

## Legal Services Commission - Summary

# Becoming a lean service organisation

### Introduction

The Legal Services Commission (the Commission) helps provide legal services in the form of advice and legal help to people on low incomes. It runs the Legal Aid scheme in England and Wales and is able to fund access to legal services for around two million people. Legal Aid is government funding to enable those who cannot afford legal services to obtain them. With its budget of £2 billion a year the Commission funds 'Providers' - solicitors and not-for-profit advice agencies to:

- advise people on legal problems
- advise people detained in police stations
- help people understand their rights and the law
- represent them in court.

The Commission is using lean production principles to become more efficient and provide a better service.

### Lean production

Lean production aims to maximise the use of available resources, reducing waste and inefficiency. Typical components of lean production include 'Just in Time' (JIT) and Total Quality Management (TQM). JIT means that a business makes or holds just enough stock to fulfil customer orders. In a service organisation, like the Commission, it can be applied to other efficiencies, such as using online data instead of paper records or the re-design of forms to make them easier for clients to complete correctly first time. TQM involves establishing a culture of quality throughout the organisation. This means that every employee is responsible for making sure customer needs are met. For example in the Commission:

- the process of handing over and signing off forms has been reduced
- wasteful correspondence has been cut
- paper files no longer needed are destroyed
- team meetings and continuous improvement processes have been introduced
- Providers can make multiple claims for services on one form
- 80% of phone calls are now answered first time.

### The benefits of a lean service

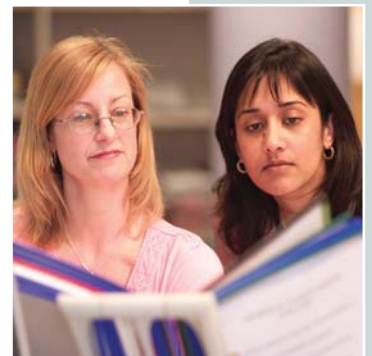
Lean production benefits everyone involved with the Legal Services Commission's processes:

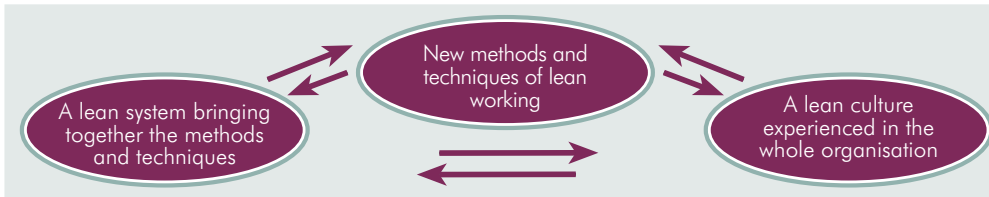
- Customers get a quicker service.
- Providers have a simpler, more sensible system.
- The Commission's work is more cost-effective.

Lean production is helping the Commission to make savings. By 2011 its administrative costs will have been reduced by up to a third (£30 million).

### Implementing a lean environment

The starting point for developing a lean approach is to research customer requirements to identify the best ways of providing value. To implement the approach, new methods and techniques, a lean culture and a lean system need to be brought together.





## Quality Assurance (QA) and Continuous Improvement

QA involves measuring a service against its targets. QA documents all processes and systems which are audited. Through QA the Commission is able to provide better value for money to the taxpayer and service to the customer. Continuous Improvement involves everyone. Employees at the Legal Services Commission can propose ideas through a suggestion scheme. Through sharing ideas, new ways of working have been established.

## Conclusion

The Legal Services Commission provides support services such as Legal Aid. Using lean production principles, it has reviewed its practices to ensure it is using public funding in a way that gives the best value for money.

