

# **Social Justice and Regeneration Committee**

**SJR(2) –12-06(p5)**

**Date: Thursday 21 September 2006**

**Time: 9.30am – 12.30pm**

**Venue: Senedd, National Assembly for Wales**

**Title: Delivering the CLS Strategy in Wales: Update September 2006**

## **Background**

Since the launch of the CLS Strategy, Making Legal Rights a Reality, in March of this year the Commission's CLS Policy team have been working jointly with the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) in establishing the best approach to deliver the CLS in Wales.

As a result of this work a draft policy paper, Making Legal Rights a Reality in Wales, has been developed jointly between the LSC and WAG. The paper places the CLS Strategy in the context of WAG's vision for developing and delivering public services in Wales with reference to its key policy initiatives. There are strong links between the core vision set out by WAG and that of the Commission's as set out in the CLS Strategy. Delivering high quality public services that meet the needs of individuals and communities that they serve is at the heart of both WAG's and the Commission's vision for service delivery.

The policy paper is likely to be finalised and signed off by Ministers in the autumn and then WAG intends to circulate the paper for consultation amongst suppliers and stakeholders.

By working jointly with WAG, the Commission has been able to ensure that priorities that are unique to Wales, namely those stemming from devolution, language and physical geography, have been fully considered and taken into account. In this context WAG has identified several key priorities for legal and advice services that are specific to Wales, such as overindebtedness (including gambling debts), family income maximisation, refugees and migrant workers and rural access.

## **Joint Commissioning**

The Commission has a responsibility to facilitate joint planning and commissioning with other funders of advice services. The Commission is currently working with WAG and the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) on how policy relating to the governance of the CLS across England and Wales can be developed into an effective and accountable structure for Wales.

One of the initial steps to achieve effective governance of the CLS in Wales will be to establish a Wales Committee for the CLS. The Committee will comprise of key policy makers and funders of

advice services in Wales. In addition a National Consultative Committee for England and Wales will be established. The Wales Committee for the CLS will feed into the National Consultative Committee for England and Wales to ensure that issues that are unique to Wales are properly considered and taken on board.

In order to deliver the CLS Strategy effectively in Wales it is important that the Commission consults and works with a range of stakeholders. In addition to WAG and WLGA some of the key stakeholders that have been identified include Local Authorities, Shelter Cymru, Citizens Advice Cymru, Wales Council for Voluntary Action, Welsh Consumer Council and the Law Society Wales. These and other key stakeholders will have an important role to play in terms of both effective governance of the CLS and in ensuring that the CLS strategy achieves its core aim of developing and delivering advice services that meet the needs of clients; with a focus on reaching the most vulnerable and socially excluded.

The Commission will therefore seek to work with all of its key stakeholders in Wales to explore opportunities for the joint-commissioning of services; gaining a comprehensive understanding of local need; achieving value for money and increasing public knowledge and awareness of legal rights.

## **Additional Information**

When drafting the joint policy paper, Making Legal Rights a Reality in Wales, the Commission discussed various options with WAG and WLGA in deciding the best way to coordinate the joint commissioning approach.

The options explored range from developing joint commissioning on a local (i.e. individual local authorities), regional (i.e. groupings of local authorities) and a Wales-wide basis. Each option comes with its own advantages and disadvantages but initial discussions suggest that the regional approach may be the most sensible and practical option. The exact nature of the regional structure would need to be explored further and we would remain flexible in determining this. Existing governance structures, the need for services and the way that services are currently accessed would all need to be taken into account when establishing regions for joint commissioning. We will use the planned consultation as set out in paragraph 3 in order to seek others opinions on the possible options for joint commissioning.

## **Next Steps**

The Commission will work closely with WAG and WLGA in order to finalise the policy paper, Making Legal Rights a Reality in Wales.

The final draft is expected to be ready during the autumn.