

**Legal Services Commission
Trainee Solicitors Training – Legal Aid Scheme
Final Report**

April 2009

Contents

1	Summary
2	Introduction
3	Terms of Reference
4	Methodology
5	Findings
6	Conclusions
Appendix One	Principals' Questionnaire
Appendix Two	Trainees and Newly Qualified Solicitors' Questionnaire
Appendix Three	Compilation of Responses to the Questionnaires

1 Summary

One of the agreed actions arising out of the trainee solicitors' conference held by the Legal Services Commission (LSC) in October 2008 was the need for training on legal aid practice and procedure to legal aid trainees.

In order to design workshops that properly meet the needs of trainees and their employers, a survey was carried out during March and April 2009. The questionnaires were sent to 261 firms. There was a good response with 84 training principals and 103 trainees or newly qualified solicitors completing a questionnaire.

Key findings from that survey were:

- Elements of legal aid practice and procedure are currently covered on the Legal Practice Course (LPC) but these vary between the various providers;
- Training on legal aid during the LPC appears to be minimal, with elements such as the completion of forms, LSC contracts and the funding code being covered in varying detail in some elective subjects;
- 75% of trainees indicated that the LPC should cover some additional legal aid training;
- Less than one third of trainees have attended another training course on legal aid practice and procedure but, on the whole, that training covered only a small selection of legal aid topics;
- The overwhelming majority of trainees and their training principals expressed an interest in a training course for trainees on legal aid practice and procedure (93.2% and 89.3% respectively);
- The LSC should either provide the training itself or, alternatively, approve the content of a training course to be provided by an independent provider;
- The training should cover the completion of LSC forms, the LSC contract terms, the Contract Specification, the Costs Assessment Guidance, the Funding Code, and the LSC audits.

- The LSC should hold the training courses at different times in the year to give firms the maximum flexibility in terms of organising cover and should hold the courses in a variety of different locations across the UK.

2 Introduction

In October 2008, the LSC held a conference specifically targeted at legal aid trainee solicitors. Feedback obtained from trainees who attended this event indicated a need for much closer links with the LSC early on in their careers.

The LSC has decided that one of the agreed actions arising out of the trainee solicitors' conference is the development of a number of training workshops which will be used to provide specific guidance on legal aid practice and procedure to legal aid trainees. These workshops will be designed in order to provide information about how legal aid is administered both by providers and the LSC.

In order to design workshops that properly meet the needs of trainees and their employers, the LSC instructed DG Legal to design and carry out a survey. This survey has been used to obtain the views and requirements of the following:

- Trainees or newly qualified solicitors who participated in the LSC's Training Contract Grant Scheme (TCGS) in 2006, 2007 or 2008;
- Other trainees or newly qualified solicitors at TCGS participating firms; and
- Training Principals at TCGS participating firms.

This survey would be used to ascertain the views of the trainees and their training principals about training on legal aid practice and procedure; that which is currently available (e.g. on their Legal Practice Course or elsewhere), and their requirements for other training.

3 Terms of Reference

The brief to DG Legal consisted of the following:

- To devise two questionnaires in order to obtain comments from trainees and their principals, in particular, with regard to their requirements for training on legal aid practice and procedure;
- To send the two questionnaires to those firms which participated in the 2006, 2007 and 2008 TCGS;
- To analyse the responses to the questionnaires in order to draw conclusions about training needs and requirements; and
- To prepare a report on recommendations for the development of a training programme based on requirements identified in the responses to both sets of questionnaires.

4 Methodology

Two questionnaires were developed. One was to be completed by the training principals; the other questionnaire was intended to be completed by trainees or newly qualified solicitors who had participated in 2006, 2007 or 2008 TCGS, or by other trainees/newly qualified solicitors at the same participating firms. The purpose of the questionnaires was primarily to obtain the views of potential participants in the training scheme together with their training principal's and identify training needs which could be met by the LSC's intended workshops.

Prior to finalising the questionnaires, the training principals of six firms, which had participated in the 2008 TCGS, were approached in order that they might 'test' the questionnaires. The rationale behind this approach was to identify any weaknesses in the questionnaire and to have the chance to add to or clarify any questions and/or amend the layout before sending them to all potential participants.

Out of the six testers, five were able to assist us within the timescale. Each of those firms provided DG Legal with their responses to the training principals' questionnaire and directed trainees within their firm to complete the trainees and newly qualified solicitors' questionnaire. As well as answering the questionnaires, the training principals and trainees also provided feedback on the wording, layout and comprehensiveness of the two questionnaires and, from their comments and suggestions, a number of amendments were identified and revisions made.

A copy of the final Training Principals' questionnaire is included in Appendix Two. A copy of the Trainee and Newly Qualified Solicitors' questionnaire is included in Appendix Three.

The two questionnaires were sent to a total of 261 firms; 62 firms which had participated in the 2006 scheme; a further 55 firms from the 2007 scheme; and a further 144 firms from 2008 scheme. Some of the participants received training grant awards in more than one of the schemes.

The questionnaires were confidential and were returned to DG Legal for analysis.

The questionnaires were completed by 84 training principals and by 103 trainees or newly qualified solicitors. As the majority of the questionnaires were returned anonymously, it is not possible to work out which firms responded. However, working on the basis that we received at least one questionnaire from a minimum of 84 firms, on a percentage basis, we received a response from 32.2% of the total number of firms approached.

5 Findings

We set out below a summary of the results from the training principals' questionnaires (84) and the trainees and newly qualified solicitors' questionnaires (103). Conclusions about the training needs and requirements are set out in Section 6.

A compilation of the responses received is in Appendix Three.

5.1 Training Principals

2008 TCGS Start Date

The training principals were asked to specify the start date for any trainees recruited under the LSC's 2008 Training Contract Grant Scheme.

The table below summarises the results.

Date	Previous schemes	Sept 2008 – Dec 2008	Jan 2009 – April 2009	May 2009 – Aug 2009	Sep 2009 – Dec 2009	Not yet finalised
Responses	21	8	29	6	7	11
%	32.2%	9.5%	34.5%	7.1%	8.3%	2.4%

We presume that some principals misunderstood the question, as the results included start dates in 2007 and 2008 which would relate to earlier training grant schemes. Start dates which were clearly for trainees recruited under the 2006 or 2007 schemes amounted to nearly a third of all responses. It is possible that some of the trainees who commenced their training contract between September 2008 and December 2008 may also fall under a previous scheme.

Additional Trainee Recruitment

The principals were asked whether they had recruited any additional trainees for 2009 who will also undertake training in publicly funded areas of work.

The table below summarises the results.

Yes	29.8%
No	70.2%

Of those who answered yes, the number of additional trainees recruited is illustrated in the table below.

No of additional Trainees	1	2	3	4	5	6	More than 6	Total no of additional trainees
Responses	17	2	13	1	0	1	1	
Total Trainees	17	4	39	4	0	6	7*	
%	68.0%	8.0%	12.0%	4.0%	0.0%	4.0%	4.0%	

** only 1 firm indicated that it had recruited more than 6 additional trainees – this firm stated it had recruited 7 additional trainees*

Of those trainees, the table below illustrates the variance in the start dates.

Training Contract Start dates	Sept 2008 – Dec 2008	Jan 2009 – April 2009	May 2009 - Aug 2009	Sep 2009 – Dec 2009	Not yet finalised	Total confirmed starting in 2009
Responses	1	9	6	11	2	26
%	3.4%	31.0%	20.7%	37.9%	6.9%	89.7%

Total Trainees

The table below illustrates the number of trainees the organisations will have in total in 2009 who will undertake training in publicly funded areas of work.

No of Trainees	1	2	3	4	5	6	More than 6	Total no of trainees
Responses	32	22	11	2	4	4	9	
Total trainees	32	44	33	8	20	24	97 *	
%	38.1%	26.2%	13.1%	2.4%	4.8%	4.8%	10.7%	

* In the 'More than 6' category, the number of additional trainees ranged from 7 to 20 (the average being 11 and the total amounting to 97 across those 9 firms).

Trainees' Experience

The table below illustrates the percentage of trainees with experience of working within the legal aid scheme.

No of years previous experience	None	Approx 6 mths	Approx 1 year	Approx 2 years	Approx 3 years	Approx 4 years	Approx 5 years	More than 5 years
Responses	78	14	65	25	8	1	2	8
%	38.8%	7.0%	32.3%	12.4%	4.0%	0.5%	1.0%	4.0%

The areas of work varied significantly. The table below gives an indication of the areas of work covered by trainees at the individual firms.

Area of Practice	Responses <i>(the % shown is an indication of the number of firms who indicated that they have trainees practising in that area of work)</i>
Family	28.6%
Crime	18.1%
Housing	13.3%
Debt	8.6%
Welfare Benefits	7.6%
Immigration	5.7%
Mental Health	4.8%
Employment	3.8%
Prison Law	2.9%
Education	1.9%
Community Care	1.9%
Public Law	1.0%

Civil Liberties	1.0%
AAP	1.0%

Other areas of work included civil litigation and insolvency work.

Training on the LPC

Part of the reasoning behind the survey was to ascertain what training on legal aid practice and procedure is currently available on the LPC. It was anticipated that the trainees would have better knowledge of the training they attended and were therefore asked for more detailed information about the areas covered. However, it was interesting to see the training principals' perception of the training undertaken by their trainees.

The training principals were asked whether training on legal aid practice and procedure is available on the LPC. The table below summarises the training principals' responses.

	Yes	No	Don't Know
Responses	29	24	29
%	34.5%	28.6%	34.5%

Of those who answered yes, the table below summarises the principals' views of how comprehensive that training was.

Scale	Not at all comprehensive (1)	Somewhat incomprehensive (2)	Fairly comprehensive (3)	Extremely comprehensive (4)
Responses	10	6	7	5
%	35.7%	21.4%	25.0%	17.9%

Opinion was therefore fairly equally divided.

Other training

The survey was also used to ascertain what other training on legal aid practice and procedure was being made available to trainees.

The training principals were asked whether their trainees attended other training on legal aid practice and procedure. The table below summarises the training principals' responses.

	Yes	No	Don't Know
Responses	47	28	8
%	55.9%	33.3%	9.5%

The remaining 1.3% did not answer the question.

Of those who answered yes, principals were asked to specify who had delivered the training. The table below summarises the responses.

Provider	In-house (other than ongoing/training through work)	External counsel (i.e. barristers chambers)	External professional trainer	External other
Responses	5	2	5	10
%	10.2%	4.1%	12.2%	20.4%

The remaining 51% (25) of recipients who answered yes indicated that they had attended training in-house on an ongoing basis (rather than a block period of training or course).

In-House

Those providing in-house training (but not merely ongoing training throughout the training contract) indicated that the duration of that training was between 2 days and 1 week. Approximately half of those firms indicated that the training covered both the completion of LSC forms and the funding code. The other topics which were covered appeared to be the firm's own internal procedural matters and/or legal matters. In all cases, the training was given to trainees during their training contract. Unsurprisingly, all of the firms indicated that

their in-house training was 'fairly comprehensive' (60%) or 'extremely comprehensive' (40%).

External Counsel

From the responses, it would appear that the training provided by the external counsel related to legal or non-procedural aspects of legal aid.

External Professional Trainer

The names of the external professional trainers were: Legal Aid Practitioners Group, DG Legal, JRS Consulting, and CLT. One recipient included the College of Law and indicated that the training was given at the LPC stage – it is assumed that this formed part of the LPC and so is therefore excluded from the above figures.

The duration of the training was either ½ day (50% (3)) or 1 day (50% (3)).

Only one course covered a range of procedural topics including the completion of forms, the contract standard terms and specification, audits, costs guidance and the funding code. The other courses covered only one or two of those topics or non-procedural matters.

66.7% (4) of the attendees were at the training contract stage. The remainder either attended before their training contract commenced or attended in the commissioning period.

All attendees on these courses indicated that the training was either 'fairly comprehensive (3)' (83.3% (5)) or 'extremely comprehensive (4)' (16.6% (1)).

External other

60% (16) of those who indicated that their trainees were trained by other external providers said that the training was provided by the Legal Services Commission. In all but one case (where they said it lasted ½ day), this was said to have lasted 1 day.

Four principals stated that this training primarily covered the completion of LSC forms. One or two firms indicated that it also covered the funding code.

Four principals said that the training was 'fairly comprehensive (3)'. The other principals did not give the course a rating.

Other training was provided by or on behalf of Advice Services Alliance, Young Legal Aid Lawyers, and Nottingham Law Society. Insufficient data was provided on these courses to draw any conclusions.

Interest in a Specific Legal Aid Training Course

The survey was used to ascertain the level of interest in a training course covering legal aid practice and procedure.

The table below illustrates that the overwhelming number of principals would be interested.

Yes	89.3%
No	9.5%

The remaining 1.2% did not answer the question.

For those who answered no, 87.5% (7) said that the primary reason why they would not be interested was because they considered their in-house training to be more than sufficient. The other reason given by firms was a concern about the cost of the training.

Of those who answered yes, those who said they would prefer the course to be managed and run by an independent course provider, by the LSC or gave no preference, can be broken down as follows:

	Independent course provider	Legal Services Commission	No Preference
Responses	16	30	29
%	21.3%	40.0%	38.7%

Excluded from the figures above, two firms expressly indicated that what they would actually prefer would be a combination of both the LSC and an external provider.

Reasons given for choosing the LSC

Almost twice as many principals expressed a preference for the training to be delivered by the LSC compared to an independent provider. Almost an equal number did not express a preference.

Out of those who gave reasons for choosing the LSC, 70% (14) did so on the basis that they considered that the LSC would have the most up to date and accurate knowledge about the subject matter and would therefore be the better choice. Some of the training principals felt that they would have the opportunity to ask specific questions about the subject matter and that the LSC would have a “*greater understanding and comprehension*” and would be more “*authoritative*”.

For example:

“It is always good to get the LSC's current 'take' on practice and procedure. The horse's mouth is best as long as training is of good standard.”

“If the LSC run the course there is more chance that the info given will be accurate. Two of our staff attended a Resolution Course on fixed fees and were given completely inaccurate information.”

“[the LSC can answer] direct questions about policy, specific problems the trainee has had with a particular issue. An independent provider couldn't do the same.”

25% (5) preferred the LSC for cost reasons; considering that the courses would either be free or low cost and that the LSC could ensure “... *value for money.*”

There were only a few other reasons provided and these included the need for trainees to develop good relations with the LSC and locality. For example:

“Developing a relationship with the LSC is key to understanding its role, function and philosophies - hand in hand with the day to day mechanics of applying the regulations.”

“LSC courses tend to be local.”

Reasons given for choosing an independent provider

One third (3) of those who gave reasons for choosing an independent provider did so because of the independence or lack of bias.

One principal said that an independent provider would, in their view, be “*much more in touch with what happens in real practices than the LSC*” and that the LSC would be “*more likely to present with spin that their schemes and schedules work!*”

Another principal stated that the “*LSC does not appreciate the practitioner's constant dilemma of cost against service (quality) and training should include how to achieve this balance whilst meeting LSC quality demands.*”

Another principal said that an independent provider would “*provide perspective of user not supplier*” and that the “*LSC often fails to understand what practice is like*”.

One third (3) of those who gave reasons also preferred the experience and *“better training skills”* that a professional trainer could offer. One principal stated that they would be *“more used to lecturing and passing on skills”* and another that they *“would prefer a skilled trainer rather than a note-learning and dull presentation.”*

A third of responses (3) also included other reasons. One principal stated that training *“... would be better coming from a body with experience of working with the LSC rather than by the LSC”*.

Another reason given was that, in their view, independent providers *“generally tend to have a keener understanding of issues currently impacting on private practice including the need to keep abreast of developments in law and practice and clearly ensuring good value for money”*.

Another stated that previously attended LSC courses *“...have not proved very helpful”*.

No preference

Almost 39% (29) of principals indicated that they had no preference as regards the trainer.

One principal stated that *“it is the quality of the training which matters not the identity of the course provider.”* This same principal said that they *“would prefer this [training] to be part of the PSC....We are otherwise 'losing' the trainee to even more training days.”*

Legal Aid Modules

Principals were asked, if they were to send their trainee(s) on a specific legal aid course, which legal aid modules would they consider important to be covered on the course.

The tables below summarise the principals’ opinions on the importance of the various areas of legal aid practice and procedure.

Completion of forms					
Scale	Not at all important (1)	Fairly unimportant (2)	Fairly important (3)	Extremely important (4)	No rating
Responses	4	4	11	56	9
%	4.8%	4.8%	13.1%	66.7%	10.6%

An overwhelming 79.8% of principals considered that it was important (fairly or extremely so) to cover the completion of legal aid forms. From the principals' perspective therefore, this is area which should be focused on in the training.

Contract Standard Terms					
Scale	Not at all important (1)	Fairly unimportant (2)	Fairly important (3)	Extremely important (4)	No rating
Responses	5	7	36	27	9
%	6.0%	8.3%	42.9%	32.1%	10.7%

Again, a very high percentage (75%) of principals favoured the inclusion of training on the standard terms of LSC contracts. In view of the perceived duration of the planned training, this topic could probably be narrowed so as to focus on those contract terms which impact directly on trainees or which are relevant to their positions.

Contract Specification					
Scale	Not at all important (1)	Fairly unimportant (2)	Fairly important (3)	Extremely important (4)	No rating
Responses	2	11	39	23	9
%	2.4%	13.1%	46.4%	27.4%	10.7%

A similarly high percentage (73.8%) of principals considered the inclusion of training on the contract specification to be important (fairly or extremely so).

Costs Assessment Guidance					
Scale	Not at all important (1)	Fairly unimportant (2)	Fairly important (3)	Extremely important (4)	No rating
Responses	2	8	25	40	9
%	2.4%	9.5%	29.8%	47.6%	10.7%

Again, a very high percentage (77.4%) of principals favoured the inclusion of training on the costs assessment guidance.

Funding Code					
Scale	Not at all important (1)	Fairly unimportant (2)	Fairly important (3)	Extremely important (4)	No rating
Responses	1	1	20	53	9
%	1.2%	1.2%	23.8%	63.1%	10.7%

In view of the extremely low number of principals who did not consider it important to include training on the funding code, from their perspective, this is another area which should be focused on in the training.

Audits					
Scale	Not at all important (1)	Fairly unimportant (2)	Fairly important (3)	Extremely important (4)	No rating
Responses	2	7	21	45	9
%	2.4%	8.3%	25.0%	53.6%	10.7%

Again, a very high percentage (78.6%) of principals favoured the inclusion of training on legal aid audits.

Evidently, from the training principals' perspective, the training should cover all of the above topics. A higher proportion of responses indicated that the completion of forms, the costs assessment guidance, the funding code and audits are areas, from the principals' perspective, of extreme importance.

Additional Training Modules

The training principals were asked whether any additional areas of legal aid practice and procedure should be covered in the training.

71.4% (60) of principals did not provide any indication or otherwise indicated that there were no other areas which they felt should be included.

Of the remaining 28.6% (24), the answers were varied and many of the areas indicated would probably form part of the areas noted in the previous section.

Six principals wanted to see training on funding in the different areas of practice, including fixed fees, exceptional cases, high cost cases and the costing of files including the *“codes to be used under the contract for costs claims...”*. Four more principals wanted training to focus on eligibility, means testing and/or obtaining prior authority in appropriate cases.

Seven principals wanted to see training on client care and some, the *“balance between client care and costs”*. For example, *“getting trainees at an early stage to manage their clients’ expectations and their time so that they are not pestered by calls and requests and do not take an age doing work or doing unnecessary work, making graduated fee cases totally unviable”*. One principal said the LSC should *“also consider a topic of how to deal with difficult clients - perhaps it should be couched as how to deal with disordered clients.”* Linked in to this, three principals expressly wanted time management training.

Some principals wanted to see training on policy including the future of legal aid including training on CLACs/CLANs and *“contracting arrangements especially in light of new tendering (how fits together/policy, future of legal aid, importance of standards)”*. Some wanted to see training on profitability and, in particular, *“how to make legal aid profitable”* and *“maximising efficiency of dealings with the LSC.”*

Some principals were more expressive in their requirements and these are set out below:

“Audits - feed into file management and case preparation.” It was identified that this training would probably need to be delivered by an experienced case worker or peer reviewer.

“..generic skills like problem solving, interviewing, listening, time management, the presentation of self, communication – a 2 hour session.”

“new developments in the law.”

“...consider links between various areas e.g. immigration mental health and crime.”

“...an updater on disclosure, confidentiality and professional ethics which may be covered on the KPI, E&D etc module outlined [in the questionnaire]”.

“How legal aid scheme is being diminished by the government!”

On the type of training, one principal indicated that open-book type workshops were the only practical option and that, in their view, *“lecture type courses don’t work well”*.

When to Present the Training Course

With regard to considering the best time to run the course, the table below illustrates the principals’ opinions.

Time of year	Prior to Start of Training Contract	First year of Training Contract	Second year of Training Contract	No preference	Other specified preference
Responses	3	19	3	36	27
%	3.4%	21.6%	3.4%	40.9%	30.7%

A few principals indicated that the course should be held on more than one occasion or that training should be split into two sessions – an introductory course in the first few months of the training contact with another more detailed session, later on.

Of those who specified a certain preference (30.7%), the main concerns appeared to be trainee absence and holidays. One principal’s view was that the course should be held *“ideally several times throughout the year so that we did not need to send all trainees at once (causes cover problems)”*. Other principals wanted the LSC to avoid major holiday periods. However, other than the need to avoid major holidays such as Easter and

Christmas, there didn't appear to be any real consensus as to the times to avoid. About the same number of people who wanted to avoid Spring expressed a preference for that period; similarly with the other seasons.

Many wished to avoid Autumn/Winter to *"avoid holiday commitments"*, because it is a *"busy time"*, or *"because of possibility of bad weather"*. However, almost an equal number of principals preferred the winter months because it was *"less busy"* or included *"late entries"* (i.e. trainees starting their training contracts in January/February).

Similarly, many wished to avoid the Summer months of June to August due to *"staff shortages"* but a similar number preferred those months because *"work demands may be lower"* or because there were *"no other studies at that time."*

One principal gave a very exact response as follows:

"not August/September - holidays. Not Easter - again holidays. Not Christmas. This rules out December, April, March, August & September".

Another indicated *"not Dec/Jan/Feb because of possibility of bad weather; not June/July/August because of holidays."*

A few principals indicated that it would be preferable to coincide the course with times of legal aid changes (i.e. eligibility rates) in April or October.

Convenient Locations

Principals were asked to give the suggested locations a rating of between 1 (being the most convenient) and 6 (being least convenient).

In analysing the responses, we first determined the number of principals who gave the different locations a rating of 1 (most convenient) and which would therefore, out of the options available, be the principals' first choice. The results are illustrated in the table below.

Location	%
London	45.2% (38)
Bristol	13.1% (11)
Manchester	11.9% (10)
Birmingham	9.5% (8)
Sheffield	9.5% (8)
Newcastle	4.8% (4)

This provides an overview of the principals' first choices but does not accurately reflect the overall popularity of the various locations.

A more detailed analysis of the results is set out below. The tables below show the percentage of principals who gave a rating of 1 or 2 (most convenient); 3 or 4 (less convenient); and 5 or 6 (least convenient).

Many principals did not answer the question or did not otherwise provide a rating. These were classified as having no preference but, for ease of reading, are not shown in the tables below.

London						
Rating	1	2	3	4	5	6
	Most convenient		Less Convenient		Least Convenient	
Responses	38	3	10	5	10	3
%	45.2%	3.6%	11.9%	6.0%	11.9%	3.6%
	48.8%		17.9%		15.5%	

Birmingham						
Rating	1	2	3	4	5	6
	Most convenient		Less Convenient		Least Convenient	
Responses	8	23	18	4	1	4
%	9.5%	27.4%	21.4%	4.8%	1.2%	4.8%
	36.9%		26.2%		6.0%	

Manchester						
Rating	1	2	3	4	5	6
	Most convenient		Less Convenient		Least Convenient	
Responses	10	9	12	16	4	4
%	11.9%	10.7%	14.3%	19.0%	4.8%	4.8%
	22.6%		33.3%		9.6%	

Sheffield						
Rating	1	2	3	4	5	6
	Most convenient		Less Convenient		Least Convenient	
Responses	8	9	4	9	21	4
%	9.5%	10.7%	4.8%	10.7%	25.0%	4.8%
	20.2%		15.5%		29.8%	

Bristol						
Rating	1	2	3	4	5	6
	Most convenient		Less Convenient		Least Convenient	
Responses	11	6	6	4	7	21
%	13.1%	7.1%	7.1%	4.8%	8.3%	25.0%
	20.2%		11.9%		33.3%	

Newcastle						
Rating	1	2	3	4	5	6
	Most convenient		Less Convenient		Least Convenient	
Responses	4	7	17	6	19	21
%	4.8%	0.0%	3.6%	11.9%	6.0%	39.3%
	4.8%		15.5%		45.3%	

Some principals questioned why other locations were not suggested. Two principals questioned why Leeds was not an option. A further two principals felt that a venue in Wales would be necessary. Other suggestions were Nottingham, Liverpool, Brighton or Southampton.

From the results, the more popular locations would appear to London, Birmingham and Manchester. The least popular would clearly be Newcastle. Both Sheffield and Bristol have a similarly, broad range of votes.

5.2 Trainees and Newly Qualified Solicitors

In all cases below, for ease of reference, 'trainees' is used to refer to all those who completed the surveys, whether students, trainee solicitors or newly qualified solicitors.

Stage of Training Cycle

Trainees were asked to specify the stage they are presently in their training cycle.

The tables below summarise the results.

Legal Services Commission Funded Trainee					
Stage	Legal Practice Course	Training Contract	Commissioned Period	Completed Scheme	Working outside scheme
Responses	7	77	1	0	2
%	8.0%	88.5%	1.1%	0.0%	2.3%

Other Trainee					
Stage	Legal Practice Course	Training Contract	Commissioned Period	Completed Scheme	Working outside scheme
Responses	2	17	0	0	1
%	10.0%	85%	0.0%	0.0%	5.0%

Some trainees indicated that they are studying for their LPC at the same time as training under their training contract.

For both the LSC funded trainees and other trainees, the overwhelming majority are in the training contract stage of their training cycle.

LPC Provider

Trainees were asked to specify the name of their LPC provider and the full name of the course.

The tables below summarise the results.

Course Provider	College of Law	BPP	Northumbria University	Nottingham Law School	University of Westminster	Manchester Metropolitan University	Other
Responses	44	8	7	5	4	4	22
%	42.7%	7.8%	6.8%	4.9%	3.9%	3.9%	21.4%

Name of Course	Legal Practice Course	Post-Graduate Diploma in Legal Practice
Responses	86	8
%	83.5%	7.8%

The remaining 8.6% of trainees did not answer the question.

Training on the LPC

The trainees were asked what areas of training on legal aid practice and procedure were available on the LPC.

The table below summarises the trainees' overall responses.

Areas covered	Completion of Forms	Contract Standard Terms	Contract Specification	Costs Assessment Guidance	Funding Code	Audits
Responses	57	14	10	10	25	7
% (% who indicated that area was covered on their course)	55.3%	13.6%	9.7%	9.7%	24.3%	6.8%

The table below shows which areas are more generally covered by the more popular providers (number of responses in brackets).

	Completion of Forms	Contract Standard Terms	Contract Specification	Costs Assessment Guidance	Funding Code	Audits
College of law	45.5% (20)	13.6% (6)	11.4% (5)	15.9% (7)	20.5% (9)	9.1% (4)
BPP	75% (6)	12.5% (1)	12.5% (1)	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Northumbria University	42.9% (3)	14.3% (1)	0.0%	0.0%	28.6% (2)	0.0%
Nottingham Law School	40.0% (5)	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Manchester Met Uni	100% (4)	25.0% (1)	25.0% (1)	25.0% (1)	50.0% (2)	0.0%
University of Westminster	25.0% (1)	50.0% (2)	0.0%	0.0%	25.0% (1)	0.0%

The trainees were also asked to indicate which other areas of legal aid practice and procedure were covered on their LPC.

66% (68) of trainees indicated that there were no other areas of legal aid practice and procedure covered on their LPC.

Of the remaining 34%, the answers were varied and many of the areas indicated would probably form part of the areas noted above.

5.8% (6) said that the LPC covered the application of the statutory charge. 5.8% (6) said that it covered eligibility/means testing. Other responses included 'general funding' (and in particular, in the family and crime categories), the "*general structure of the LSC, CLS and CDS*", appeals processes and judicial review.

Many trainees stated that the LPC did not go into any significant detail on any legal aid issue. Many said they were covered only in some elective subjects and then only by way of an introduction, single lecture or explained briefly in the course books.

The table below summarises the trainees' views of how comprehensive the training was.

Scale	Not at all comprehensive (1)	Somewhat incomprehensive (2)	Fairly comprehensive (3)	Extremely comprehensive (4)	N/A
Responses	25	23	41	9	2
%	24.3%	22.3%	39.8%	8.7%	1.9%

The remaining 3% did not answer this question.

Given the answers to Q3 and Q4 of the questionnaire, it can be assumed that the majority of trainees answered this question on the basis of the training given overall on the LPC, rather than in relation to training on legal aid practice and procedure.

The answers given in Q3 and Q4 would appear to indicate that the legal aid training was not generally comprehensive on any course.

Comments received in relation to Q6 would also support this. For instance, the following comments made by trainees:

"The training on the course was very comprehensive but legal aid was not covered very well."

"The whole area of public funding was dealt with in a very brief way, almost as an afterthought. There was a little more instruction during optional modules related specifically to legal help type work e.g. family, housing, but in general exposure to legal aid was cursory at best, possibly reflecting the fact that most LPCs are geared towards High Street practice."

"One realises that the LPC is an intensive course but the needs of potential legal aid practitioners need to be catered for, perhaps by way of an elective subject dedicated to legal aid practice and procedure. This certainly would have helped me hit the floor running."

"There is currently very little training available for students who intend to go into legal aid practice."

Additional Legal Aid Training on the LPC

The trainees were asked to indicate which additional areas of legal aid practice and procedure they would have liked to see covered on the LPC.

24.2% (25) of trainees did not provide an answer to this question or otherwise indicated that there were no other areas which needed to be covered.

32% (33) of trainees indicated that the LPC should cover or go into further detail on the completion of legal aid forms, for both controlled work and licensed work. 7.8% (8) of trainees were more descriptive and indicated that this should include the processes of challenging the grant of a certificate or obtaining an extension to any limitations.

One trainee said, in particular, that they would like to see *“detailed guidance on completing legal help form, especially in relation to the rule for passing the means and sufficient benefit tests...the use of example clients would be very helpful, particularly for borderline clients.”* In addition, a *“clearer explanation of the process of moving from Legal Help to certificated work would have been very useful.”*

Another said that s/he *“had no knowledge of funding or forms until began employment”* and that s/he *“would like some basic overview of the system and limitations of certificates to be incorporated on a mandatory level for further year groups specifically in sectors “family”, “PI” etc where legal aid is primary source of funding”*.

Other trainees wanted to see more than just the completion forms and, as one trainee said, would like to see the LPC cover *“the practical aspects of LSC funding in the training”*. Another said they wanted the course to be *“more practical”* with *“hands on studies of legal aid work, including formalities of practice and generic advice to clients”*.

17.5% (18) of trainees wanted to see the LPC cover the standard terms of LSC contracts. 19.4% (20) wanted to see it cover the contract specification.

24.3% (25) of trainees said that the LPC should cover the costs assessment guidance and 32% (33) indicated that it should cover the funding code. One particular trainee felt that *“full copies of ‘the Manual/Funding Code’ [should be] given to each student...as these are voluminous it is not until you are able to highlight/make notes on the documents that you*

are able to understand them and refer back to them - this is difficult when copies are shared.”

Another trainee said that there should be “more teaching around the funding code and more detail on the process - how to make a good application, applications for extensions, variation, discharge etc.”

6.8% (7) especially wanted to see the LPC cover or go into further detail in the area of financial eligibility.

Other areas included the statutory charge, advocacy and other more specialised topics covering various areas of work, such as family, mental health and immigration.

Other Training

The survey was also used to ascertain what other training on legal aid practice and procedure was being made available to trainees.

The trainees were asked whether they attended other training on legal aid practice and procedure. The table below summarises their responses.

Yes	54.5%
No	43.7%

The remaining 1.8% did not provide an answer.

Of those who answered yes, trainees were asked to specify who had delivered the training.

The table below summarises the responses.

Provider	In-house (other than ongoing/training through work)	External counsel (i.e. barristers chambers)	External professional trainer	External other
Responses	13	2	6	12
%	22.8%	3.5%	10.5%	21.0%

In-House

The remaining 43.9% (25) of recipients who answered yes indicated that they had attended training in-house on an ongoing basis (rather than a block period of training or course).

Those who attended other in-house training (but not merely ongoing training throughout the training contract) indicated that the duration of that training was between 2 hours and 1 week (the average being 1.5 days).

Just under half of those firms indicated that the training covered the completion of LSC forms. The other main area appeared to be training on eligibility.

The coverage of other areas appeared to be quite even with an equal number of trainees stating that the training covered contract terms, the specification and costs assessment guidance. The other topics covered appeared to be legal matters.

Approximately one third of the trainees attended the training before they commenced their training contract. The remaining two thirds of trainees attended during their training contract.

Only one trainee said that their in-house training was 'somewhat incomprehensive (2)'. Other trainees who provided an answer to this part of the questions were split equally considering the training to be either 'fairly comprehensive (3)' or 'extremely comprehensive (4)'.

External Counsel

Training delivered by external barristers' chambers lasted between 1 day and 3 days and covered mostly legal matters, although one trainee indicated that their training also covered the completion of legal aid forms.

Trainees were split equally on the comprehensiveness of the training, considering the training to be either 'fairly comprehensive (3)' or 'extremely comprehensive (4)'.

External Professional Trainer

The names of the external professional trainers were: Legal Aid Practitioners Group, JRS Consulting, DG Legal, and CLT.

The duration of the training was on average just over ½ day (ranging from 2 hours to 1 day)

The courses covered a range of procedural topics including the completion of forms, the contract standard terms and specification, audits, costs guidance and the funding code. Most of the courses appeared to focus on costs and billing.

66.7% of the attendees were at the training contract stage. The remainder attended before they commenced their contract or did not specify which stage.

Half of these trainees (3) indicated that these courses were 'fairly comprehensive (3)'. One trainee indicated that it was 'extremely comprehensive (4)'. The remainder did not give a rating.

External other

83.3% (10) of those who indicated that they attended training provided by other external providers said that the training was provided by the Legal Services Commission, one referring to it as "*the trainees' conference*". The duration of the training was on average just over ½ day (ranging from 2 hours to 1 day)

The trainees' indications of the areas covered appeared to have been varied. 70% (7) said it included the completion of forms. Other areas included LSC online, audits and costs guidance.

60% (6) said that the training was 'fairly comprehensive (3)'. 20% (2) said the training was 'somewhat incomprehensive (2)'. 10% (1) said it was 'not at all comprehensive (1)' and 10% (1) that it was 'extremely comprehensive (4)'.

Other training was provided by or on behalf of Advice Services Alliance and 'East End CAB'. Insufficient data was provided on these courses to draw any conclusions.

Legal Aid Modules

Trainees were asked, if they were to attend a specific legal aid course, which legal aid modules would they consider important to be covered on the course.

The tables below summarise the trainees' opinions on the importance of the various areas of legal aid practice and procedure.

Completion of forms					
Scale	Not at all important (1)	Fairly unimportant (2)	Fairly important (3)	Extremely important (4)	No rating
Responses	2	3	16	74	8
%	1.9%	2.9%	15.5%	71.8%	7.9%

An overwhelming 87.3% of trainees considered that it was important (fairly or extremely so) to cover the completion of legal aid forms.

Contract Standard Terms					
Scale	Not at all important (1)	Fairly unimportant (2)	Fairly important (3)	Extremely important (4)	No rating
Responses	1	12	49	34	7
%	1.0%	11.7%	47.6%	33.0%	6.8%

Again, a very high percentage (80.6%) of trainees favoured the inclusion of training on the standard terms of LSC contracts.

Contract Specification					
Scale	Not at all important (1)	Fairly unimportant (2)	Fairly important (3)	Extremely important (4)	No rating
Responses	2	5	40	48	8
%	1.9%	4.9%	38.8%	46.6%	7.8%

A similarly high percentage (85.4%) of trainees considered the inclusion of training on the contract specification to be important (fairly or extremely so).

Costs Assessment Guidance					
Scale	Not at all important (1)	Fairly unimportant (2)	Fairly important (3)	Extremely important (4)	No rating
Responses	1	2	33	60	7
%	1.0%	1.9%	32.0%	58.3%	6.8%

An overwhelming percentage (90.3%) of trainees favoured the inclusion of training on the costs assessment guidance. From the trainees' perspective therefore, this is area which should be focused on in the training.

Funding Code					
Scale	Not at all important (1)	Fairly unimportant (2)	Fairly important (3)	Extremely important (4)	No rating
Responses	2	1	19	74	7
%	1.9%	1.0%	18.4%	71.8%	6.9%

In view of the extremely low number of trainees (2.9%) who did not consider it important to include training on the funding code, from their perspective, this is an area which should be focused on in the training.

Audits					
Scale	Not at all important (1)	Fairly unimportant (2)	Fairly important (3)	Extremely important (4)	No rating
Responses	2	6	45	43	7
%	1.9%	5.8%	43.7%	41.7%	6.9%

Again, a very high percentage (85.4%) of trainees favoured the inclusion of training on legal aid audits.

Evidently, from the trainees' perspective, the training should cover all of the above topics. A higher proportion of responses indicated that the costs assessment guidance and the funding code are areas, from the trainees' perspective, of extreme importance

Additional Training Modules

The trainees were asked whether any additional areas of legal aid practice and procedure should be covered in the training.

77.7% (80) of trainees did not answer this question or otherwise indicated that there were no other areas which they felt should be included.

Of the remaining 22.3% (23), the answers were varied and many of the areas indicated would probably form part of the areas noted above.

4.9% (5) of trainees wanted to see training on financial eligibility. One trainee was particularly descriptive in his/her requirements requiring "*clear guidance about dealing with complicated legal help situations e.g. clients who need fairly urgent advice but have limited proof of income and expenditure, clients who orally tell you about their income/expenditure but subsequently fail the tests when documents are provided...in other words, guidance about when it is allowable to give funded advice to clients without 100% proof of income/expenditure*".

1.9% (2) wanted to see training on the future of legal aid including policy decisions, tendering etc.

It is difficult to categorise the other responses but they focused on funding issues relating to different areas of practice and in particular, applying for funding.

When to Present the Training Course

With regard to considering the best time to run the course, the table below illustrates the trainees' opinions.

Time of year	Prior to Start of Training Contract	First year of Training Contract	Second year of Training Contract	No preference	Other specified preference
Responses	5	31	4	44	25
%	4.6%	31.0%	3.7%	40.4%	22.9%

As with the principals, a handful of trainees indicated that the course should be held on more than one occasion or that training should be split into two sessions – an introductory course in the first few months of the training contract with another more detailed session, later on.

Many trainees indicated “October/November” as a preference. Those that did, did so on the basis that a high number of training contracts start in September and that some training should be given at the start of the contract, (these answers were included in the ‘First year of training contract’ category). An additional 3.7% (4) of trainees preferred this time but did not give any indication as to whether this was the first year of the training contract or any year. These were included in the ‘other specified preference’ category for that reason. One trainee chose the month of October (in addition to April) as *“legal aid forms and eligibility criteria usually changes at these times”* and *“a course after such changes would be most beneficial”*. Another, because it *“will avoid holiday periods so more people will be able to attend”*.

Of those who specified a certain preference (22.9%(25)), the main concerns appeared to be anticipated workload or not clashing with other courses (such as the PSC).

Other trainees agreed with the principals and felt that the LSC should avoid major holiday periods.

Convenient Locations

Trainees were also asked to give the suggested locations a rating of between 1 (being the most convenient) and 6 (being least convenient).

In analysing the responses, we first determined the number of trainees who gave the different locations a rating of 1 (most convenient) and which would therefore, out of the options available, be the trainees' first choice. The results are illustrated in the table below.

Location	%
London	41.7% (43)
Bristol	13.6% (14)
Manchester	13.6% (14)
Sheffield	11.7% (12)
Birmingham	9.7% (9)
Newcastle	9.7% (9)

This provides an overview of the trainees' first choices but does not accurately reflect the overall popularity of the various locations.

A more detailed analysis of the results is set out below. The tables below show the percentage of trainees who gave a rating of 1 or 2 (most convenient); 3 or 4 (less convenient); and 5 or 6 (least convenient).

A few trainees did not answer the question or did not otherwise provide a rating. These were classified as having no preference but, for clarity, are not included in the below tables.

London						
Rating	1	2	3	4	5	6
	Most convenient		Less Convenient		Least Convenient	
Responses	43	5	11	14	11	11
%	41.7%	4.9%	10.7%	13.6%	10.7%	10.7%
	46.6%		24.3%		21.4%	

Birmingham						
Rating	1	2	3	4	5	6
	Most convenient		Less Convenient		Least Convenient	
Responses	10	36	20	10	6	4
%	9.7%	35.0%	19.4%	9.7%	5.8%	3.9%
	44.7%		29.1%		9.7%	

Manchester						
Rating	1	2	3	4	5	6
	Most convenient		Less Convenient		Least Convenient	
Responses	14	20	14	26	9	2
%	13.6%	19.4%	13.6%	26.0%	8.7%	1.9%
	33.0%		39.6%		10.6%	

Sheffield						
Rating	1	2	3	4	5	6
	Most convenient		Less Convenient		Least Convenient	
Responses	12	13	11	16	27	8
%	11.7%	12.6%	10.7%	15.5%	26.2%	7.8%
	24.3%		26.2%		34.0%	

Bristol						
Rating	1	2	3	4	5	6
	Most convenient		Less Convenient		Least Convenient	
Responses	14	7	17	6	19	21
%	13.6%	6.8%	16.5%	5.8%	18.4%	20.4%
	20.4%		22.3%		38.8%	

Newcastle						
Rating	1	2	3	4	5	6
	Most convenient		Less Convenient		Least Convenient	
Responses	9	1	9	9	10	46
%	8.7%	1.0%	8.7%	8.7%	9.7%	44.7%
	9.7%		17.4%		54.4%	

From the results, the more popular locations would appear to be London, Birmingham and Manchester. The least popular would clearly be Newcastle. Both Sheffield and Bristol have a similarly, broad range of votes.

Trainees' Experience

The table below illustrates the percentage of trainees with experience of working within the legal aid scheme.

No of years previous experience	None	Approx 6 months	Approx 1 year	Approx 2 years	Approx 3 years	Approx 4 years	Approx 5 years	More than 5 years
Responses	58	6	14	10	7	4	3	1
%	56.3%	5.8%	13.6%	9.7%	6.8%	3.9%	2.9%	1.0%

The areas of work varied significantly. The table below shows the percentage of trainees who indicated they have experience in the various areas of work.

Area of Practice	Responses <i>(the % shown is an indication of the number of trainees who have experience in this area of work)</i>
Family	26.2% (17)
Crime	23.1% (15)
Housing	10.8% (7)
Debt	9.2% (6)
Immigration	9.2% (6)
Welfare Benefits	6.2% (4)
Employment	6.2% (4)
Prison Law	4.6% (3)
Mental health	3.1% (2)
Education	1.5% (1)

Completion of Training Contract

Those trainees that had completed their training contract were asked to indicate whether they were now working with the firm they trained with.

In 96.1% of cases, this question was not applicable as those completing the questionnaires were largely still at the training contract stage. Of the remaining 4 respondents, only one indicated that they are not at the same firm.

Those trainees that had completed their training contract were also asked what legal aid training would they have found useful during their training contract and at what stage?

This question was not applicable to 95.1% (98) of the trainees.

One respondent indicated that there should be some general legal aid training at the start of the training contract but did not provide any further details.

A further respondent indicated that there should be training during the first half of the training contract covering the completion of legal aid forms, the funding code and “*general legal aid training*”.

Another respondent considered that there should be training given in the second half of the training contract on form completion and standard terms in LSC contracts.

No other information was provided by any other trainee.

Proportion of Legal Aid Work

The trainees were asked what proportion of work they presently assist with was publicly funded.

The table below summarise the trainees’ responses.

Proportion of work	Approx 100%	Approx 75%	Approx 50%	Approx 25%	Less than 25%	Virtually no time on legal aid
Responses	66	26	5	1	0	2
%	64.1%	25.2%	4.9%	1.0%	0.0%	1.9%

The remaining 2.9% of trainees did not answer this question.

Interest in a Specific Legal Aid Training Course

The survey was used to ascertain the level of interest in a training course covering legal aid practice and procedure.

The table below illustrates the overwhelming number of trainees who would be interested.

Yes	93.2%
No	4.9%

The remaining 1.9% did not provide an answer.

For those who answered no, 60% (3) said that they considered that trainees are provided with sufficient training and/or obtain sufficient experience through their training contract. One trainee said that s/he feels *“that experience on the job is the most effective training...we already do too many courses”*. Another said that *“...it is best taught during training so that forms and procedures are seen in context and the realities of dealing with the LSC are experienced”*.

Of those who answered yes, those who said they would prefer the course to be managed and run by an independent course provider, by the LSC or gave no preference, can be broken down as follows:

	Independent course provider	Legal Services Commission	No Preference
Responses	10	43	42
%	10.5%	45.3%	44.2%

Excluded from the figures above, two trainees expressly indicated that what they would actually prefer would be a combination of both the LSC and an external provider.

Reasons given for choosing the LSC

Out of those who gave reasons for choosing the LSC, 34.9% (15) did so on the basis that they considered that the LSC would have the most up to date and accurate knowledge about

legal aid. Some of these trainees felt that they would have a better opportunity to ask specific questions about the subject matter.

Unlike their principals, no trainee chose the LSC for cost reasons.

The other main reason given by 14% (6) of trainees was that the LSC is the governing body and it would be preferable for them to, as one trainee put it, *“explain how they assess files etc and reasoning behind their criteria etc”*.

Another trainee stated as follows:

“The LSC produce criteria and make decisions on the grant of legal aid and I therefore conclude that it would be important for us to be applying for legal aid in line with their requirements and to enable the correct information is provided to ensure success in the grant of legal aid where clients are eligible.”

Reasons given for choosing an independent provider

60% (6) of those who gave reasons for choosing an independent provider did so because of the independence or lack of bias.

One trainee said that an independent provider would provide *“an open forum for learning about and discussing legal aid work”*; another said that the topic *“should be taught from the perspective of the user”*; another that *“such a provider is more likely to correctly portray any reforms to the legal aid system, thereby better prepare the learner”*.

20% (2) of those who gave reasons also preferred the experience that a professional trainer could offer.

No preference

Over 44% of principals indicated that they had no preference as regards the trainer.

6.0 Conclusions

From our analysis of the questionnaires, the main conclusions are as follows:

2008 TCGS Start Date

A large proportion of trainees (34.5%) of trainees will start their training contract under the scheme between January 2009 and April 2009. A smaller proportion will commence theirs between May 2009 and August 2009, and between September 2009 and December 2009 (7.1% and 8.3% respectively).

Additional Trainee Recruitment

Over 70% of firms will not recruit another trainee in addition to the trainee recruited under the 2008 TCGS. Of those that will, the majority (88%) of firms will not be recruiting more than 3, with 68% only recruiting one additional trainee.

Trainees' Experience

From the training principals' perspective, over 38.8% of their trainees had no previous legal aid experience before commencing their training contract but 32.3% had at least one year's experience.

The trainees' responses indicate that the trainees themselves feel that they have less experience, with 56.3% of them indicating that they have no previous experience and with only 13.6% indicating that they have one year's experience.

Areas of Practice

The areas of practice and the percentages of trainees working in those areas were not significantly different in the training principals' and the trainees' responses.

The most common areas of work were Family, Crime, Housing, Debt and Welfare Benefits.

Training on the LPC

Over one third (34.5%) of training principals considered that training on legal aid practice and procedure was given during the LPC. Opinion on the comprehensiveness of this training was, however, equally divided.

The trainees' responses indicated that there were elements of legal aid practice and procedure covered on the LPC but these varied between the various providers. Training on legal aid on the courses appears to be minimal, with elements such as the completion of forms, LSC contracts and the funding code being covered in some elective subjects.

75% of trainees indicated that the LPC should cover some additional legal aid training.

Other Training

Almost the same percentage of trainees as training principals indicated that they had attended other training on legal aid practice and procedure (54.5% and 55.9% respectively).

As for who had delivered the training, the results did not differ significantly between the trainees and their principals.

83.3% of trainees indicated that they had attended a course (or 'conference') organised by the LSC.

In the majority of cases, the other training attended covered only a small selection of legal aid topics including the completion of LSC form, the terms of LSC contracts, the contract specification, costs assessment guidance, funding code, audits and in many cases, non-procedural matters.

Specific Legal Aid Training Course

Interest

An overwhelming majority of trainees and the training principals indicated that they would be interested in a training course for trainees on legal aid practice and procedure (93.2% and 89.3% respectively).

Provider

A similar percentage of trainees and training principals would prefer the training to be delivered by the LSC (45.3% and 40% respectively). A similar percentage indicated that they had no preference as regards the choice of trainer. A smaller percentage of trainees and training principals would prefer an independent training provider (10.5% and 21.3% respectively).

Training could therefore be provided by the LSC or another provider. There is a larger preference for the LSC and therefore, the LSC should either provide the training itself or, alternatively, approve the content of a training course to be provided by an independent provider.

Modules

The training should cover all of the following topics:

- Completion of LSC forms
- LSC contract terms
- Contract specification
- Costs assessment guidance
- Funding code
- Audits

A higher proportion of trainees felt that it was extremely important for the training to cover the costs assessment guidance and the funding code. Training principals agreed but also felt the same about the inclusion of the completion of LSC forms and the audits.

Other areas which a significant number of trainees and training principals mentioned included client care, the future of legal aid including future contracting arrangements such as CLACs and CLANs, and financial eligibility, including means testing in appropriate areas.

Time of Year

There didn't appear to be a great deal of consensus as to the best time of year to run the training courses. The only real conclusion that can be made is for the LSC to hold the training courses at different times in the year to give firms the maximum flexibility in terms of organising cover.

A high percentage of both trainees and training principals did not express a as to the timing of the training courses (40.4% and 40.9% respectively).

A significant percentage of trainees and training principals did indicate that the trainees should attend the training in the first year of their training contract, and in many cases, within the first few months. Given the higher percentage of training contracts under the TCGS commencing in the period January 2009 to April 2009, the training should start as soon as possible.

The LSC should seek to avoid major holidays such as high Summer and Christmas.

Locations

From the results, the more popular locations would appear to be London, Birmingham and Manchester. The least popular would clearly be Newcastle. Both Sheffield and Bristol have a similarly, broad range of votes.

The main conclusion to be drawn from the results is that the training will need to be delivered in a variety of locations. It will not be practically possible to accommodate the first choice of each and every firm – clearly, most firms would want the training to be held locally.

APPENDIX ONE

The Training Principals' Questionnaire

APPENDIX TWO

The Trainees and Newly Qualified Solicitors' Questionnaire

APPENDIX THREE

Compilation of Answers to the Questionnaires

Training Principals' Questionnaire

Q1 What is the start date for the trainee recruited under the Legal Services Commission's 2008 Training Contract grant Scheme?

Date	Previous schemes	Sept 2008 – Dec 2008	Jan 2009 – April 2009	May 2009 – Aug 2009	Sep 2009 – Dec 2009	Not yet finalised
Responses	21	8	29	6	7	11
%	32.2%	9.5%	34.5%	7.1%	8.3%	2.4%

Q2 Have you recruited any additional trainees for 2009 who will also undertake training in publicly funded areas of work?

Yes	29.8%
No	70.2%

Of those who answered yes, the number of additional trainees can be broken down as follows:

No of additional Trainees	1	2	3	4	5	6	More than 6
Responses	17	2	13	1	0	1	1
%	68.0%	8.0%	12.0%	4.0%	0.0%	4.0%	4.0%

Of those trainees, the start dates can be broken down as follows:

Training Contract Start dates	Sept 2008 – Dec 2008	Jan 2009 – April 2009	May 2009 - Aug 2009	Sep 2009 – Dec 2009	Not yet finalised
Responses	1	9	6	11	2
%	3.4%	31.0%	20.7%	37.9%	6.9%

Q3 How many trainees will you have in total within the organisation who will undertake training in publicly funded areas of work in 2009?

No of Trainees	1	2	3	4	5	6	More than 6
Responses	32	22	11	2	4	4	9
%	38.1%	26.2%	13.1%	2.4%	4.8%	4.8%	10.7%

Q4 If any of the trainees already have experience of working within the Legal Aid scheme, please give an indication below?

No of years previous experience	None	Approx 6 mths	Approx 1 year	Approx 2 years	Approx 3 years	Approx 4 years	Approx 5 years	More than 5 years
Responses	78	14	65	25	8	1	2	8
%	38.8%	7.0%	32.3%	12.4%	4.0%	0.5%	1.0%	4.0%

Area of Practice	Responses <i>(the % shown is an indication of the number of firms who indicated that they have trainees practising in that area of work)</i>
Family	28.6%
Crime	18.1%
Housing	13.3%
Debt	8.6%
Welfare Benefits	7.6%
Immigration	5.7%
Mental Health	4.8%
Employment	3.8%
Prison Law	2.9%
Education	1.9%
Community Care	1.9%

Public Law	1.0%
Civil Liberties	1.0%
AAP	1.0%

Q5 Did you trainee(s) receive training on legal aid practice and procedure as part of the Legal Practice Course?

	Yes	No	Don't Know
Responses	29	24	29
%	34.5%	28.6%	34.5%

If yes, how comprehensive was the training provided?

Scale	Not at all comprehensive (1)	Somewhat incomprehensive (2)	Fairly comprehensive (3)	Extremely comprehensive (4)
Responses	10	6	7	5
%	35.7%	21.4%	25.0%	17.9%

Q6 Has you trainee(s) received any other training covering legal aid practice and procedure?

	Yes	No	Don't Know
Responses	47	28	8
%	55.9%	33.3%	9.5%

If yes, who provided the training?

Provider	In-house (other than ongoing/training through work)	External counsel (i.e. barristers chambers)	External professional trainer	External other
Responses	5	2	5	10
%	10.4%	4.2%	10.4%	20.8%

Q7 Are you interested in sending you trainee(s) on a specific Legal Aid course?

Yes	89.3%
No	9.5%

Of those who answered yes, those who said they would prefer the course to be managed and run by an independent course provider, by the LSC or gave no preference, can be broken down as follows:

	Independent course provider	Legal Services Commission	No Preference
Responses	16	30	29
%	21.3%	40.0%	38.7%

Q8 If you were to send your trainee(s) on a specific legal aid course, which of the following legal aid modules do you think would be important to cover during the course?

Completion of forms					
Scale	Not at all important (1)	Fairly unimportant (2)	Fairly important (3)	Extremely important (4)	No rating
Responses	4	4	11	56	9
%	4.8%	4.8%	13.1%	66.7%	10.6%

Contract Standard Terms					
Scale	Not at all important (1)	Fairly unimportant (2)	Fairly important (3)	Extremely important (4)	No rating
Responses	5	7	36	27	9
%	6.0%	8.3%	42.9%	32.1%	10.7%

Contract Specification					
Scale	Not at all important (1)	Fairly unimportant (2)	Fairly important (3)	Extremely important (4)	No rating
Responses	2	11	39	23	9
%	2.4%	13.1%	46.4%	27.4%	10.7%

Costs Assessment Guidance					
Scale	Not at all important (1)	Fairly unimportant (2)	Fairly important (3)	Extremely important (4)	No rating
Responses	2	8	25	40	9
%	2.4%	9.5%	29.8%	47.6%	10.7%

Funding Code					
Scale	Not at all important (1)	Fairly unimportant (2)	Fairly important (3)	Extremely important (4)	No rating
Responses	1	1	20	53	9
%	1.2%	1.2%	23.8%	63.1%	10.7%

Audits					
Scale	Not at all important (1)	Fairly unimportant (2)	Fairly important (3)	Extremely important (4)	No rating
Responses	2	7	21	45	9
%	2.4%	8.3%	25.0%	53.6%	10.7%

Q10 When would be the best time of year to run the course and why?

Time of year	Prior to Start of Training Contract	First year of Training Contract	Second year of Training Contract	No preference	Other specified preference
Responses	3	19	3	36	27
%	3.4%	21.6%	3.4%	40.9%	30.7%

Q11 Where would be the most convenient area for your trainee(s) to attend this training?

Location	% indicating 'most convenient' (1)
London	45.2% (38)
Bristol	13.1% (11)
Manchester	11.9% (10)
Birmingham	9.5% (8)
Sheffield	9.5% (8)
Newcastle	4.8% (4)

London						
Rating	1	2	3	4	5	6
	Most convenient		Less Convenient		Least Convenient	
Responses	38	3	10	5	10	3
%	45.2%	3.6%	11.9%	6.0%	11.9%	3.6%
	48.8%		17.9%		15.5%	

Birmingham						
Rating	1	2	3	4	5	6
	Most convenient		Less Convenient		Least Convenient	
Responses	8	23	18	4	1	4
%	9.5%	27.4%	21.4%	4.8%	1.2%	4.8%
	36.9%		26.2%		6.0%	

Manchester						
Rating	1	2	3	4	5	6
	Most convenient		Less Convenient		Least Convenient	
Responses	10	9	12	16	4	4
%	11.9%	10.7%	14.3%	19.0%	4.8%	4.8%
	22.6%		33.3%		9.6%	

Sheffield						
Rating	1	2	3	4	5	6
	Most convenient		Less Convenient		Least Convenient	
Responses	8	9	4	9	21	4
%	9.5%	10.7%	4.8%	10.7%	25.0%	4.8%
	20.2%		15.5%		29.8%	

Bristol						
Rating	1	2	3	4	5	6
	Most convenient		Less Convenient		Least Convenient	
Responses	11	6	6	4	7	21
%	13.1%	7.1%	7.1%	4.8%	8.3%	25.0%
	20.2%		11.9%		33.3%	

Newcastle						
Rating	1	2	3	4	5	6
	Most convenient		Less Convenient		Least Convenient	
Responses	4	7	17	6	19	21
%	4.8%	0.0%	3.6%	11.9%	6.0%	39.3%
	4.8%		15.5%		45.3%	

Trainees and Newly Qualified Solicitors

Q1 At what stage are you in your training cycle?

Legal Services Commission Funded Trainee					
Stage	Legal Practice Course	Training Contract	Commissioned Period	Completed Scheme	Working outside scheme
Responses	7	77	1	0	2
%	8.0%	88.5%	1.1%	0.0%	2.3%

Other Trainee					
Stage	Legal Practice Course	Training Contract	Commissioned Period	Completed Scheme	Working outside scheme
Responses	2	17	0	0	1
%	10.0%	85%	0.0%	0.0%	5.0%

Q2 What is the name of your LPC provider and the full name of the course?

Course Provider	College of Law	BPP	Northumbria University	Nottingham Law School	University of Westminster	Manchester Metropolitan University	Other
Responses	44	8	7	5	4	4	22
%	42.7%	7.8%	6.8%	4.9%	3.9%	3.9%	21.4%

Name of Course	Legal Practice Course	Post-Graduate Diploma in Legal Practice
Responses	86	8
%	83.5%	7.8%

Q3 Which of the following areas relating to legal aid practice and procedure were covered during the LPC?

Areas covered	Completion of Forms	Contract Standard Terms	Contract Specification	Costs Assessment Guidance	Funding Code	Audits
Responses	57	14	10	10	25	7
% (% who indicated that area was covered on their course)	55.3%	13.6%	9.7%	9.7%	24.3%	6.8%

	Completion of Forms	Contract Standard Terms	Contract Specification	Costs Assessment Guidance	Funding Code	Audits
College of law	45.5% (20)	13.6% (6)	11.4% (5)	15.9% (7)	20.5% (9)	9.1% (4)
BPP	75% (6)	12.5% (1)	12.5% (1)	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Northumbria University	42.9% (3)	14.3% (1)	0.0%	0.0%	28.6% (2)	0.0%
Nottingham Law School	40.0% (5)	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Manchester Met Uni	100% (4)	25.0% (1)	25.0% (1)	25.0% (1)	50.0% (2)	0.0%
University of Westminster	25.0% (1)	50.0% (2)	0.0%	0.0%	25.0% (1)	0.0%

Q5 How comprehensive was the training provided on the LPC?

Scale	Not at all comprehensive (1)	Somewhat incomprehensive (2)	Fairly comprehensive (3)	Extremely comprehensive (4)	N/A
Responses	25	23	41	9	2
%	24.3%	22.3%	39.8%	8.7%	1.9%

Q7 Have you received any other training covering legal aid practice and procedure?

Yes	54.5%
No	43.7%

If yes, who provided the training?

Provider	In-house (other than ongoing/training through work)	External counsel (i.e. barristers chambers)	External professional trainer	External other
Responses	13	2	6	12
%	22.8%	3.5%	10.5%	21.0%

Q8 If trainee solicitors were to attend a vocational legal aid course designed specifically for them, which of the following legal aid modules do you think would be important to cover during the course?

Completion of forms					
Scale	Not at all important (1)	Fairly unimportant (2)	Fairly important (3)	Extremely important (4)	No rating
Responses	2	3	16	74	8
%	1.9%	2.9%	15.5%	71.8%	7.9%

Contract Standard Terms					
Scale	Not at all important (1)	Fairly unimportant (2)	Fairly important (3)	Extremely important (4)	No rating
Responses	1	12	49	34	7
%	1.0%	11.7%	47.6%	33.0%	6.8%

Contract Specification					
Scale	Not at all important (1)	Fairly unimportant (2)	Fairly important (3)	Extremely important (4)	No rating
Responses	2	5	40	48	8
%	1.9%	4.9%	38.8%	46.6%	7.8%

Costs Assessment Guidance					
Scale	Not at all important (1)	Fairly unimportant (2)	Fairly important (3)	Extremely important (4)	No rating
Responses	1	2	33	60	7
%	1.0%	1.9%	32.0%	58.3%	6.8%

Funding Code					
Scale	Not at all important (1)	Fairly unimportant (2)	Fairly important (3)	Extremely important (4)	No rating
Responses	2	1	19	74	7
%	1.9%	1.0%	18.4%	71.8%	6.9%

Audits					
Scale	Not at all important (1)	Fairly unimportant (2)	Fairly important (3)	Extremely important (4)	No rating
Responses	2	6	45	43	7
%	1.9%	5.8%	43.7%	41.7%	6.9%

Q10 When would be the best time of year to run the course and why?

Time of year	Prior to Start of Training Contract	First year of Training Contract	Second year of Training Contract	No preference	Other specified preference
Responses	5	31	4	44	25
%	4.6%	31.0%	3.7%	40.4%	22.9%

Q11 Where would be the most convenient area for you to attend this training?

Location	% indicating 'most convenient' (1)
London	41.7% (43)
Bristol	13.6% (14)
Manchester	13.6% (14)
Sheffield	11.7% (12)
Birmingham	9.7% (9)
Newcastle	9.7% (9)

London						
Rating	1	2	3	4	5	6
	Most convenient		Less Convenient		Least Convenient	
Responses	43	5	11	14	11	11
%	41.7%	4.9%	10.7%	13.6%	10.7%	10.7%
	46.6%		24.3%		21.4%	

Birmingham						
Rating	1	2	3	4	5	6
	Most convenient		Less Convenient		Least Convenient	
Responses	10	36	20	10	6	4
%	9.7%	35.0%	19.4%	9.7%	5.8%	3.9%
	44.7%		29.1%		9.7%	

Manchester						
Rating	1	2	3	4	5	6
	Most convenient		Less Convenient		Least Convenient	
Responses	14	20	14	26	9	2
%	13.6%	19.4%	13.6%	26.0%	8.7%	1.9%
	33.0%		39.6%		10.6%	

Sheffield						
Rating	1	2	3	4	5	6
	Most convenient		Less Convenient		Least Convenient	
Responses	12	13	11	16	27	8
%	11.7%	12.6%	10.7%	15.5%	26.2%	7.8%
	24.3%		26.2%		34.0%	

Bristol						
Rating	1	2	3	4	5	6
	Most convenient		Less Convenient		Least Convenient	
Responses	14	7	17	6	19	21
%	13.6%	6.8%	16.5%	5.8%	18.4%	20.4%
	20.4%		22.3%		38.8%	

Newcastle						
Rating	1	2	3	4	5	6
	Most convenient		Less Convenient		Least Convenient	
Responses	9	1	9	9	10	46
%	8.7%	1.0%	8.7%	8.7%	9.7%	44.7%
	9.7%		17.4%		54.4%	

Q12 Do you have any previous experience of working in the legal aid scheme?

No of years previous experience	None	Approx 6 months	Approx 1 year	Approx 2 years	Approx 3 years	Approx 4 years	Approx 5 years	More than 5 years
Responses	58	6	14	10	7	4	3	1
%	56.3%	5.8%	13.6%	9.7%	6.8%	3.9%	2.9%	1.0%

Area of Practice	Responses <i>(the % shown is an indication of the number of trainees who have experience in this area of work)</i>
Family	26.2% (17)
Crime	23.1% (15)
Housing	10.8% (7)
Debt	9.2% (6)
Immigration	9.2% (6)
Welfare Benefits	6.2% (4)
Employment	6.2% (4)
Prison Law	4.6% (3)
Mental health	3.1% (2)
Education	1.5% (1)

Q14 What proportion of the work you presently assist with is publicly funded?

Proportion of work	Approx 100%	Approx 75%	Approx 50%	Approx 25%	Less than 25%	Virtually no time on legal aid
Responses	66	26	5	1	0	2
%	64.1%	25.2%	4.9%	1.0%	0.0%	1.9%

Q16 Are you interested in attending a specific legal aid course?

Yes	93.2%
No	4.9%

If applicable, reasons for preferring independent provider or LSC

	Independent course provider	Legal Services Commission	No Preference
Responses	10	43	42
%	10.5%	45.3%	44.2%