

A hand is shown holding a glowing, interconnected network sphere. The sphere is composed of numerous small, bright nodes connected by thin, white lines, creating a complex web-like structure. The background is a dark, reddish-brown gradient with a faint, stylized world map composed of small triangles. The overall aesthetic is modern and technological.

Chapter 6 Organisation, Administration and Staffing

Organisation, Administration and Staffing

The Department has three Divisions, 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 <http://www.lad.gov.hk/eng/ginfo/oo.html>.

Staffing

At the end of 2018, the Department had 542 staff members comprising 80 professional officers, 172 law clerks and 290 supporting staff. Nine Legal Aid Counsel and 19 Law Clerks were newly recruited.



Mr Chris Chong Yan-tung

*Deputy Director of Legal Aid
(Policy and Administration)*

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 our 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 the staff.



Professional Training

To keep our professional officers abreast of the changes and development in the relevant legislation and law, the Department sponsored 47 professional officers to attend external seminars including Data Protection and Data Access Request, Assessment of Damages in Fatal Accident Cases, Cross-Border Child Custody Evaluation and Family Mediation, Crossing the Payne Barrier – Is there A Price to Pay For International Families, Financial Issues on Divorce and Practical Tips in Handling Divorce, Law Lectures for Practitioners 2018, Liability in Slip and Trip and Pedestrian Traffic Accidents, Personal Injury Litigation: Practice & Procedure, Review and Update on Insolvency Recovery Actions, Sanctioned Offers and Sanctioned Payments, Techconnect Forum, Telling Your Client's Story - A Post Child Protection Conference, The Change of the Face of International Child Abduction, The HCCH 125 – Ways Forward: Challenges and Opportunities in an Increasingly Connected World, Civil Law Talk by Dr Jimmy Ma, Civil Law Talk by Professor Christopher Forsyth, and Civil Law Talk by Professor Judith Sihombing.

To promote exchanges with the Mainland counterparts, two professional officers attended the LOCPG Short Course on Mainland Legal Studies Course at the Peking University coordinated by the Department of Justice.

Management Training Courses

To strengthen staff's management capability, 10 professional officers were nominated to attend management courses organised by the Civil Service Training and Development Institute, Civil Service Bureau (CSTDI, CSB). Courses included Negotiations – Strategies and Processes for Impactful Outcomes, Leading High-Performance Organisations, Positive Leadership for Innovation, Pre-crisis Management, People Management in the Public Sector, Positive Communication to Achieve Influence, Persuasion and Influencing, Presentation Skills for Occasional Speakers, and The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People.

For executive development, five professional officers were nominated to attend executive development programmes organised by CSTDI, CSB, namely Advanced Leadership Enhancement Programme, Leadership in Action Programme and Innovative Leadership Programme.

Customer Service Training

The Department places great importance in nurturing a customer focused culture. To enhance staff's skills in delivering quality service to the public, the Department organized an in-house Customer Service Workshop. A total of 24 colleagues attended. We also nominated staff of different ranks to attend relevant courses held by CSTD, CSB. In 2018, 18 staff members, including general grade staff, attended the following courses: Workshop on Quality Customer Service, Customer Service Skills on the Telephone, Effective Putonghua for Quality Service, Enhanced Communication in English for Customer Service, Handling Confrontational Situations in Customer Service, Handling Complaints and Difficult Situations, Building Relationships with Teammates and Customers, and Seminar on Accessibility Issues.

Staff Well-being and General Training

The Department is committed to promoting staff well-being. In 2018, two in-house workshops on "From Mindfulness to Positive Thinking" and "Chinese Dietary Therapy against Urban Diseases" were held, with an attendance of 103 staff members.

Apart from the above, 173 staff members were nominated to attend courses and seminars organised by CSTD, CSB and other departments on a wide range of topics that aimed at enhancing staff's work capability and career development. The courses included Information Security, Enhancement of Court Security Measures at High Court, Induction Course, Personal Data Protection, First Aid, Automated External Defibrillators, Prevention and Handling of Workplace Violence, Occupational Safety, Use of Language, Official Writing, Government Financial Management, Basic Law, Pre-retirement Seminar, Supervisory Skills, Performance Management System, Performance Appraisal Writing, Misconduct and Corruption in the Public Sector, and Seminar Series on Chinese Wisdom and computer-related courses.

Furthermore, eight professional officers attended national studies programmes held at the Chinese Academy of Governance, Tsinghua University, Peking University, Nanjing University and Zhejiang 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 general management, communication, use of language, national studies, personal development, positive thinking, stress management and healthy lifestyles. Every year, new books are added to the Learning Resource Centre to further 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, Basic Law, communication, information technology, etc.

Information Systems

The Department's Case Management and Case Accounting System (CM&CAS) supports over 500 staff users in handling day-to-day legal aid business processes such as processing applications, monitoring assigned out cases and handling legal aid payments. To cope with technology advancement and to improve the system to meet future operational needs, a feasibility study for revamping the system was undergoing in 2018.

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.

With effect from January 2018, the intended applicants can use our online service through the LAESP to make advance appointment with our staff to obtain the Pre-application Information Forms before visiting our Headquarters or Kowloon Branch Office. Our system provides 30 calendar days' advance booking and can greatly save their queuing time. The development work for the mobile phone version of the online booking function commenced in the third quarter of 2018 with a target rollout date in early 2019.

To streamline the submission of Pre-application Information Forms or Legal Aid Panel Entry Forms through the LAESP, we enhanced the system in June 2018. The requirement of e-cert authentication was replaced by Captcha as the security measure. It aims to encourage more intended applicants and panel lawyers to access legal aid services via the e-channel.



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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, indoor air quality and human resources planning, etc.

The Director of Legal Aid visited each section 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 were also 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 views 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 mini thank-you cards, e-fax, conference room e-booking system, regular health tips to colleagues, etc. The suggestions were carried out in the Department accordingly.



Staff Welfare

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 provide staff with opportunities to keep a healthy balance between work and relaxation, Yoga classes were held regularly. Recreational activities including the Annual Dinner, table tennis competition and mini bazaars to celebrate Chinese New Year, Dragon Boat Festival and Mid-Autumn Festival were also held. Interest classes such as dessert making and bakery classes proved to be very popular among staff.



During the year, the Volunteer Service Group, which was formed in 2002 and aims to encourage staff to get involved in volunteer services, participated in various fund raising activities such as the Rice Selling Campaign organised by Oxfam Hong Kong, Day Fund Raising Campaign organised by Medecins Sans Frontieres, World Sight Day organised by ORBIS Hong Kong and the Chinese New Year Gift Transfer Program organised by St James' Settlement (People's Food Bank). 19 pieces of winter clothing were also donated to St James' Settlement. It was worth mentioning that the Department attained the Top Fund-raiser and the Highest Per Capita Contribution Award in the Civil Service Category of Dress Casual Day organized by The Community Chest in 2018.



Environmental Initiatives

The Department is committed to ensuring 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 the use of its resources is in an efficient and green manner. Details of the Department's environmental initiatives in 2018 can be found in the Department's Environmental Report at the departmental website <http://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.

During the year, IAS reviewed assigned-out cases by the Department and internal control in the maintenance of Official Solicitor Account and Official Trustee Account by Official Solicitor's Office. It 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 periodical 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 under the Legal Aid Services Council Ordinance, Cap. 489 to oversee the provision of legal aid services. The Council is responsible for advising the Chief Executive on matters of policy relating to legal aid. The Council is chaired by a non-official who is not a lawyer by profession. There are a total of 10 members comprising the Director of Legal Aid, representatives of the two legal professional bodies and lay members chosen from other fields not connected with the practice of law. Representatives of the Department attend meetings of the Council and its working party and participate in its activities in promoting public awareness and understanding of the role of the Council and its relationship with the Department.

During the year, the Department provided the Council with regular progress reports and information on different aspects of legal aid services, such as information relating to the expansion of the Supplementary Legal Aid Scheme and assignment of lawyers. With the support from the Council, the revised limits on civil and criminal legal aid cases assigned to panel lawyers took effect in 2018.