



**Duncan Lewis**

Giving people a voice

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## **Duncan Lewis Comments on High Court Ruling in Legal Services Commission Case**

**Whilst the High Court has found in favour of the Law Society, the decision only adds to the general climate of uncertainty in the legal aid system. Duncan Lewis believes the system needs the government to safeguard its future, not court cases.**

As Britain's biggest provider of legal aid services, Duncan Lewis has obviously taken a keen interest in the outcome of today's case. The High Court's finding in favour of the Law Society is a statement that the recent family law tender process undertaken by the Legal Services Commission was flawed. Whilst we support the Law Society's goal of ensuring that access to justice is properly maintained, today's decision only adds to the general climate of uncertainty in the legal aid system.

Prior to this case reaching court, many law firms had already felt the need to make significant changes to their structure and staffing to meet the enormous challenges faced by the outcomes of the LSC's tender process. And now, although the most likely immediate outcome of today's case will be another extension of the status quo i.e. maintaining the current contracts, it will not be easy for firms to shift gear once again to respond to this temporary measure. Legal aid law firms are businesses that need a degree of certainty to function so that they can deliver their services to the clients with confidence. An unclear and insecure future is no help.

At the same time, the most important audience affected by all of this: some two million vulnerable members of the public who depend on legal aid for access to justice, are left confused as to the future of the system that plays such a vital role in aiding their safety and wellbeing. Like the law firms that want to serve them, they have a right to clarity.

For more than sixty years, thanks to the Legal Aid & Advice Act (1949), the UK has been able to be proud, both at home and internationally, of giving life to a principle first outlined in the Magna Carta (1215): we will not deny or defer to any man either justice or right. With this in mind, Duncan Lewis now eagerly awaits the publication of the government's White Paper on the future of legal aid services and the opportunity to engage in a frank, passionate and meaningful debate to ensure the future strong survival of this fundamental aspect of our democratic society. As Duncan Lewis Chief Executive Shany Gupta comments, "The legal aid system needs the government to safeguard its future, not court cases."



## Duncan Lewis

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*Duncan Lewis provides more legal aid services than any other UK law firm: every year, it gives over 20,000 people a voice in the legal system. The firm plays a key role in holding Government and other public bodies to account with over 300 Judicial Review cases currently lodged in the High Court – more than any other firm in the country. And last year, it had twenty House of Lords and Court of Appeal reported cases.*

*Established in 1998 by three people, Duncan Lewis has grown rapidly and now employs over 400 people in six sites across London. Its staff come from and represent over 60 ethnic groups, and more than 60% of them are women. We are particularly strong in the provision of law in areas such as Immigration, Public Law, Crime, Family & Child Care, Housing, Social Welfare and Mental Health.*

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