



## JUSTICE

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Sir Alan Beith  
Chair  
Justice Select Committee  
House of Commons  
7 Millbank  
London  
SW1P 3JA

10 June 2013

Dear Sir Alan,

JUSTICE welcomes the decision of the Justice Committee to take evidence on 11 June 2013 on the Government's proposals published for consultation in *Transforming Legal Aid*.

We consider that the proposals in *Transforming Legal Aid* are rushed, ill-considered and unsupported by evidence. I enclose a copy of JUSTICE's detailed response to the consultation, which I hope will assist the Committee in its work.

The proposals for the reform of criminal legal aid will, in our view, have a devastating impact on the operation of our criminal justice system and the ability of people without means to secure a fair defence.

However, we hope that the Justice Committee will also explore the wider implications of the civil legal aid proposals for the rule of law. By restricting the ability of individuals to hold public decision makers to account – by restricting access to legal aid for judicial review, and access to other public support for prisoners and non-residents – the Government proposes to shield public decision making from the transparency and accountability afforded by judicial oversight.

These significant changes are proposed for little quantifiable financial gain and could lead to significant additional costs within the justice system and for other public budgets. The Lord Chancellor believes he can make these changes without primary legislation. The Government will respond in the Autumn to the consultation process and the proposed reforms are scheduled for implementation before mid-2014. We hope that the Lord Chancellor will ensure that your Committee has time to complete its work before progressing any further with Government plans for reform.

We hope that the Committee will take the opportunity to hear not only from lawyers and their representatives, but also from the individuals who have benefitted from legal aid and who would not be eligible under these rules.

If JUSTICE is able to assist the Committee any further with its inquiry, we would be happy to do so.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Helena Kennedy." The signature is written in a cursive style with a period at the end.A simple handwritten flourish consisting of a single diagonal line that starts from the left and ends with an arrowhead pointing towards the upper right.

Baroness Helena Kennedy of the Shaws  
Chair of JUSTICE Council

*Chair of Council* **Baroness Kennedy of The Shaws QC** *Director* **Andrea Coomber**

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