

A Ten Year Vision for Public Legal Education

Prepared by the Solicitor General's
Committee on Public Legal Education



Our vision is for a country where legal capability is spread throughout our society - where everyone, and every group, is able to identify and act on legal situations when they arise. It is a country where no-one, no community, and no section of society is denied justice through ignorance of their legal rights and responsibilities, or of the actions which they can take to protect them.

As a consequence of this widespread legal capability, individuals and communities will be able to:

- Identify when they face a legal situation, and know what choices are available to them, including where to get advice, information and self help tools – giving them more control over their lives, and ability to help themselves;
- Feel confidence in the rule of law, our legal justice system, and that the principle of equality before the law is being upheld – all of which are foundation stones of our democratic society;
- Fully participate as citizens in society, working with their communities to secure and uphold justice for all;
- Respond appropriately to everyday legal situations – such as consumer rights, employment rights and responsibilities, or buying and selling a home. Public Legal Education (PLE) is an essential element in delivering our vision. It ranges from broad-based ongoing education about legal matters (Just-in-Case PLE) – delivered through formal education systems as well as informal education - to education, information and tools for individuals or groups most likely be facing a specific legal issue (Just-in-Time PLE).

Those individuals and communities who are most vulnerable in our society – who often face multiple challenges – are often the least likely to be able to identify and act on their legal rights and responsibilities. For this reason, a key element in reaching our vision will be to pay particular regard to ways to reach those who are least likely to have legal capability.

We have identified seven high-level goals which will need to be achieved if our vision is to become a reality with key short term and long term 'activities which we think are needed to make them a reality, as follows.

Our seven goals for PLE

Goal 1: Be supported by a robust evidence base and a body of research showing where the need is and what works best

In the short-term, we need more sharing of evaluations between PLE providers, and more common evaluations to be able to compare between activities.

In the long-term, we need a longitudinal study on the impact of PLE, to assess the long term impact, with support from funders for the work.

Goal 2: Be of high quality, maintained to ensure that it remains accurate, accessible and useful for the people who need it and have significant social impact

In the short-term, we need to ensure that PLE activity is targeted, tailored to meet the needs of the intended audience and evaluated.

In the long-term, we need to spread best practice guidance to help all those involved to achieve a consistently high standard and identify the means to monitor and maintain the accuracy of PLE information.

Goal 3: Universality of PLE reach across all demographics. Prioritising reaching children, young adults and vulnerable groups in significant numbers across the UK - with the support of intermediaries

In the short-term, we need to improve the capability of the legal profession to work with non-legal professionals in helping to develop Just in Case PLE, to focus on harder to reach groups, and to focus beyond London, where much Just in Case PLE work takes place.

In the long-term, we need to focus on the engagement of young people.

Goal 4: Be scaled up through delivery by the legal community

In the short-term, we need to offer more opportunities for pro-bono legal support for PLE, especially outside of metropolitan areas.

In the long-term, we need to provide more opportunities for early career involvement in PLE, including through training.

Goal 5: Harness technology and be delivered through innovative methods, both on and offline

In the short-term, we need to increase the capacity of the PLE-delivery organisations to work through social media to deliver PLE.

In the long-term, we need to embrace virtual reality and enhanced reality as ways to promote PLE, as well as ensuring that quality is maintained and resources remain current

Goal 6: Be embedded into public services and government departments particularly as an aspect of early intervention in health, advice and community settings

In the short-term, we need to improve the links between gov.uk website and PLE; and we also need to focus on upskilling professionals within priority areas such as health and housing.

In the long-term, we need to incorporate PLE in the design of public services.

Goal 7: Be understood as beneficial, and utilised, by other sectors (e.g. banks, insurance, trade unions, housing)

In the short-term, we need to explain to those outside of the traditional PLE providers why PLE is important and can help their sectors

In the long-term, we need to raise the quality of PLE in these other sectors, perhaps through the provision of a Kitemark.

These goals have been developed under the auspices of the Solicitor General's PLE Committee. The Solicitor General's PLE Committee was established to bring together the array of voluntary, public, and private sector organisations which are playing leading roles in PLE initiatives. Under the chairship of the Solicitor General, our aim is to better coordinate our activities, to identify gaps in provision, and to set out the priorities for future work.



There are many other organisations in all sectors that deliver PLE, often without even realising that they are doing so, and our aim is also to open a dialogue with them, explain the importance of PLE and hopefully inspire them to get involved.

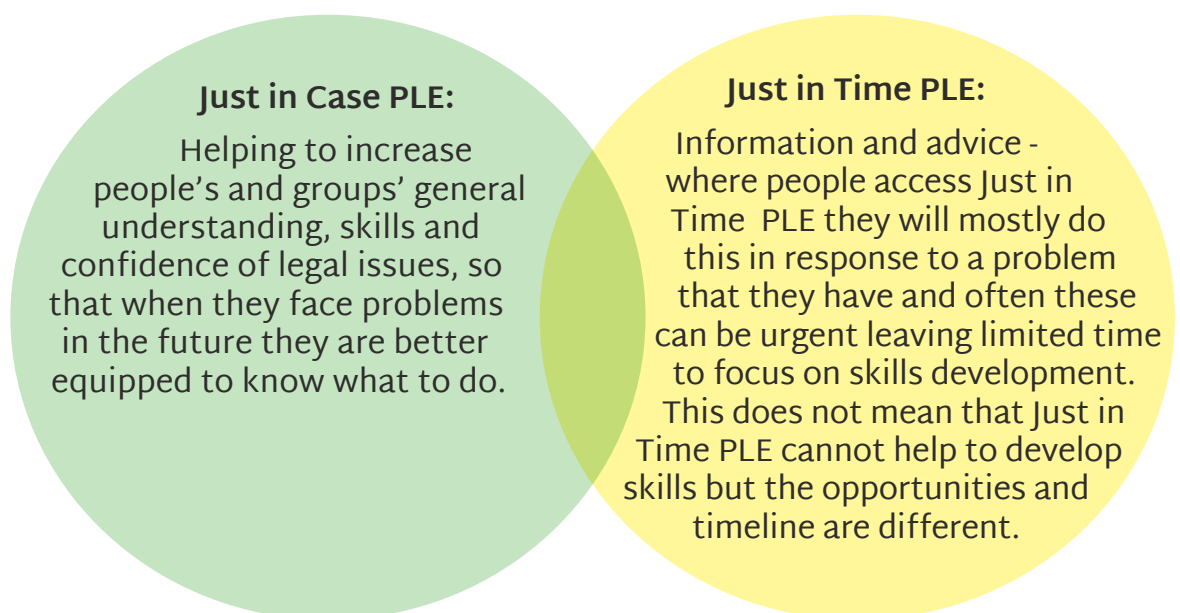
What is Public Legal Education?

Public Legal Education (PLE) covers a wide range of activities aimed at empowering participants, and increasing their confidence and capability to deal with their law-related problems. From community based courses, theatre performances, step by step guides, awareness-raising campaigns about rights-issues, to law reform campaigns.

Better knowledge of rights and legal issues empowers individuals and communities, enabling them to take more control over their lives, deal with their problems, participate in the democratic process, and get involved in shaping the decisions that affect them.

Public Legal Education also has links with community development and education and complements legal and advice services.

There are two main areas of PLE provision:



Whilst distinct, they also clearly overlap; both are vital in achieving our goals and cannot be substituted for each other. Just in Case PLE may help people identify urgent problems, the Just in Time PLE can help to develop skills, for example, information can be supplemented with videos, how to 'step by step' guides and e-learning modules.