



# **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 <https://www.lad.gov.hk/eng/ginfo/oo.html>.

## Staffing

At the end of 2022, the Department had 525 staff members comprising 85 professional officers, 166 law clerks and 274 supporting staff. 4 Legal Aid Counsel and 6 Law Clerks were newly recruited.

## 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.



**Mr Steve Wong Yiu-fai**  
*Deputy Director of Legal Aid  
(Policy and Administration)*



## Professional Training

To keep our professional officers abreast of the changes and development in the relevant legislations and laws, the Department sponsored 30 professional officers to attend external webinars including Workshop on Data Protection and Data Access Request, Update on Testate Succession, Update on Intestate Succession, Property Law Cases 2022, Bilingual Legal Drafting in Plain Language - A Law Drafter's Perspective, Contentious Probate, Financial Issues in Divorce and Practical Tips on Handling Divorce and Family Trust Related Cases, Handling Cross-border Divorce, Legal Challenges in NFT, Cryptocurrency and Metaverse, Medical Expert Evidence in Personal Injury Actions, Common Mistakes in Civil Litigation, Practical Tips in Email Fraud Cases and New Solution Under S.25a, High Court Ordinance, Settlement and Strategy in PI Cases, Mental and Testamentary Capacity: The Law and Practice - An Update, Update Legal Issues Related to Building Management, Landlord and Tenant: Challenge Under Epidemic, A Technophobe's Introduction to Law and Technology: Non-fungible Tokens, Blockchain, Cryptocurrency, Smart Contracts, Artificial Intelligence and the Law.

To promote exchanges with our Mainland counterparts, two professional officers attended National Studies Programme for Government Lawyers (Module 1: The Fundamental Principles of Chinese Law) coordinated by the Department of Justice.

## Management and Communication Training Courses

To strengthen staff's management and communication capability, 11 professional officers were nominated to attend management and communication training courses organised by the Civil Service College, Civil Service Bureau (CSC, CSB) including People Management in the Public Sector, Behavioural Insights - Fundamentals for Public Policy Making, Behavioural Insights - Improving Decision Making, Navigating the Media - New Rules of the Game, Navigating the Media - Crisis Management and Communication, Effective Engagement for Public Service Innovation, Global Trends and Best Practices of Digital Media, Crisis Communication for a Positive Workplace, Be a 5-Star Performance Manager, Leader as a Great Communicator and Leaders as Strategic Executors.



For leadership development, 3 professional officers were nominated to attend leadership development programmes organised by CSC, CSB, namely Advanced Leadership Enhancement Programme, Leadership in Action Programme and Innovative Leadership Programme.

### Customer Service Training

The Department places great importance on nurturing a customer-focused culture. To enhance staff's skills in delivering quality service to the public, the Department organised an in-house workshop on Communicating with Empathy. A total of 16 colleagues attended the workshop.

We also nominated staff of different ranks to attend relevant courses held by CSC, CSB. In 2022, 12 staff members, including general grade staff, attended courses including Quality Customer Service, Handling Confrontational Situations in Customer Service, Effective Putonghua for Quality Service and Effective Putonghua Telephone Skills.

### Staff Well-being and General Training

The Department is committed to promoting staff well-being. In 2022, 2 in-house workshops on Maintaining Well-being through Quality Sleep and Relaxation Techniques, and Stress Management Workshop - Kicking Off Work Pressure in 5 Mins were held, with an attendance of 31 staff members.

Apart from the above, 296 staff members were nominated to attend courses and seminars organised by CSC, CSB and other departments on a wide range of topics that aimed at enhancing staff's work capability and career development. Topics included Basic Law, National Security, Foreign Affairs, Big Data, Innovation and Technology Solution, Problem Solving and Decision Making, First Aid, Automated External Defibrillators, Occupational Safety and Health, GRS Records Management, Government Financial Management, Government Procurement, Induction Courses, Human Resources Management, Personnel Matters, Positive Psychology, Counselling, Chinese and English Official Writing, Putonghua and computer courses.



## 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 management, communication, use of language, 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 and information technology, etc.



**Mr Ben Li Chi-keung**  
*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. The tender for the revamp project of the CM&CAS was awarded in September 2022. The revamped system will be developed and rolled out in two phases by the latter half of 2024 and the latter half of 2025 respectively. Meanwhile, the current system was enhanced so that legal aid applicants would be notified of their legal aid application status by SMS in September 2022. To facilitate payment by electronic means, it is planned to adopt the fast payment system (FPS) in the first quarter of 2024.

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 system was enhanced so that legal practitioners could use their own "iAM Smart+" to digitally sign and submit legal aid panel entry forms by early 2023.

## 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 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 view 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 introducing electronic payment methods, equipping interview rooms with soundproofing facilities, and the production of a video clip to showcase acknowledgements from the public received by the Department.

## Staff Welfare and Charitable Activities

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.

Affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Staff Club was unable to organise any activity in 2022. Upon the resumption of normality, the Staff Club will resume organising staff welfare activities.

The Department participated in various fund raising activities such as Skip Lunch Day, Love Teeth Day, Green Low Carbon Day and Dress Casual Day organised by The Community Chest, MSF Day organised by Medecins Sans Frontieres, Orbis World Sight Day organised by ORBIS Hong Kong, Flag Selling Day organised by Oxfam Hong Kong. In the Warmth Giving Project organised by St James' Settlement, winter clothing and surgical masks were donated to St James' Settlement.



On 23 December 2022, the Department joined the Carol Singing Festival organised by the Child Development Matching Fund at Lee Tung Avenue, Wanchai to raise funds for the next generation.

## 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 resources are used in an efficient and green manner. Details of the Department's environmental initiatives in 2022 can be found in the Department's Environmental Report at the departmental website <https://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.

The major audit reviews conducting by IAS during the year were the review of payment to Aided Persons and Panel Lawyers in civil cases and the review of Supplementary Legal Aid Scheme. IAS 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 periodic 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 in September 1996 pursuant to the Legal Aid Services Council Ordinance, Cap. 489 to supervise the provision of legal aid services in Hong Kong and to advise the Government on legal aid policy. The Council comprises two barristers, two solicitors, the Director of Legal Aid, and four other lay members. The Chairman is not a public officer, and is also not connected in any other way directly with the practice of law. The Council meets regularly to oversee the administration of legal aid service, and to suggest improvement in the administration and operation transparency of the Department.

Following a review of the provision of legal aid services by the Chief Secretary for Administration's Office in 2021, proposed enhancement measures were endorsed by the Council in October 2021. The enhancement measures were fully implemented by end of 2021. Regular progress reports on implementation of the enhancement measures and on various aspects of the provision of legal aid services, in particular, on judicial review cases, were provided to the Council.