



November 2006

Government Response to the Consultation on Legal Aid Procurement

The Department for Constitutional Affairs and the Legal Services Commission today published *Legal Aid Reform: the Way Ahead*, which sets out how we will reform the procurement of legal aid services, moving towards a market-based system. It is our reply to the responses we received to the consultation paper *Legal Aid: a sustainable future (CP 13/06)* which was published simultaneously on 13 July 2006 with Lord Carter of Coles' independent report *Legal Aid – A market-based approach to reform*.

The consultation period closed on 12 October. We received 2,372 replies to the consultation paper. We also listened carefully to the views of over 2,700 practitioners who attended open meetings with Vera Baird and events held by the Legal Services Commission nationwide between July and October.

We are fully committed to the market-based approach set out by Lord Carter. We will move to fixed and graduated fees, as the key transitional step towards best value competition. However, we have made some adjustments to the timing and sequencing of some of the proposed schemes, as well as to some of the detail of the original proposals, where we believe they will improve the proposals and in response to concerns expressed during the consultation process.

We believe the approach set out in our response will provide the best guarantee of an affordable, good quality legal aid system that is fair to the vulnerable, fair to taxpayers, fair to defendants, and fair for practitioners.

Further copies of the response can be downloaded from the DCA and LSC websites (www.dca.gov.uk and www.legalservices.gov.uk)

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