

**Minutes of a meeting held at 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor Markwell House  
on Wednesday 08<sup>th</sup> March 2023**

<b>Members Present:</b>	Ruth Costain	RC
	Colm Andrew	CA
	Paul Coppell	PC
	David Trace ( <i>via Teams</i> )	DT
	Howard Connell	HC
<b>Officers Present:</b>	Christine Clucas	CC
	Martina Jay	MJ/LACO
	Alex Powell (Note Taker)	AP
<b>Apologies:</b>	Bob Ayres	BA
	Pam Pringle	PP

<b>10/23</b>	<b>WELCOME AND MINUTES</b>		
	<p>RC opened the meeting and apologies from BA and PP were noted.</p> <p>The amended Minutes of the meeting 11<sup>th</sup> January, having been previously circulated, were approved. The Minutes of the meeting 8<sup>th</sup> February, having been previously circulated, require an amendment and will be recirculated to the Committee by AP.</p>		<b>AP</b>
<b>11/23</b>	<b>MATTERS ARISING</b>		
		<p><b>57/22 Interim Costs in Personal Injury/Medical Negligence Cases</b> – further to the Committee’s discussion at the previous meeting, an email was sent to the Law Society on 6<sup>th</sup> March. A request was also made that the information was sent to all members of the Society.</p>	
<b>12/23</b>	<b>MATTERS REQUIRING ACTION AND DECISION</b>		
	<b>(a)</b>	<b>Update from the Legal Aid Certifying Officer (MJ)</b>	
	<b>(i)</b>	Tribunals – no update on the case to be heard on 23 <sup>rd</sup> March, The second appeal (referred Min 06/23) had been withdrawn	
	<b>(ii)</b>	<p>Criminal Disbursements – Advocates are to be asked to provide greater level of detail when requesting the LACO’s permission to incur disbursements.</p> <p>PC and HC said that establishing a protocol with the Courts should be explored. For example, when the Court orders a Psychiatric Report for an Assisted Person, should it fall to the Court or to Legal Aid to cover the cost, particularly when it is required for sentencing?</p>	<b>MJ/CC</b>

		<p>CC said that the Regulations denote Legal Aid exists to provide 'advice and assistance' but in reality, the Scheme is being asked to fund play therapy/drug testing and beyond.</p> <p>The meeting agreed that there needs to be justification of what exactly the overstretched Legal Aid budget should be used for and why.</p>	
	<b>(b)</b>	<b>Update on Staffing/Operational Matters (CC)</b>	
	<b>(i)</b>	<p>CC reported that staff absence in the Legal Aid Office is continuing however priorities are constantly being reviewed to ensure the quality of service is maintained.</p>	
<b>13/23</b>	<b>ANY OTHER BUSINESS</b>		
		<p>RC advised that the Committee's Code of Conduct is being reviewed and it will be circulated ahead of the next meeting ahead of being published on the Legal Aid website.</p> <p>She added that the matter of appointing a Vice-Chair to the Committee is being dealt with by the Appointments Commission.</p> <p>HC gave his apologies for the next meeting which takes place on Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> April.</p>	

The meeting closed at 14:39

**Minutes agreed  
By  
Chair**



**Date** 17/04/2023