

Millions invested to support vulnerable people navigating legal issues

- £12 million to help vulnerable people struggling with legal problems
- focus on early intervention to resolve issues before going to court
- 33,000 supported since October 2020

The funding will be awarded to charities and organisations providing support for people facing disputes – helping them to better understand their issues and avoid costly court proceedings.

More than 33,000 people have been supported by organisations receiving similar government grants since October 2020 and nearly two-thirds of cases were resolved before reaching court.

Justice Minister Lord Bellamy said:

Those who most need support should be able to access it quickly and easily, which is why we're increasing funding for organisations providing this vital service.

Early intervention helps prevent people from undergoing lengthy court proceedings – saving time, money and unnecessary stress.

It adds to more than £5 million of investment this year, including a £1 million cost-of-living grant, to help organisations respond to increasing demand for free legal advice. Specialist guidance is offered in person, by telephone or online, to help deal with problems before they escalate or to support those who need to appear in court.

The grant will replace the current Help Accessing Legal Support grant worth £3.2 million which is due to end in June 2023.

The funding benefits people in difficult situations including Helen (not her real name), who was supported by an organisation funded by the grant after leaving an abusive relationship. She continued to suffer harassment from her ex-partner and contacted her local free advice charity who provided guidance on navigating family court proceedings. Helen was able to secure protective court orders aimed at restricting her ex-partner's access to the family home and preventing violent behaviour against her and her daughter.

Helen said:

[The advisor] gave me sound legal advice to help me make choices to keep me safe and get my house back.

If I had not had access to the [advice] it is quite likely that I may have not had the courage or the understanding to go to court to seek these orders, or even worse, that I would have returned to an abusive and volatile relationship as I would not have had any other option.

This legal support is provided by organisations across the country, using the funding where it is needed.

Cara Walker, Mobile Legal Adviser at Norfolk Community Law Service, said:

Providing outreach legal help to people is vital in a large rural county like Norfolk. The Ministry of Justice funding enables me to work with clients on a long term basis in community settings, who have a range of complex legal problems-including welfare benefits, domestic abuse and immigration.

Cathy Ashley, Chief Executive of Family Rights Group, said:

Our Advice and Advocacy Service provides social care and legal expertise to families, including parents whose children are in need or subject to child protection enquiries and relatives raising children who cannot live at home.

The Help Accessing Legal Support Grant is funding our new webchat service for families and is enabling us to provide more intensive support to callers to our advice line, allowing more children to live safely and thrive within their families and safely averting them entering a care system already in crisis.

Further information on how charities and organisations can bid for the funding will be made available shortly.