



Chapter 6

Organisation, Administration and Staffing

-  Matrimonial Cases
-  Traffic Accident Claims
-  Breach of Contract
-  Employees' Compensation
-  Landlord and Tenant Disputes
-  Claims in respect of Industrial Accidents
-  Immigration Matters



There are three Divisions in the Department, namely the Application and Processing Division, the Litigation Division and the Policy and Administration Division, each headed by a Deputy Director. The organisation chart can be found at the departmental website at <https://www.lad.gov.hk/eng/ginfo/oo.html>.

Staffing

As at the end of 2023, there were 529 staff members comprising 84 professional officers, 173 law clerks and 272 supporting staff. 7 Legal Aid Counsel and 19 Law Clerks were newly recruited in the year.

Training and Development

The Department is committed to developing and maintaining a highly-motivated and professional work team to provide quality services to our customers. Every year the Department arranges various general and professional training courses for staff of all levels to equip them with the latest knowledge and skills needed to face the challenges ahead. The Training Unit, which is headed by a Senior Training Officer, is responsible for formulating, implementing and reviewing the Department's training and development policies and plans to meet the operational and development needs of staff.



Mr Steve Wong Yiu-fai
Deputy Director of Legal Aid (Policy and Administration)

Professional Training

To keep our professional officers abreast of changes and development of the law, the Department sponsored 44 professional officers to attend external webinars including Workshop on Data Protection and Data Access Request, Practical Workshop on Data Protection Law, Update on Personal Injuries Claims, Practical Tips in Email Fraud Cases and New Solution under s. 25A, High Court Ordinance, Mental Capacity Law of Hong Kong – Capacity Assessment, Guardianship, the New Vista of Continuing Powers of Attorney and Beyond (Modules 1 & 2), Family Law: Practical Tips and Legal Updates, Handling Cross-border Divorce, Parent and Child Ordinance – Orders that May Be Made, Briefing on Masters System in Family Court, Informal Interests in Property: Presuming Interests and Illegality, Personal Injuries Litigation in Hong Kong: Past, Present & Future – a Personal Journey from 1980 to 2025, Medical Expert Evidence in Personal Injury Actions, Financial Issues in Divorce and Practical Tips on Handling Divorce and Family Trust Related Cases, How to Calculate Damages for Personal Injury Claims, Developments in the Law: Admissibility of Confession and WhatsApp Messages, The Mechanism for Reciprocal Enforcement of Judgments in Civil and Commercial Matters Between the Hong Kong SAR and the Mainland, and Recent Developments in the Family Court: the New Master System, GD 1.1 and 1.2. Besides, 52 professional officers attended an in-house legal talk on Adverse Possession in Hong Kong delivered by an external speaker.

To promote exchanges with our Mainland counterparts, 3 professional officers attended Mainland Legal Studies Course coordinated by the Department of Justice.

Management and Communication Training Courses

To strengthen staff's management and communication capability, 10 professional officers were nominated to attend management and communication training courses organised by the Civil Service College, Civil Service Bureau (CSC) including Behavioural Insights for Public Policy Making, Navigating the Media -Planning Your Narratives, Crisis Communication for a Positive Workplace, Achieve Excellent Team Performance through Coaching, Issue Management and Crisis Handling, and Expert Interview Series: Leadership in the New Era.

For leadership development, 5 professional officers were nominated to attend leadership development programmes organised by CSC, namely Advanced Leadership Enhancement Programme, Leadership in Action Programme and Innovative Leadership Programme.

Customer Service Training

The Department places great importance on nurturing a customer-focused culture. To enhance staff's skills in delivering quality service to the public, the Department organised 3 in-house workshops on Communicating with Persuasion and Influence, How to Communicate with Customers with Emotional / Mental Problems, and Dealing with Difficult Customers. A total of 72 colleagues attended the workshops.

In 2023, 2 staff members attended a relevant course on Handling Confrontational Situations in Customer Service held by CSC.

Staff Well-being and General Training

The Department is committed to promoting staff well-being. In 2023, an in-house workshop on Enhancing AQ was held, with an attendance of 14 staff members. Besides, 4 staff members were nominated to attend CSC courses on well-being.

Apart from the above, 286 staff members were nominated to attend courses and seminars organised by CSC, and other departments on a wide range of topics aimed at enhancing staff's work capability and career development. Topics included Basic Law, National Security, Foreign Affairs, Big Data, Innovation and Technology Solution, Problem Solving and Decision Making, First Aid, Automated External Defibrillators, Occupational Safety and Health, GRS Records Management, Government Financial Management, Government Procurement, Induction Courses, Human Resources Management, Personnel Matters, Cyber Security, Team Building and Communication, Chinese and English Official Writing, Putonghua and computer courses.

Furthermore, 7 professional officers attended national studies programmes held at the National Academy of Governance, Tsinghua University, Zhejiang University and Sun Yat-sen University.

Promoting Self-Learning and Development: In-house Learning Resource Centre

To cultivate the culture of continuous self-learning, the Department maintains a comprehensive collection of books available to our staff. The collection covers a wide range of topics including management, communication, use of language, personal development, positive thinking, stress management and healthy lifestyles. Every year, new books are added to the Learning Resource Centre to enrich the collection.

To facilitate easy access to self-learning materials by staff, resources on IT tips as well as reference materials on training courses are uploaded onto the departmental portal. Staff also have direct access to CLC Plus, the e-learning portal for civil servants, which contains a variety of self-learning resources, toolkits and job aids on management, language, Constitution, Basic Law and national security, communication and information technology, etc.



Ms Amy Lee Ngar-ling
Assistant Director of Legal Aid (Policy & Development)

Information Systems

The Department's Case Management and Case Accounting System (CM&CAS) supports over 500 users in handling day-to-day legal aid business processes such as processing applications, monitoring assigned out cases and handling legal aid payments. The system is now under revamp and the revamped system is planned to roll out in two phases by the latter half of 2024 and the latter half of 2025 respectively. To provide a more convenient and reliable payment option to the public, we planned to introduce the "Faster Payment System" ("FPS") in addition to traditional cash and cheque payments. Payments by FPS at our Shroff will be launched in the first quarter of 2024, while e-payments by FPS will be introduced by the third quarter of 2024.

The Legal Aid Electronic Services Portal (LAESP) provides an online gateway through which members of the public and Panel lawyers can gain access to information and transact certain legal aid business with the Department online. Members of the public can access the LAESP to download and submit legal aid Pre-application Information Forms to the Department as a first step towards making an application for legal aid. The system will also provide an alternative channel for legal aid applicants to accept legal aid offer electronically with iAM Smart+ by the end of 2024. To better support citizens in need of legal aid services, it is planned to implement a chatbot on our website to handle general enquiries in the second quarter of 2025.

Staff Relations and Communication

The Department maintains effective communication with staff through regular meetings with various staff representative bodies such as the Departmental Consultative Committees, the Law Clerks Association and the Legal Aid Counsel Association. Resulting from the discussions at these meetings, improvements have been made concerning office accommodation, streamlining of working procedures and human resources planning, etc.

The Director of Legal Aid would visit sections throughout the year with a view to exchanging ideas with staff of all levels including professional officers and receiving their views on work arrangements and procedures for further review and improvement. Divisions / Sections continued to implement their respective internal communication strategies in consultation

with staff. Informal meetings would also be held between the Deputy Director of Legal Aid (Policy and Administration) and Senior Law Clerks I and II and general grades staff regularly to collect their view on work and to explore areas for improvement.

Staff Suggestions Scheme

Staff Suggestions Scheme was launched to encourage colleagues to make suggestions to the Department. It aims to facilitate the improvement and streamlining of the Department's operation and management, promote Department's image, arouse staff morale and occupational safety, thereby enhancing work efficiency. Our colleagues provided many useful and practical suggestions such as supplementing information in public forms, launching auto-reply function for the official email of the Department and enhancing privacy of the members of the public at the waiting area.

Staff Welfare and Charitable Activities

The Department values the general well-being of its staff. The objective of the Staff Club is to promote staff welfare by organising a wide range of activities and to provide opportunities where staff can meet and interact whilst engaging in relaxing and enriching activities.

To promote staff wellness, the Staff Club resumed organising recreational activities in 2023. The Annual Dinner, a tour to the Tsz Shan Monastery and the Green Hub and a latte art workshop were held during the year. Staff also participated in a basketball competition organised by the Leisure and Cultural Services Department.

During the year, the Department actively participated in various volunteer services and fund raising activities such as the Standard Chartered Hong Kong



Marathon, book recycling activity and the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge (HK Section) Half Marathon 2023, Skip Lunch Day, Love Teeth Day, Green Low Carbon Day and Dress Casual Day, Orbis World Sight Day and Oxfam Rice. In the New Year Food Drive organised by St James' Settlement, surplus Chinese New Year gifts and food were donated to the charity.

Environmental Initiatives

The Department is committed to ensuring that its operations and activities are conducted in an environmentally responsible manner. The Department makes efforts to minimise waste, conserve energy, promote "reuse" and "recycle" of resources and enhance staff awareness and participation in protecting the environment.

The Department undertakes regular reviews to ensure that resources are used in an efficient and green manner. Details of the Department's environmental initiatives in 2023 can be found in the Department's Environmental Report at the departmental website <https://www.lad.gov.hk/eng/ppr/publication/enr.html>.

Internal Audit

The Internal Audit Section (IAS) is an independent team established to assist management to ensure that adequate control procedures and systems are in place to safeguard the Department's assets. It also carries out reviews of the various activities of the Department in order to ensure an economical, efficient and effective use of the Department's financial, human and other resources.

The major audit reviews conducted by IAS during the year were the review of recovery of outstanding amount of debtor accounts, review of collections through bank automated teller machines and internet banking and review on assignment to experts. IAS also carried out audits on the use of the Integrated Registration Information System provided by the Land Registry for conducting land searches in legal aid cases and performed periodic checks on means investigation reports, petty cash, imprest, etc.

Support Service to the Legal Aid Services Council

Legal Aid Services Council (the Council) is a statutory body set up in September 1996 pursuant to the Legal Aid Services Council Ordinance, Cap. 489 to supervise the provision of legal aid services in Hong Kong and to advise the Government on legal aid policy. The Council comprises barristers and solicitors, the Director of Legal Aid, and other lay members. The Chairman is not a public officer, and is also not connected in any other way directly with the practice of law. The Council meets regularly to oversee the administration of legal aid service, and to suggest improvement in the administration and operation transparency of the Department. Regular progress reports were submitted by the Department to the Council and tabled for discussion.

Following a review of the provision of legal aid services by the Chief Secretary for Administration's Office, proposed enhancement measures were endorsed by the Council. Regular progress reports on implementation of the enhancement measures and on various aspects of the provision of legal aid services were provided to the Council.

To promote a better public understanding of the work of the Department and to dispel misconceptions and unfounded criticisms, a public communication plan was drawn up by the Department. With strong support from the Council, publicity measures were stepped up to promote a positive image of our services to the public.

Matrimonial
Cases

Traffic Accident
Claims

Breach of
Contract

Employees'
Compensation

Landlord and Tenant
Disputes

Claims in respect of
Industrial Accidents