

Chapter 6

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 2019, the Department had 534 staff members comprising 84 professional officers, 161 law clerks and 289 supporting staff. Six Legal Aid Counsel and 16 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 61 professional officers to attend external seminars including Briefing Session on Consultation Paper on the Proposed Legislation and Practice Directions Relating to Judiciary's Information Technology Strategy Plan, Conflict of Fundamental Rights and the Double Proportionality Test, Seminar on Judicial Review – When will a Court Refuse to Entertain a Judicial Review, Hong Kong Family Law Conference, International Law Talk by MFA Official, Sharing Session on External Mediation Master Scheme, Data Protection and Data Access Request, Practical Workshop on Data Protection Law, Civil Law Talk on costing work and Civil Law Talk "Service of Originating Process outside Hong Kong Jurisdiction".

Management and Communication Training Courses

To strengthen staff's management capability, 26 professional officers were nominated to attend management and communication courses organised by the Civil Service Training and Development Institute, Civil Service Bureau (CSTDI, CSB). Courses included Be a 5-Star Performance Manager, Bringing Out The Best In People, People Management in the Public Sector, Chinese Wisdom Series Seminar on Team Management, Public Relations Management in Crises, Curiosity and Innovative Leadership in Disruptive Times, Ethical Leadership Programme: Workshop on Supervisory Accountability, Persuasion and Influencing, Workshop on Practical Negotiation Skills, The Art of Public Speaking through Storytelling, and Promoting Policies and Services with Compelling Stories.

For executive development, 8 professional officers were nominated to attend executive development programmes organised by CSTDI, CSB, namely Leadership in Action Programme, Innovative Leadership Programme, and Leadership Essentials 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 two in-house Customer Service Workshops. One workshop focused on how to handle confrontational situations and the other on how to communicate with customers with emotional/ mental problems. A total of 62 colleagues attended the workshops.

We also nominated staff of different ranks to attend relevant courses held by CSTDI, CSB. In 2019, 26 staff members, including general grade staff, attended the following courses: Workshop on Quality Customer Service, Effective Putonghua for Quality Service, Effective Putonghua Telephone Skills, Enhanced Communication in English for Customer Service, Handling Confrontational Situations in Customer Service, Building Good 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 2019, two in-house workshops on “Staying Healthy through Acupressure Therapy and Office Exercises” and “The Secret of Emotion Regulation” were held, with an attendance of 53 staff members. Besides, 20 staff members were nominated to attend CSTDl courses on well-being.

Apart from the above, 285 staff members were nominated to attend courses and seminars organised by CSTDl, CSB and other departments on a wide range of topics that aimed at enhancing staff’s work capability and career development. The courses included Basic Law, Social Media, Media Communication Strategies, Public Service Innovation, Design Thinking, Big Data, Smart City and Technology, Information Security, Personal Data Protection, First Aid, Automated External Defibrillators, Occupational Safety and Health, Equal Opportunities Ordinances, Prevention and Handling Sexual Harassment, Understanding and Responding to Verbal Violence, Misconduct and Corruption in the Public Sector, ICAC Symposium, Techconnect Forum, Pro-innovation Government Procurement, Government Records Management, Financial Management, ERKS implementation, Induction Course, Pre-retirement Seminar, Chinese and English Official Writing, Putonghua, Seminar Series on Chinese Wisdom and computer-related courses.

Furthermore, 13 professional officers attended national studies programmes held at Tsinghua University, Nanjing University, Zhejiang University, Jinan University and Sun Yat-sen 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.

Ms Doris Lui Wai-lan
Assistant Director of Legal Aid
(Policy & Development)



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 2019 and will complete in early 2020. It is planned to submit a major funding bid in 2020 for the revamp of CM&CAS.

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.

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. The function was enhanced to provide mobile phone version in February 2019.

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 and mini bazaars to celebrate Chinese New Year, Dragon Boat Festival and Mid-Autumn Festival were also held. Interest classes such as handcrafted soap 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). 25 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 2019.




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 2019 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 the procedures in handling complaints and representations, the use of Government Financial Management Information System Accounts Payable and Purchase Order modules and internal control on staff allowance. 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.

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