

access to justice alliance

JUSTICE – ACCESS DENIED

WEEK OF ACTION 14 – 18 MAY 2007

The Access to Justice Alliance (AJA) is co-ordinating a series of activities to highlight the damaging impact which the Government's civil legal aid changes will have on the most vulnerable people in society.

A week of action starts on Monday 14 May and events will take place throughout the country to increase awareness about the proposed changes. The Alliance includes a wide range of organisations united by concern that the introduction of a fixed fee system of payment, followed by competitive tendering, will badly affect the quality and supply of legal help. The risk is that people with complicated problems involving housing, debt, welfare benefits, family, mental health, community care and immigration, will be unable to find a legal aid lawyer to take on their case, and will be denied any meaningful access to justice. We fear that the government remains determined to take this risk, despite warnings from the all-party Constitutional Affairs Committee, which has carried out an investigation into the impact of the changes.

Law Centres are at the forefront of the activities planned for the week starting 14 May. For many years they have represented tenants facing eviction in county courts. Lawyers and advisers from many boroughs will be demonstrating and leafleting outside county courts during the week of action to raise awareness that the specialist housing advice and representation currently available to those who face losing their homes may not be there much longer, if the government proposals go ahead.

A meeting in Parliament on Monday 14 May will bring together key organisations concerned with access to justice. They fear that the Carter Report reforms will mean that fewer people will be given legal advice, and that this will especially affect those with complex needs, those from black and ethnic minorities and people with disabilities.

We call on everyone concerned about these issues to support the week of action – by lobbying your MP or councillor, by joining the action outside the courts, or by coming to the meeting in Committee room 14, House of Commons on Monday 14 May at 7.30 pm.

For more information, see our website: www.accesstojusticealliance.org.uk