

INTRODUCTION

This campaign pack is designed to assist advice agencies, Citizens Advice Bureaux, law centres, voluntary organisations and legal aid solicitors in drawing attention to the current crisis facing the Community Legal Service (CLS), and putting real access to justice higher up the political agenda.

The Access to Justice Alliance was set up by a variety of organisations in November 2004 to draw attention to the serious and worsening shortage of provision of advice and representation for people who need help with civil and family legal problems. The people affected need help in a number of different areas, from human rights issues to social welfare law to legal disputes with a richer and more powerful opponent.

We want to bring these issues to the attention of MPs, and to highlight relevant cases through local and national media, in order to increase pressure on the Government to acknowledge the urgency of the situation and to act to remedy it.

We cannot achieve these objectives without your help and support. The more MPs, the media etc are made aware of the gravity of the problems that now exist, the stronger the chance of getting the government to address the issue.

We need to challenge the current perception of many people that legal aid is about fat cat lawyers and shady firms abusing the system, and that it has little relevance to the needs of ordinary people. The Government has allowed this distortion of the truth to persist.

By challenging this mis-perception we can start making people aware of what is achieved by good legal advice, and the damage caused by its absence. The briefing paper included in this campaign pack provides detailed information on the current state of legal aid.

What you can do - campaign timetable

Get your clients to send the postcards to their MPs from **now**. The Access to Justice Alliance will be organising a mass lobby of Parliament in spring 2006. The more MPs who have signed the **Early Day Motion 453** on Civil Legal Aid before the mass lobby, the more effective it will be.

Further help and advice?

Contact the Access to Justice Alliance
www.accesstojusticealliance.org.uk



Carol Storer, Chair, Access to Justice Alliance

