person programme, is split between grants for services provided at national, regional and local levels. Working closely with the charities delivering them, these different services will be collectively evaluated to build up our understanding of how they combine to provide the best support.
- The MOJ and ATJF have already awarded over £500,000 of these grants to a number of larger charities to provide new national-level services:
  - Support Through Court (STC) and RCJ Advice – who are partnering to expand STC’s national telephone helpline to include the addition of new family referral routes into RCJ Advice, as well as piloting a new remote support initiative.
  - LawWorks – who will scale up their Free Legal Answers website service, which enables people on low incomes and not eligible for legal aid to access free, initial legal advice by describing their issue, or asking direct questions.
  - Law for Life – who will add new resources to their Advicenow website to assist people to deal with a range of legal problems, as well as creating new guidance to help individuals appear in the virtual court effectively. They will also use the new funding to undertake research to expand understanding of digital and legal capability.

- Background on the organisations already funded by Legal Support for Litigants in Person:
  - Support Through Court (STC) and RCJ Advice. STC is a charity dedicated to providing free, independent assistance and emotional support to people facing proceedings without legal representation. RCJ Advice is a unique Citizens Advice service who deliver free legal advice to people who cannot afford a solicitor and need assistance with preparing, or dealing with a Civil or Family court case. RCJ Advice also provide a range of other specialist services, such as the Finding Legal Options for Women Survivors (FLOWS) project
  - LawWorks are a charity working in England and Wales to connect volunteer solicitors with people in need of legal advice, who are not eligible for legal aid and cannot afford representation, and with not-for-profit organisations who can support them.
  - Law for Life are a national public legal education charity. Their Advicenow platform already provides an online one-stop-shop for anyone experiencing legal problems in England and Wales. The website provides instant access to regularly updated resources from a range of sources, including GOV.uk, Citizens Advice, Shelter, Mencap, Age UK and specialist advice organisations.

A further £2 million of funding from the programme will be awarded to smaller not-for-profit organisations at regional and local levels in the autumn. Distribution of this funding has been moved back in order to give those organisations more time to manage the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and put together proposals.

In the meantime, around £270,000 of the grant programme has been diverted for emergency support to a number of organisations providing vital expert advice to litigants in person, to help them deal with COVID-19 demand. Through this diverted funding, we have, so far, provided emergency funding to Citizens Advice Devon, Norfolk Community Law Services, Citizens Advice Middlesbrough and Citizens Advice North Lancashire.

This emergency funding is in addition to the MOJ's £5.4 million cash injection for law centres and other legal advice charities to help people with housing, debt, discrimination and employment problems during the COVID-19 crisis.

The new grant will build on the more than £9 million that the MOJ has invested in support for litigants in person in the civil and family courts since 2015, through the MOJ's existing Litigants in Person Support Strategy (LIPSS).