

Headline Intentions for Crime services from 1 October 2025

7 May 2024

The 2022 Standard Crime Contract (the contract) will come to an end on 30 September 2025. We intend to begin the procurement process for the 2025 Standard Crime Contract in September 2024 for Services to commence on 1 October 2025.

The 2025 Contract is intended to run for a maximum term of 10 years. As with all existing contracts the 2025 contract will contain a six-month termination provision. Providers will continue to be required to give three months' notice of withdrawal.

This approach is intended to give certainty for those delivering the services and allow long term decisions to be taken.

The 2025 Contract will also allow new providers to apply for a contract at any point between the contract start date and the final year of the contract. Similarly, existing providers may expand their office and duty scheme network at any time during the life of the contract. Details of the procurement process are set out in the **Procurement Process** section of this document.

Details to the changes from the 2022 Contract in the 2025 Contract are set out in the **Outline of Services** section of this document.

Outline of Services

The 2025 Contract will contain some key changes from the 2022 Contract. Those changes are set out below alongside the key requirements organisations will be required to meet under the contract.

Subject to engagement with the LAA's consultative bodies, our intention is that key features of the 2025 Contract will include the following provisions:

Office requirements

All providers will be required to deliver criminal legal aid services from an office which meets the contract requirements. For most offices (see Prison Law only below) this will mean premises which are permanently occupied during normal office hours.

Contract holders will be eligible to join duty solicitor schemes based on their office location(s) although there is no requirement to deliver duty solicitor services.

Offices will be required to be open for at least 5 hours between 8am and 8pm on each business day.

We will also be changing the office requirements for providers who have offices carrying out **Prison Law Only**, including greater flexibility over opening hours and access because clients rarely attend these offices.

Duty solicitor schemes and duty solicitor eligibility

Duty solicitor scheme boundaries will largely remain as currently operated under the 2022 Contract.

Duty slot allocation will continue to be based on the geographical location of offices and in proportion to the number of duty solicitors engaged from each office. Duty solicitors must be accredited under the Law Society's Criminal Litigators Accreditation Scheme CLAS or be a CILEX Practitioner holding a Criminal Litigation and Advocacy certificate with rights to conduct criminal litigation and advocacy in the magistrates' court (and who also holds the Police Station Qualification 'PSQ').

Minimum hours of criminal defence work requirements

As under the 2022 Contract, all duty solicitors seeking to obtain Duty Slots must undertake a minimum of 50 hours criminal defence work per calendar month from the provider office for which those Duty Slots have been obtained. Solicitors unable to meet the requirement will continue to be able to carry out contract work, however, they will not be eligible to join duty rotas.

We will be simplifying the duty solicitor police station and court attendance requirements by more closely aligning them with the case involvement requirements of supervisors. This will mean that duty solicitors who are also supervisors will no longer need to comply with two different sets of case involvement requirements.

Supervisors

As a minimum we will require providers to employ a full-time equivalent supervisor who meets the relevant crime supervisor standard.

Under the 2025 Contract, whilst providers will continue to be required to employ at least one full-time equivalent supervisor, we intend to allow individual supervisors to act for up to two providers.

Post-2025 proposals

We have identified two complex and interconnected contract areas – office requirements and duty scheme boundaries – where the impact of any potential significant change in longstanding requirements is uncertain.

Making significant changes in either of these areas is likely to have substantial implications for providers and clients. It has therefore become clear that a public consultation will be needed to better understand the impacts and opportunities of any significant change in these areas.

We intend to carry out any such consultation within the early years of the contract period. If this results in minor (or no) change to the office and duty scheme requirements, we will accommodate them by amending the 2025 Contract. If the

consultation pointed to more fundamental reform in these areas, we may be required to exercise the contractual break clause and re-tender for new contracts.

Procurement Process

The procurement process will assess an organisation's suitability to contract with us, as well as an organisation's ability to meet our minimum service requirements.

All organisations that are assessed as being compliant and as meeting the minimum service requirements will be awarded a 2025 Contract.

Any organisation assessed as being non-compliant will be able to re-bid or amend their bid and have the opportunity to obtain a 2025 Contract.

Our new proposed approach will mean no organisation will be prevented from obtaining a 2025 contract simply because it cannot meet our requirements at a particular point in time. The process will remain open and when an applicant meets our requirements it will receive a contract.

Membership of duty schemes

Organisations will be required to indicate whether they wish to join the duty solicitor schemes associated with the location of each office when they bid.

Providers will be able to open additional offices during the life of the contract and join the associated duty solicitor schemes.

A post code tool will be available to assist organisations to identify which duty solicitor schemes an office is eligible to join.

Eligibility to join the October 2025 duty solicitor rotas

Organisations seeking to join the October 2025 rotas will be required to provide evidence they and relevant duty solicitors meet the procurement requirements in sufficient time to enable rotas to be published.

Where organisations are not able to provide this information by the deadline, they will have the opportunity to join the next rota commencing in January 2026.

Remuneration

The current rates of payment can be found in The Criminal Legal Aid (Remuneration) Regulations 2013.

Proposed timetable

We anticipate that the activity relating to the procurement process will broadly follow the timetable set out below, however, a final timetable will be published in the Information for Applicants document.

Procurement opportunity opens	September 2024
Procurement opportunity closes	Final year
Notification of outcomes	Winter 2024/25

Submission of evidence of meeting procurement requirements	Winter / Spring 2025
Contract start and 1 st duty rota commencement date	1 October 2025