

Independent committee seeks views on the future of Legal Aid

The new independent Legal Aid Committee is reviewing the future shape of access to justice for those without the means to pay for it.

The Committee, which was reconvened last year, is embarking on the first fundamental review of the Island's legal aid system for 14 years and as a first step is undertaking an open public consultation.

Committee Chairman Andrew Swithinbank explained: "The focus of the Committee is to promote access to justice in a manner which is fair, equitable, transparent and professional and which uses public resources carefully and effectively. So we want to hear from you if you have experience of or any connection with the current Legal Aid system. Please let us know whether you feel the system is working well, whether you believe there could be refinements to improve access to justice or if you have ideas and suggestions for, new alternative solutions"

The consultation asks for comments regarding the ability of the current legal aid system to provide:

1. Fairness and equity in access to justice;
2. Effective use of limited resources and value for money;
3. Transparency, simplicity and efficiency;
4. Professionalism and continuous quality improvement in practice; and
5. A service shaped around the needs of its customers, clients, and users.

The Committee is also keen to encourage respondents to be unhindered by the operation of the existing arrangements and to provide ideas and express options for alternative approaches which may deliver the above principles more effectively. These may include mediation or other dispute resolution mechanisms and earlier advice and help which prevents the need to go to court.

Submissions should be sent to legalaidconsultation@gov.im or Kevan Cubbon, Legal Aid Committee, c/o General Registry, Deemsters Walk, Bucks Road, Douglas, IM1 3AR, no later than 28th November 2014.

More detail of the Legal Aid Committee and their Terms of Reference can be found at www.gov.im/registries/Legal/civil/legalaidcommittee.xml