



Ministry
of Justice

GEN (13-14) 027

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13

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THE GOVERNMENT'S PROPOSALS TO REFORM LEGAL AID

Thank you for your letter of 15 July and the attached call for evidence. I am considering the requests you have made and you can expect a further and fuller representation from me before your deadline.

The *Transforming Legal Aid: delivering a more credible and efficient system* consultation paper was launched in April and was preceded by my announcement in March that the Government would bring forward its plan to consult on a new package of proposals to reform legal aid. The decision to accelerate the next tranche of legal aid reforms was taken because of the acute need to continue to bear down on the costs of legal aid against a backdrop of continuing pressure on public finances, and to address questions of public confidence in the legal aid scheme.

As you are aware, the Department received approximately 16,000 responses to the recent consultation which we have analysed in advance of the Government response being published in the autumn.

Alongside the Government response to the consultation I have also signalled my intention to undertake a short period of *further* consultation on certain changes to the current proposals. At the Justice Select Committee hearing on 3 July I confirmed that I would also be looking again at how the residence test relates to children under 12 months of age. Further detail on this proposal, and others adjustments to policy following consultation, will be published shortly. I would of course welcome any views the JCHR may have on these.

Regarding the impact of these proposals, I published five impact assessments and one equalities statement. Furthermore, an explicit part of the consultation's purpose was to invite any relevant information to further inform our analysis and better

understand the potential impacts of the proposals. As outlined in paragraph 8.3 of the consultation document, we will be updating our assessments.

I'm afraid it will not be possible for me to delay the reform process by agreeing not to press ahead with implementation of any finalised proposals prior to the Joint Committee on Human Rights reporting. I will endeavour to support the JCHR while it is undertaking its inquiry, and I will consider its findings alongside and in addition to the analysis that my officials are undertaking and that is currently well underway.

I look forward to assisting the committee in any way I can during the course of its investigation.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C. Grayling', with a large, stylized flourish below the name.

CHRIS GRAYLING