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## Challenges for the Office of the Public Guardian

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When I joined the Office of the Public Guardian (OPG) as its Head of Legal a few months ago I wasn't expecting the job to be quite as interesting as this. I thought OPG would be similar to other government organisations I have worked for – restructuring downwards, 'doing more with less', applying fairly well-established law from a civil service perspective.

The reality is quite different – OPG is undergoing a significant programme of change and growth, with the digital LPA service, a more tailored way of supervising deputies and responding to record numbers of LPA applications to register.

More significant it seems is the continued drive within OPG to help members of the public benefit from the potential effects of powers of attorney on their lives. It makes me proud when I overhear our staff in the contact centre compassionately walking people through the LPA process, which, in the end, is not about the process but is about maintaining your freedom to choose and to plan for the future none of us can predict.

Mental capacity law certainly seems to be fast moving! The field was new to me (this is the Government Legal Service ethos) but I am learning quickly. In coming months we will have to understand the impact of Cheshire West on deputies and attorneys, for example, and consolidate our guidance on gifting. We are continuing to develop our expertise in handling safeguarding referrals (if you have a safeguarding concern ring our contact centre and they will transfer you to a dedicated member of staff). As well as more complex financial cases we are also being faced with more health and welfare conundrums, and we expect to increasingly refer to the Court of Protection.

Mindful too of the House of Lords report on the MCA, OPG is thinking now about what more it could do to raise awareness of the Act. We continue to work positively with the financial sector, and I am looking to how I can work more closely with the legal profession – watch this space!

*Sally Jones*

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