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| MoJ_mono_H_crest | |  | **www.gov.uk** |
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|  | **Our Reference:** FOI/82755 |  | June 2013 |

**Freedom of Information Request**

You asked for the following information from the Ministry of Justice (MoJ):

***How old is the oldest debt owed by the LSC? What value is that debt? To whom is it owed? (job description rather than a name please, i.e. a barrister or a solicitor) Please ask if any of the above is unclear and needs further clarification.***

Your request has been handled under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA). I am very sorry for the delay in providing you with a response.

I can confirm that the department holds the information that you have asked for. Please note that I have interpreted your request as relating to monies owed by the Legal Aid Agency to our providers from the Legal Aid Fund only, and this response excludes any information about monies owed to suppliers from our administration budget.

Monies owed to our providers can be broken down into two broad groups: those requests for payment that have not yet been processed and thus not yet entered into our payment system; and those that have been processed and have been accepted as due for payment. Unprocessed requests are not considered ‘creditors’ for accounting purposes. On this basis I have interpreted your request as relating solely to processed requests. However, you may be interested to note the table below, taken from the LSC’s 2012-2013 annual report (available at <http://www.justice.gov.uk/publications/corporate-reports/legal-services-commission>), shows that the vast majority of requests for payment are processed with 30 days of receipt.

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| **Bills paid – 2012-13 target measures** | **Targets 2012-13** | **Performance 2012-13** | **Bills paid – 2011-12 target measures** | **Targets 2011-12** | **Performance 2011-12** |
| Civil bills – Taxed, assessed, POA’s, Family Graduated Fee & Family  Advocacy Scheme bills | 30 days (90%) | 98% | Civil bills – Taxed, assessed, POA’s, Family Graduated Fee | 30 days (90%) | 91% |
| Criminal non standard fee and Investigative exceptional cases | 30 days (90%) | 99% | Criminal non standard fee | 20 days (90%) | 88% |
| Investigate exceptional cases | 5 days (90%) | 81% |
| Advocates Graduated Fee Service & Litigator Graduated Fee Service fee claims | 30 days (90%) | 94% | AGFS & LGFS fee claims | 40 days (95%) | 78% |

Our oldest outstanding creditor inevitably changes depending on a point in time as payments are made. In answer to your question, as interpreted above, on the morning of the 1st of July 2013 the oldest outstanding request for payment was £293.75 owed to a counsel for a civil representation case. The payment was authorised on the 25th of October 2012, it was not paid originally as at that time the counsel owed monies to the Legal Aid Agency for a previous overpayment. It was not until the 28th of June 2013 that the balance of credits and debits on their account made it possible for the LAA to settle the provider’s payments. Below are some statistics about the average time taken from authorisation of a request for payment and the LAA making the payment, the data has been taken from the payment run started on the morning of the 1st of July 2013.

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| **Total paid** | £69 Million |
| **Volume of bills paid** | 53,625 |
| **Mean number of days between assessment and payment** | 7 |
| **Median number of days between assessment and payment** | 6 |