

Your Future **me** Design Thinking Problem Brief

Department:
Manchester Law School

Opening question:

In an era of ever decreasing public funding impacting legal aid, how can we rethink the delivery of legal services to provide access to justice?

Context:

Access to Justice: new faces, new lawyers, and new thinking to solve an age old problem

In 2017, the Law Society reviewed the legal aid changes introduced under LASPO and found:

- legal aid is no longer available for many who need it
- those eligible for legal aid find it hard to access
- wide gaps in provision are not being addressed
- LASPO has had a negative impact on the state and society

On the 17th October 2022, the latest Chancellor of the Exchequer, stated that "eye-wateringly difficult" decisions were needed – including cuts across government departments.

The Legal Service Board (2020) has determined the legal needs of people in the UK fall into the following categories:

- employment, finance, welfare or benefits (32%)
- property, construction and planning, eg housing issues such as anti-social behaviour by neighbours, issues with a rented property or dealing with a planning application (28%)
- a consumer problem (26%)
- wills, trust and probate (22%)
- an injury (15%)
- a conveyancing or residential issue (15%)
- a family-related issue (11%)
- issues related to the rights of individuals e.g. immigration or police treatment (4%)

The Access to Justice Foundation (2022) state that:

- 2/3 of the UK population don't know how to get legal advice
- 14 Million people live in poverty and can't afford access to justice
- The legal aid budget, in real terms, is £950m less than it was in 2010
- 1/2 of all legal advice services in the UK have closed
- There are huge housing advice deserts across the UK. Analysis shows up to a million people live in areas with no legal aid provision for housing, with a further 15 million in areas with one provider.

The prospects for legal aid funding are bleak, and the demands for legal advice are increasing.

However, new ways of working and delivering legal services are increasing, and MLS is one of the first law degrees in England and Wales to recognise this and equip students, at core levels, with skills and knowledge that goes far beyond the traditional law degree.

These changes in legal education coupled with a new generation of students from a far more diverse range of backgrounds than ever before, mean there is the opportunity to rethink the way we see and imagine how we design and deliver legal information and services, and how we provide access to justice.

[Read the LASPO review](#)

[Right-time-right-place-May-2022.pdf \(smf.co.uk\)](#)

[Legal needs of individuals in England and Wales - Technical Report 2019/2020 \(legalservicesboard.org.uk\)](#)

Starting points/ prompts:

Thinking of the key areas of legal need listed above:

- How do you address the Access to Justice concerns identified by the Law Society, in an age of restricted public finances?
- How could law schools work with firms and organisations to support access to justice?
- What opportunities, changes, and challenges does technology bring to ways to support access to justice?
- What strengths does creating a more diverse profession afford, and could this help to deliver legal services that a diverse society needs?
- How can we think about reconfiguring traditional legal services to help support access to justice?
- How could design/technology/training/new ways of working be used to address gaps in knowledge and practice among advice workers, paralegals, lawyers, and other legal services professionals?
- How could technology/training/new tools/ways of working be used to increase collaboration between practitioners and organisations to improve practice and to increase access to justice?