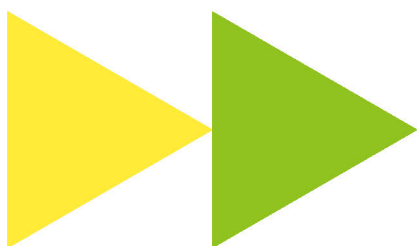


# Overview

# What is LASC



## The Establishment

Established on 1 September 1996 under the Legal Aid Services Council Ordinance (Cap. 489), the Legal Aid Services Council (LASC) is a body corporate to supervise the provision of legal aid services provided by the Legal Aid Department (LAD), and to advise the Chief Executive on legal aid policy.

Since its establishment, the LASC has made recommendations on various aspects of the legal aid services in Hong Kong. On legal aid policy, the Council has provided the Government with advice on issues relating to the eligibility criteria, scope of services, etc., and has proposed measures to enhance the independence of legal aid. On the administration of legal aid services, the Council has made suggestions on ways to improve the application and processing procedures, system and arrangement for assigning cases to private lawyers, monitoring of assigned out cases, appeal procedures against legal aid refusal, etc. The Council has also conducted outreach activities such as conference and seminars to promote public awareness of legal aid.

## Functions of the Council

The LASC is responsible for overseeing the administration of the legal aid services provided by LAD and the Department is accountable to the Council for the provision of such services.

In discharging its responsibility, the LASC may –

- (a) formulate policies governing the provision of services by LAD and give advice on the policy direction of the Department;
- (b) review the work of LAD from time to time and make such arrangements as are expedient and proper to ensure the efficient and economical discharge of the functions and provision of legal aid services by the Department;
- (c) keep under review the services provided by LAD and the plans for development of the Department; and
- (d) consider and advise on the estimates of expenditure of LAD.

The LASC shall not have the power to direct the LAD on staff matters and

the handling of individual cases by the Department.

The LASC also serves as the Chief Executive's advisory body on the policy of the Government concerning publicly-funded legal aid services provided by LAD and shall advise on –

- (a) the eligibility criteria, scope of services, mode of service delivery, future plans for improvements, funding requirements and future development of legal aid policy;
- (b) the feasibility and desirability of the establishment of an independent legal aid authority; and
- (c) any other aspect of legal aid which the Chief Executive may from time to time refer to the Council.

### Interest Group

As a means to invite public participation in legal aid administration and obtain operational feedback from stakeholders, the LASC established interest groups which serve as a structured communication channel where the legal profession and lay members of the community may exchange views on the further development of legal

aid, and identify legal aid issues of significance to the objective of policy formulation and overseeing of the provision of legal aid services.

At present, there are two interest groups set up under the LASC, namely the Interest Group on Processing, Assignment and Monitoring of Assigned-out Cases and the Interest Group on Scope of Legal Aid. Each interest group is led by a Council member who is either a barrister or a solicitor. Generally, the terms of reference of the interest groups are to report to the Council feedback/comments and recommendations in respect of the subjects under the purview of the interest groups; and to consider any issues referred to the interest groups by the Council.

### Working Group

The Council also forms working groups as necessary to study specific issues in depth and make recommendations based on its findings to the Council. In 2016-17, there were two working groups. One of the working groups is to review the scope of Supplementary Legal Aid Scheme and the other one is to study the dissemination of legal aid information. The set-up of the latter aims at enhancing the operational transparency of LAD.