

RECEIVED 20 JUN 2013



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Dear Valerie,

Business Questions on Thursday 13 June

At last Thursday's Business Questions you asked me whether the Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice will make a statement to the House on Legal Aid. You also stated that the Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice have yet to meet with the chairman of the Criminal Bar Association to discuss this policy. I enclose the relevant exchange from Thursday's business:

Valerie Vaz (Walsall South) (Lab): Will the Leader of the House ask the Lord Chancellor to come to the House to explain his flawed policy on legal aid? He refuses to meet the chairman of the Criminal Bar Association, the Law Society is threatening legal action, the Lord Chief Justice and the Master of the Rolls are against it, and it undermines the English legal system. We need a statement or a debate in Government time.

Mr Lansley: I sat here with my right hon. and hon. Friends during Justice questions a few days ago when almost exactly the same point was made to them, and I heard them reply and say how often they meet the Criminal Bar Association and others and that they had done so recently. I will, of course, draw their attention to what the hon. Lady has said, but I heard them say that it is not true that they are not discussing this issue with those affected.

(13 June 2013, *Official Report*, Column 503)

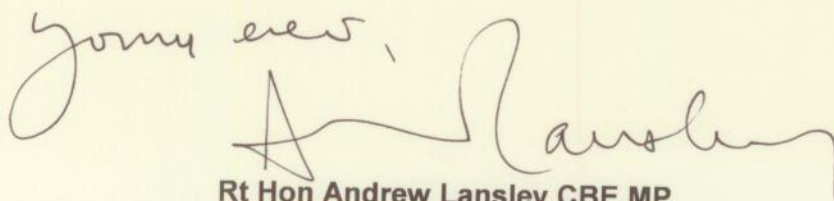
My office has subsequently received correspondence from Michael Turner QC, Chairman of the Criminal Bar Association, confirming that his association have not yet held discussions with the Justice Secretary. I am therefore writing to clarify my response.

On 21 May 2013, I was on the bench for Ministry of Justice questions which detailed several meetings between the Secretary of State and relevant stakeholders regarding Legal Aid matters. I mistakenly recollected that this included the Criminal Bar Association. I have written separately to the Chairman of the Criminal Bar Association to confirm this.

My office has since consulted with the Ministry of Justice on this matter and they have confirmed that Lord McNally, lead Minister for legal aid at the Department met with Mr Turner on 30 May 2013.

I hope this reply has been helpful.

I am placing a copy of this letter in the House of Commons Library.

Yours ever,


Rt Hon Andrew Lansley CBE MP
Leader of the House of Commons