



March 2016

Invitation to submit an Expression of Interest to deliver Legal Aid Welfare Benefits Services under the 2016 Standard Civil Contract (Welfare Benefits)

The LAA is inviting expressions of interest from organisations that would be interested in delivering legal aid Welfare Benefits services under the new 2016 Standard Civil Contract (Welfare Benefits) ("the Contract") in the following Procurement Areas from 1 November 2016:

- The North; and/or
- The South West & Wales

Legal aid for Welfare Benefits services is currently provided through two contracts:

- The 2013 Standard Civil Contract (Welfare Benefits) covering the London & South East and the Midlands & East Procurement Areas. This contract will expire on 31 March 2018; and
- The 2014 Standard Civil Contract (Welfare Benefits) ('2014 SCC (WB)') covering the North and the South West & Wales Procurement Areas. The 2014 SCC (WB) will expire on 31 October 2016.

The Contract will replace the 2014 SCC (WB). Organisations awarded a Contract will be required to provide Welfare Benefits services in accordance with the terms and conditions set out in the Contract documents from 1 November 2016 until the Contract expires (along with all other civil legal aid contracts) on 31 March 2018.

Organisations will be authorised to deliver Welfare Benefits services across the whole of the relevant Procurement Area in which they are awarded a Contract. The majority of legal advice delivered to clients will be on a face to face basis, but organisations will also be required to deliver legal aid Welfare Benefits services remotely to ensure adequate provision across each Procurement Area.

Only those organisations that complete and return the Expressions of Interest document below by 12 noon on 14 April 2016 will be invited to submit a tender in May 2016.

There will be no limit to the number of Contracts that can be awarded in each Procurement Area and all organisations that are assessed as being suitable to contract with the LAA and are able to meet the minimum service requirements will be awarded a Contract.

Eligibility to take part in this process

This process is open to any organisation that can meet our requirements. Organisations do not need to have an existing legal aid contract to be able to respond to this opportunity.

Matter start allocations

Organisations awarded a Contract (“Providers”) will be allocated up to 30 matter starts (“MS”) per annum. The Contract will authorise Providers to self-grant up to an additional 50% of their MS allocation per annum, and request further MS which may be granted where there is deemed to be a legitimate need.

There will be no limit on the volume of licensed work that a Provider may undertake under the Contract.

The table below outlines recent case volumes and provider numbers:

	Current number of providers holding 2014 SCC (WB)	MS opened (February 2014 – January 2015)	Certificates issued (February 2014 – January 2015)
North	10	151	5
South West & Wales	3	26	0
Total	13	177	5

Requirements

Organisations wanting to obtain a Contract will be required to take part in a single stage process that will assess their suitability to contract with the LAA as well as their ability to meet the minimum service requirements by the Contract Start Date including the following:

- Have at least a part-time presence within the Procurement Area(s) in which they wish to provide Welfare Benefits services;
- Hold a relevant quality standard (Lexcel or the Specialist Quality Mark);
- Employ at least one part-time supervisor (working at least 17.5 hours per week) who meets the requirements set out in the Welfare Benefits Supervisor Self Declaration Form;
- Maintain a supervisor to caseworker ratio of at least 1:4;
- Have access to an Authorised Litigator (an individual who conducts litigation services as an authorised person in accordance with the Legal Services Act 2007);
- Have not had a category 4 or 5 Peer Review rating in the 5 year period prior to May 2016.

Further information in relation to the minimum service requirements will be set out in the procurement and Contract documentation which will be available when the process opens in May 2016.

Organisations should review the requirements set out above and satisfy themselves that they meet all the requirements to deliver legal aid Welfare Benefits services in the Procurement Area(s) in which they intend to submit a tender.

If you wish to express an interest in delivering legal aid Welfare Benefits services, please complete the form below and email it to us at civil.contracts@legalaid.qsi.gov.uk by **12 noon on Thursday 14 April 2016**.

Organisations that express an interest will be invited to submit a tender in **May 2016**.

Organisations must register on our eTendering portal (www.legalaid.bravosolution.co.uk) to be invited to tender. We will be unable to invite any organisation to respond to this tendering opportunity that has not registered. Organisations are therefore strongly encouraged to ensure they have registered before submitting their Expression of Interest.

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A 'postcode' tool is available in the 'documents' section on the Welfare Benefits tender page of GOV.UK for Organisations to check which Procurement Area their Office falls within.

1) Organisation contact details and main office

Name of organisation:

Organisation's main address:

Postcode:

Email address:

Telephone number:

Contact name for this tender opportunity:

Do you currently hold a legal aid contract? YES / NO

If YES, please provide your organisation's lead account number:

2)i) North Procurement Area

Please enter the address from which you intend to deliver Welfare Benefits services in the North Procurement Area:

Address of office:

Postcode:

If you do not currently have premises please state where you intend to have an Office in place to deliver Welfare benefits services from 1 November 2016.

2)ii) South West & Wales Procurement Area

Please enter the address from which you intend to deliver Welfare Benefits services in the South West & Wales Procurement Area:

Address of office:

Postcode:

If you do not currently have premises please state where you intend to have an Office in place to deliver Welfare Benefits services from 1 November 2016.

Please ensure your organisation is registered on the LAA's eTendering portal (www.legalaid.bravosolution.co.uk) before you submit your expression of interest.

Completed forms should be returned to civil.contracts@legalaid.gsi.gov.uk by **12 noon on Thursday 14 April 2016**.