# WRITTEN STATEMENT

# BY

# THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

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| **TITLE**  | **Publication of the Rapid Review of the Legal Sector** |
| **DATE**  | **10 October 2019** |
| **BY** | **Jeremy Miles AM, Counsel General and Brexit Minister** |

Before the summer recess I informed Members the rapid review of the Welsh Government’s support for the Legal Sector in Wales had been completed. I also undertook to make the report available to Members once it was ready for publication. I am pleased to be able to do that today.

In my update I outlined some key actions we were taking to provide support to the legal sector, through the procurement of legal advice by the Welsh Government and encouraging inward investment. I also said I would be giving further consideration to how we could support law firms in the provision of legal services in local communities across Wales and how we could build on emerging good practice in offering legal apprenticeships. I would like to take this opportunity to inform you about the progress we have made in these areas.

In my previous statement I noted the report’s conclusion that the overall purchasing power of the Welsh Government (and indeed the wider Welsh public sector) is insufficient on its own to make a meaningful difference to the overall success of law firms through public sector procurement. However I am pleased to note that over the last several years the percentage spend by the Welsh public sector on solicitor services from Wales based law firms is very high. The report did indicate a desire amongst the legal sector for greater simplicity in the procurement process for solicitor services. Development of the next pan-Wales public sector legal services framework has been paused to allow us to take into account any recommendations the Commission on Justice may make in relation to procurement. NPS will continue to engage with the market and keep them informed of developments including at the Supplier Events which are being delivered this week.

In relation to the Welsh Government’s panel of Counsel I asked officials in the Legal Services Department to review the arrangements for determining the make-up of our panel of Counsel. I can say at this juncture that I am already in discussion with Wales and Chester Circuit about developing a set of initiatives aimed at fostering the Welsh public and administrative law Bar in particular, and about removing some of the real or perceived obstacles that may be getting in the way of Wales based barristers’ securing work from the Welsh Government.

Developing a vibrant legal sector is key to encouraging more of our home grown talent to remain in Wales. Encouraging the location of legal service centres in Wales, recommended in the report, could help to achieve this. Officials in the Economy Department are already liaising with those in our London office and wider legal networks to identify key opportunities, and we will be bringing in specialist support to assist this process further.

Law firms across Wales offer a vital service to our local communities, providing essential advice across a wide range of areas. The UK Government’s court estate and legal aid cuts, advances in technology and changes to the types of advice being sought have created a challenging environment for law firms in many parts of Wales. The report recommended further work be undertaken to identify the issues firms, particularly those in rural areas, are currently facing and officials are stepping up work with firms to better understand those issues with a view to offering appropriate support.

The report made some recommendations for how we might further develop the provision of legal apprenticeships. Within our flagship apprenticeship programme, which is on track to create 100,000 apprenticeship employment opportunities by the end of the current Assembly, there are a number of routes available in the legal sector that include Legal Services and Advice at Levels 2 and 3 as well as higher apprenticeship options in probate and conveyancing.

I am pleased to report we are already actively pursuing a number of the recommendations made in the report through our on-going engagement with the sector. We have committed to work proactively with employers and key stakeholders to plan and prepare for future skills support within apprenticeships to address sector demand. We will work with the sector to assist with workforce development to help stimulate a pipeline, support training and qualifications needed and develop a contemporary and robust route for individual’s looking to pursue a careers within the legal sector.

We commissioned the rapid review in part to inform the work of the Commission on Justice in Wales. We will need to consider this report in the context of the wider recommendations made by the Commission. Both will be invaluable in helping us to develop a strong and sustainable legal sector.

[https://gov.wales/the-legal-sector-in-wales-a-rapid-review](https://eur01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fgov.wales%2Fthe-legal-sector-in-wales-a-rapid-review&data=02%7C01%7CElizabeth.Price%40gov.wales%7C90e7896b9d89463b194808d74d96f355%7Ca2cc36c592804ae78887d06dab89216b%7C0%7C0%7C637063183026226922&sdata=CEWOENQeg2rR5bwSN4A2EBYNpvHWV94P152s43L3q7s%3D&reserved=0)