



Welcome

Hi and welcome to the September issue of the Advice Services Alliance newsletter. We are the umbrella body for independent advice services in the UK, and we use this newsletter to share news and updates from across the sector. If you have any news for future issues please get in touch at info@asauk.org.uk.

In this edition:

[1. News from the Advice Services Alliance](#)

- Nominations are open for the Advising Londoners Awards
- ASA Conference - bringing together the advice sector to connect and grow

[2. Sector news](#)

[3. Events](#)

[4. Training opportunities](#)

[5. Research and Publications](#)

[1. News from the Advice Services Alliance](#)

Nominations are open for the Advising Londoners Awards



ADVISING LONDONERS AWARDS

London's Community Legal Advice Awards

University House
Legal Advice Centre & A2J Lab

advice
services
alliance

We are delighted to see nominations coming in for this year's Advising Londoners Awards. The awards celebrate free, non-profit legal advice services for Londoners, across eight categories. You can nominate yourself, a colleague, team, or partner organisation and it is completely free to take part. **Nominations close at midday on Tuesday 22 September** and winners will be announced at a ceremony on 24 November. [Find out more and make a nomination now.](#)

2. Sector news

Help protect funding for free legal advice

The Department for Business, Innovation Science and Trade (DBIST) is consulting on the opt-out collective actions regime. This is an opportunity to champion access to justice for consumers across the country, by protecting a vital source of funding for free legal advice. The Access to Justice Foundation (AtJF) are calling for people to respond to the consultation, helping to convey the extent to which funding is needed in our sector. Find out more in this [AtJF briefing](#) and please take a few minutes to [respond to the consultation](#) (Question 37, no other responses required) before the deadline of 25 September.

Local Government Reorganisation plans halted

The government has announced a review of its Local Government Reorganisation plans, in light of legal advice. Decisions on reorganisation in Essex, Hampshire, Norfolk and Suffolk have been withdrawn, and plans for 14 other areas are paused while the review is carried out. Reorganisation plans in Surrey are unaffected. Read more on [gov.uk](#) and [LGA comment](#).

CPAG Debt Advice Handbook is now open access

The 16th edition of the [CPAG debt advice handbook](#) is now available on AskCPAG, meaning that it is accessible to all, for free, from any computer or mobile device, thanks to a partnership between CPAG and MaPS.

Papyrus suicide prevention charity enters administration

Papyrus has entered administration, following an "extended and extremely difficult period". The charity operated a 24-hour helpline, HopeLine, which has now closed. Further information and alternative sources of support can be found on the [Administrator's website](#).

Changes to DBS checks for staff and volunteers working with children

New rules came into force on 1 September, expanding the eligibility for Enhanced DBS checks for those working with children. Under the new rules, the supervision exemption is removed from the definition of regulated activity. This means that if a staff member of volunteer teaches, trains, instructs, cares for or supervises children often enough, or overnight, they will be in regulated activity with children, even if someone else supervises them. [More info on gov.uk](#).

3. Events

28 September - Collective Actions: From Courtroom to Community - Access to Justice Foundation

An evening of discussion and insight into the role of collective actions in strengthening access to justice. This event will bring together leaders from across the legal and consumer sectors to explore how collective actions can deliver consumer protection across the UK. [Tickets are free and can be booked on Eventbrite](#).

19-23 October - Advice Saves - AdviceUK

Advice Week returns, highlighting the invaluable work of AdviceUK members and independent advice organisations across the UK. Organisations are warmly invited to get involved, sharing the Advice Saves campaign messages during the week. A toolkit will be shared shortly - [sign up for Advice UK updates to find out more](#).

2-6 November - Talk Money Week - Money and Pensions Service

Join the annual campaign to encourage more open conversations about money. [Find out more and download the participation pack](#) - available in English and Welsh.

20 November - Children's Rights Conference - Legal Action Group

This conference will bring together lawyers, academics, campaigners and those on the frontline to discuss how best to advocate for children and ensure their rights are safeguarded and enforced. [Follow LAG on Humanitix for more information.](#)

[4. Training opportunities](#)

Free digital skills training from CAST

CAST is offering a new series of free online workshops to support digital skills. The two-hour sessions promise practical tools, ideas and real-world examples - and there are multiple dates available for each, running from this September up until next April. The four workshops are as below:

- Introduction to AI: AI principles, use cases & practical tips
- Thinking About Digital Strategy: Mission-alignment & practical planning
- User-Centred Design Approaches: Service design & practical tools
- Working With Digital Agencies: Partner selection & relationship-building.

[Find out more and book.](#)

[5. Research and Publications](#)

Access to Justice Inquiry finds "no system at all"

The Justice Committee has published the findings of its Access to Justice Inquiry, pressing the government to restore legal aid as an effective, sustainable and accessible service for those who need it most. Find out more in the Inquiry report and this related [blog by Public Law Project.](#)

New report highlights lack of legal representation for those in prison under immigration powers

New research from Bail for Immigration Detainees found that 86% of respondents detained under immigration powers in prison had no lawyer, despite legal safeguards and policies. [Read the report](#).

Reports into use of AI in addressing legal issues

JUSTICE has published new research, finding that one in six people with a legal problem are turning to AI for advice. As well as seeking legal advice, users commonly asked chatbots to explain legal jargon, check advice from lawyers, draft complaints and emails, and provide emotional reassurance. The study highlighted the risks of inaccuracy, with chatbots reinforcing false beliefs in some instances. [Read the report](#).

The [BBC](#) reported on a rise in AI-assisted complaints to schools and councils, with an increase in the number of long and complex complaints. [The Times](#) reported a similar trend in Employment Tribunals.

If you have any news for future issues please get in touch at info@asauk.org.uk.



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