



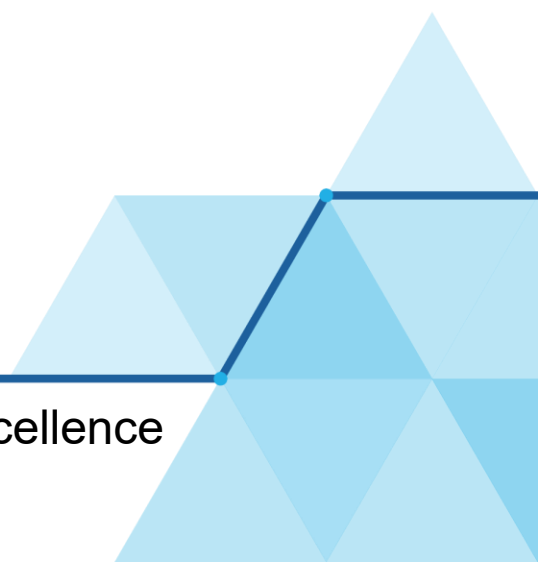
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Crime Contract 2025

A Guide for Providers Who Have Previously Held a Criminal Legal Aid Contract

October 2025

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Disclaimer



This document is intended to be guidance only and is not intended to be a replacement for the Standard Crime Contract 2025.



It should be read alongside the Contract. In the event of any inconsistency between the contents of the guidance contained in this welcome pack and the Contract, the terms of the Contract shall prevail.



Capitalised terms used in this document but not defined within it shall have the meaning given to them in the Contract.



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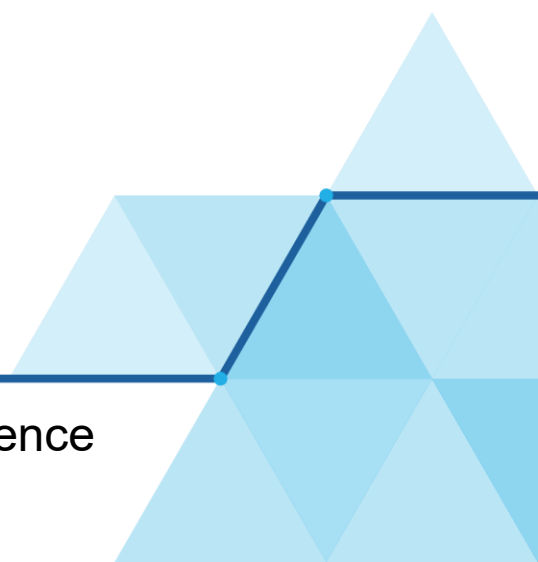
- Overview of the Crime Contract 2025
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Overview of the Crime Contract 2025

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Crime Contract 2025: Overview



Effective from: 1 October 2025



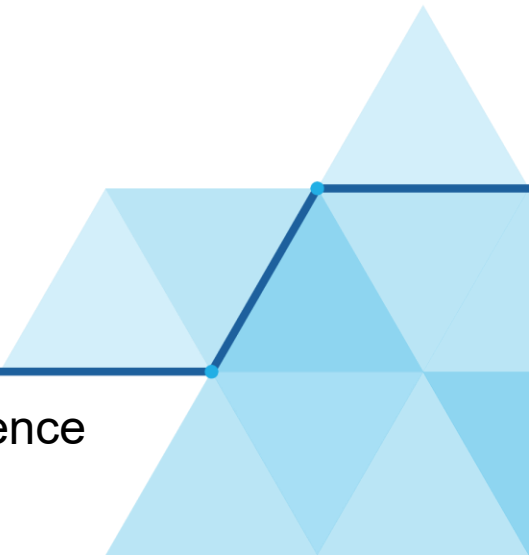
Applies to all providers of criminal legal aid services in England and Wales



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Tendering & Contracting Approach

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Tendering & Contracting Approach

The 2025 Crime Contract introduces a new procurement model:

- The contract duration is extended to ten years (1 October 2025 to 30 September 2035).
- Three Stage Procurement Process (TSPP): Allows new entrants and existing providers to apply for or to expand services at any time until 30 September 2034
- Entry requirements have been simplified to reduce bureaucracy and support market sustainability. Applicants will be able to join Duty Rotas at the next available entry point following successful verification.

Tendering & Contracting Approach: How to Tender for the 2025 Crime Contract

Access the Tender

Visit the LAA tender portal: <https://legalaid.bravosolution.co.uk/web/login.shtml>

The tender documents and Application Guide will be available there.

Understand the Contract Requirements

Review the [Application Guide](#) (formerly known as the Information for Applicants or IFA), which outlines the tender process and the key contractual requirements

Choose Your Entry Stage

Stages 1 & 2 are Now Closed

Stage 3: 1 May 2025 – 30 Sept 2034 (ongoing entry for new providers and expansions)

Submit Application

- Complete and submit the tender through the eTendering system (Bravo/Jaggaer).
- Monitor the system's message board daily for updates and communications

Tendering & Contract Approach: Verification, Contract Issuance & Duty Work Access

Verification

After successful tendering, applicants must pass verification before receiving a contract.

Verification deadlines:

- Stage 3: within 2 weeks of notification

Contract Issuance

- Contracts will be issued via by the LAA
- Ensure designated signatories are set up to sign the contract

Duty Solicitor Access

- If applying for Duty Work, the LAA will provide details of the CRM12 process after verification is complete.
- Only verified applicants can submit CRM12s and join Duty Rotas

Tendering & Contracting Approach: Opening a New Office Under the 2025 Crime Contract

If a provider has successfully obtained a 2025 Crime Contract, they can open new offices during the contract term and undertake Duty Solicitor work from those offices.

✓ Steps to Follow:

- **Submit a Request:** The provider must email their request to open a new office (or add a new class of work) to crime.contracts@justice.gov.uk.
- This process is outlined in Paragraph 6.3 of the [Application Guide](#).
- **Verification Required:** Each new office must undergo successful verification.
- **Duty Rota Eligibility:** Once verified, the provider can join the next available Duty Rota entry point for that office.

Tendering & Contracting Approach: Moving Offices Under the 2025 Crime Contract

If a provider wants to move an office under the 2025 Crime Contract, they should:

- 1) Check Clause 21.11 of the Standard Terms
- 2) Notify their LAA Contract Manager.
- 3) The move might affect Duty Scheme eligibility and could require a request via crime.contracts@justice.gov.uk.

Please see [6.5 Application Guide](#) for more information

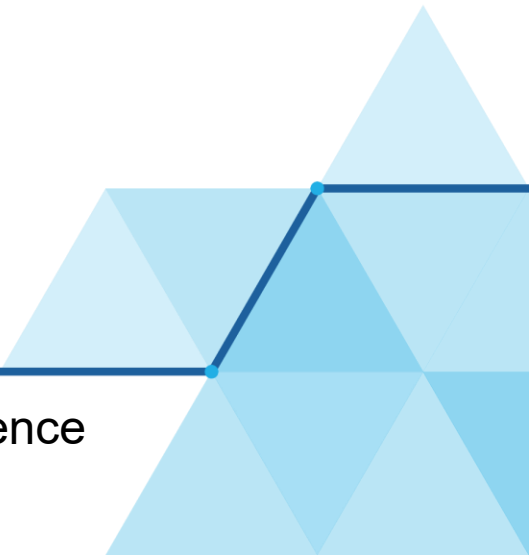
Duty Scheme Boundaries can be checked using the [Postcode Tool](#)



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Changes to the Standard Terms

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Changes to the Standard Terms: Cyber Essentials

- Providers must hold a valid Cyber Essentials Basic Certification as a minimum as per *(16.19 Standard Terms)*
- This is the minimum level mandated under the contract to ensure baseline protection against common internet-based threat
- You must present your Contract Manager with a copy of the Cyber Essentials Certificate, if requested, as part of the verification process and as part of the annual review process.
- The cost of obtaining a Cyber Essentials Basic Certification will depend on the number of employees a you have, and the certification will apply to the organisation as a whole
- Cyber Essentials Certification is valid for 12 months
To maintain certification, you must renew it annually. The accreditation body typically sends a reminder one month before the expiry date. When renewing, you must reapply and pay the application fee again.
- For further details and resources, please visit the official Cyber Essentials website: <https://www.ncsc.gov.uk/cyberessentials>

Changes to the Standard Terms: Accredited Representatives

3.7 Standard Terms:

‘When instructing an Accredited Representative, providers must ensure they continue to meet the criteria required to maintain their accreditation’

The purpose of this is to reinforce provider responsibility for ensuring that Accredited Representatives remain compliant with accreditation standards, thereby maintaining the quality and integrity of legal services delivered

There have been further changes to Accredited Representatives in the Specification which are covered at slides [24 & 25 for this pack.](#)

Changes to the Standard Terms: Client Feedback

Under Clause 7.8 Standard Terms Crime Contract 2025

- Providers are required to have a written procedure that encourages clients to provide feedback about the quality of service they receive.
- Providers must monitor performance and take corrective action.

Providers must assess:

- The Quality of legal advice
- The level of service provided to the client
- The perceptions of the client

Changes to the Standard Terms: Instructing Advocates

Clauses requiring providers to consult with clients on the instruction of Crown Court advocates (Clauses 7.3 - 7.6 of the 2022 Crime Standard Terms) have been removed to reduce duplication with professional standards.

The information below is no longer required under the Crime Contract 2025:

- Evidence of detailed consultation with clients about advocate selection.
- Documentation of suitability and availability of counsel.

Changes to the Standard Terms: Peer Review

Clause 10.10 has been introduced into the Crime Contract 2025 in respect of Peer Review ratings

If your Contract Work receives a rating of 5 in the first Peer Review, you can make representations.

If the rating is upheld, it is considered a Fundamental Breach.

This may lead to the immediate termination of your Contract in the relevant Category of Law as a Fundamental Breach following an initial Peer Review.

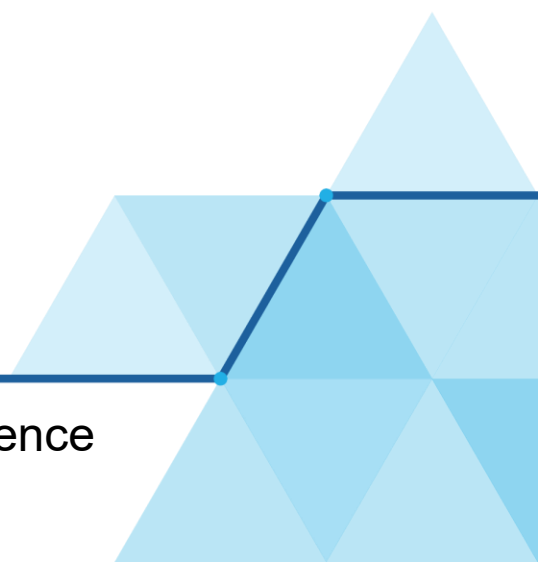
You are also liable to reimburse the standard Peer Review costs.



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Changes to the Specification

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Changes to the Specification: Supervision & Service Standards

- Fixed supervisor-to-staff ratios have been removed, allowing providers some discretion on how best to ensure that Supervision remains effective.
- Supervisors may oversee staff across a maximum of two providers, provided quality standards are maintained.
- Please note that this is subject to each provider employing at least one FTE supervisor in the relevant Class of Work
- The SQM Audit cycle has been extended from 3 to 5 years

For further information please see:

[2.1 – 2.26 Specification Crime Contract 2025](#)

[Supervisor Guidance](#)

Important Information - Supervision

Supervision requirements have been revised to give providers more flexibility to set supervisory arrangements in accordance with their professional obligations

Remote supervision continues to be allowed under the 2025 Contract and as per 2.17 Specification:

- The Supervisor must set aside dedicated time for supervising each Designated Fee Earner or Caseworker.
- The level of supervision should be tailored to the individual's skills, knowledge, and experience
- Each provider must still have at least one full-time equivalent (FTE) supervisor in the relevant Class of Work
- Supervisors must be employed by the provider, not engaged on a freelance basis.

Changes to the Specification: Duty Solicitor Case Involvement Requirements

Case Involvement requirements for Duty Solicitors have been more closely aligned with the Supervisor case involvement requirements. This is to reduce the burden on those Duty Solicitors who are also Supervisors from having to meet two differing standards.

To retain Duty Slots and deploy Duty Solicitors, each Duty Solicitor must (as per 6.21 Specification):

- Complete at least 6 Police Station Advice and Assistance cases every rolling 12 months, only 2 can be telephone-only without attendance.
- In each rolling 12-month period, do either:
 - 20 magistrates' court representations (including Duty sessions), or
 - 10 magistrates' court + 5 Crown Court representations.
- Within every 3-month rolling period, complete at least 1 in-person Police Station Duty attendance (telephone advice doesn't count) or 1 Duty Slot in your name.

Changes to the Specification: Duty Solicitor Case Involvement Requirements Key Information

Please note that it is still the position that:

- Any Duty Solicitor used to obtain Duty Slots must complete at least 50 hours of Criminal Defence Work per calendar month from the relevant office.
- Providers must keep sufficient evidence of this work to comply with Clause 8.3(n) of the Standard Terms.

Changes to the Standard Terms: Variable Monthly Payments

As per 14.8 Standard Terms & 5.18 Specification Crime Contract 2025

Variable Monthly Payments are now default; Standard Monthly Payments remain optional.

For more information, including processing and payment dates please visit:

[Legal Aid Agency payments to providers - GOV.UK](#)

Changes to the Specification: Office Requirements

Office Requirements have been relaxed under the Crime Contract 2025:

- Offices must now be open at least 5 hours between 8am–8pm on business days (reduced from 7 hours): *(2.38(c) Specification)*

The requirements for Offices that deliver **Prison Law only** services have been made more flexible:

These offices need to meet the criteria as per 2.39 Specification:

- satisfy any professional requirements of your Relevant Professional Body and be registered as appropriate.
- contain suitable facilities to interview Clients, witnesses and any other persons in a private interview room where that is required; and
- meet any relevant health and safety standards, quality standards, service standards together with additional standards set out in this Contract



Changes to the Specification: Accredited Representatives



The Specification has been updated to ensure that only qualified and properly registered individuals provide police station advice.

Delegating Police Station Work (9.26 Specification) has been updated to clarify what is expected of providers when instructing an accredited representative, particularly where the representative is instructed via an agency or similar arrangement.

Changes to the Specification: Accredited Representatives (Continued)

Reporting Concerns About Representatives (9.33 Specification) –creates a formal route for raising concerns, enabling the LAA to investigate and take action if needed.

If you notice issues with a Representative's:

- Advice quality
- Conduct or professionalism
- Any other reasonable concern

You must notify both the Legal Aid Agency and the Representative's supervising solicitor within 5 business days, detailing the concern.

9.40 Specification has been updated to ensure that:

- Before advice is given, the Client must be informed of the status of the Duty Solicitor or Representative and the Provider they represent

Changes to the Specification Very High-Cost Crime Cases (VHCCs)

- Early Notification of potential Very High-Cost Crime (VHCC) cases is essential
- Providers must notify the Criminal Cases Unit (CCU) as soon as it appears a case may qualify as a VHCC.
- It is now a contractual requirement that a [**VHCC Notification Form**](#) is submitted to the Criminal Cases Unit within 5 business days if requested
- For further information please see:

[**Chapter 7 Crime Contract 2025**](#)

[**VHCCs - Very High Cost \(Criminal\) Cases - GOV.UK**](#)

Clarification in the Specification: Court Duty Solicitor Work

The Crime Contract 2025 now includes clarification on Court Duty work to the following effect:

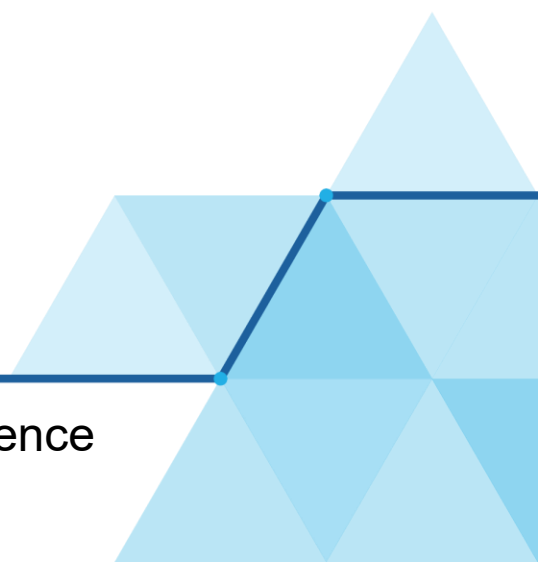
- Duty Solicitors must attend any courtroom during the Duty Period if requested by the court. (10.12 Specification)
- Own Client work may be undertaken during Duty Periods only if it does not interfere with duty services and must not be claimed as Duty Solicitor work. (10.16 Specification)
- Please note that it is still the position that providers cannot use agents to conduct Court Duty Work as per 5.40 – 5.44 Specification.



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Key Information – Duty Solicitor Rotas

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Key Information: Duty Solicitor Rotas

CRM12 Application Process

Providers must submit a CRM12 form where for the next rota period they wish to:

- Add new Duty Solicitors
- Change their Duty Scheme or office allocation changes

Dual Representation Restrictions

- If a solicitor appears on CRM12s for two organisations, the LAA may refuse to allocate slots to either. Providers must obtain written confirmation from solicitors that they are not applying elsewhere

Key Information: Duty Solicitor Rotas (Verification & Compliance)

Scheme Membership Verification

- Organisations are responsible for ensuring all duty solicitors are correctly listed on the scheme members list before rota production begins. Errors must be reported by the published deadlines

Eligibility and Compliance

- Only providers with an active 2025 Crime Contract will be eligible to participate in duty rotas from October 2025 onwards

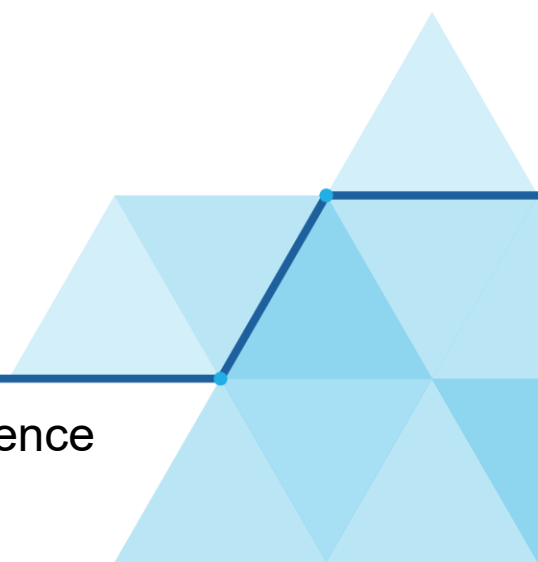
For further information please visit [Duty solicitors: rotas, information and guidance - GOV.UK](#)



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Key Information Digital Case Handling

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Key Information: Digital Case Handling

Secure Digital Storage

- Providers must use encrypted, access-controlled systems for storing client files and evidence.
- Cloud-based systems must be hosted in the UK or comply with UK GDPR standards.

Electronic File Sharing

- The LAA encourages the use of secure portals or encrypted email for sharing case files with counsel, experts, and the courts.

Digital Audit Trails

- All digital casework must include timestamped audit trails for actions such as file access, edits, and submissions.

Key Information: Digital Case Handling (Continued)

Remote Working Protocols

- Staff working remotely must use VPNs or secure remote desktop environments.
- Personal devices are only permitted if they meet Cyber Essentials standards.

Training and Awareness

Providers must ensure all staff receive annual training on digital security, phishing awareness, and secure data handling.

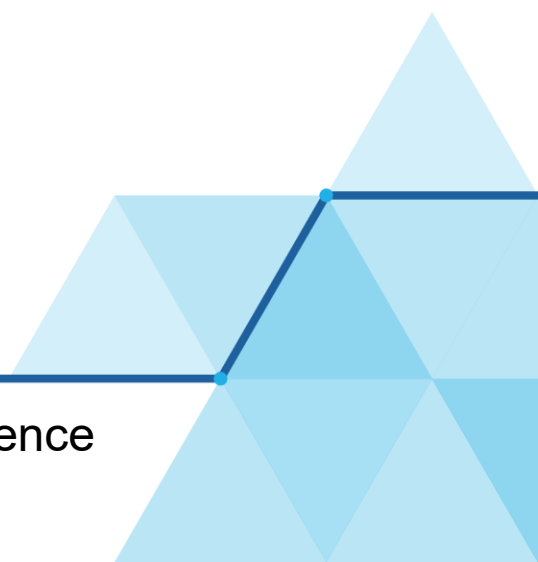
For more information visit : [Legal Aid Agency data security requirements - GOV.UK](#) and see 16.5 Standard Terms Crime Contract 2025



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Compliance & Audits

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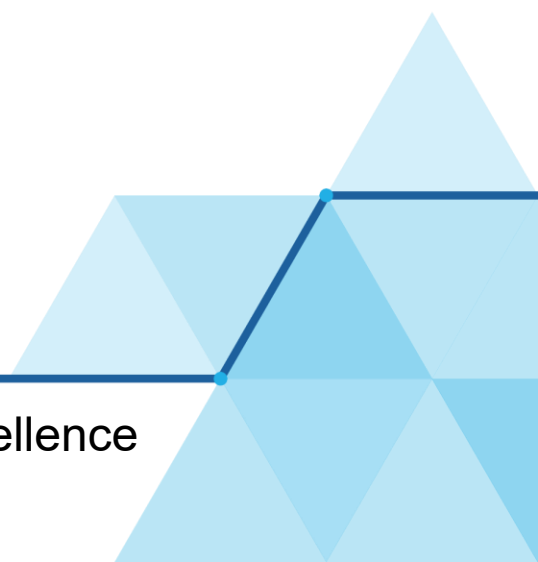
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Compliance & Audits

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Compliance & Audits: Regular Assurance Activities

The Legal Aid Agency conducts a range of audit and assurance activities to ensure providers maintain high standards of compliance, quality, and financial accuracy across legal aid services.

Regular Assurance Activities

- **Contract Management Activities**
Routine reviews by Contract Managers to ensure providers meet contractual obligations, including file checks and payment reviews. Non-compliance may lead to further audits or sanctions.
- **Peer Review**
Independent solicitors assess the quality of legal advice in sampled files. Poor ratings can trigger re-reviews or contract termination.
- **Core Testing Programme**
Monthly random checks of legal aid applications and claims to identify errors for reporting to the National Audit Office. Errors may require amendments or further provider engagement.

Compliance & Audits: Ad Hoc Assurance Activities

Ad Hoc Assurance Activities:

- **Cost Assessment Audit**

Evaluates the accuracy of claims over time using a sample of files.

Results may be extrapolated to all claims, potentially leading to financial recoupment or contract notices.

- **Targeted File Review (TFR)**

Focused reviews triggered by data suggesting specific issues. Selected files are examined to understand the problem's scope, with potential follow-up actions if errors are found.

For more information on audits visit - [Legal Aid Agency audits - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/legal-aid-agency-audits)

Compliance & Audits: Files & Submissions

File Compliance

During audits, sampled files must meet all compliance criteria (e.g., proper documentation, client care letters, time recording). Falling below this may trigger remedial action or further audits.

File Management:

- Providers are expected to maintain clear, contemporaneous records
- Ensure all CRM forms are completed correctly and signed

Timeliness of Submissions

Claims must be submitted within 3 months of case conclusion. Late submissions beyond this window may be rejected unless exceptional circumstances are documented.

Compliance & Audits: Performance Monitoring

Performance Monitoring:

- Providers should meet the KPIs in 2.65 Specification Crime Contract 2025 on timeliness, accuracy, and client satisfaction

Duty Solicitor Scheme Participation

- If you repeatedly fail to meet the contract requirements for your Rota, Panel membership, or Duty Slots, we may suspend or remove your right to carry out Contract Work. This may include removing some or all of your allocated Duty Slots on one or more Rotas, as outlined in a written notice.
- See 24.12 Standard Terms Crime Contract 2025

Compliance & Audits: Additional Information

Audit Readiness:

- Providers should retain documentation for 6 years
- Providers should be prepared for remote or in-person audits

Training & Supervision:

- Ensure staff are trained on 2025 contract requirements

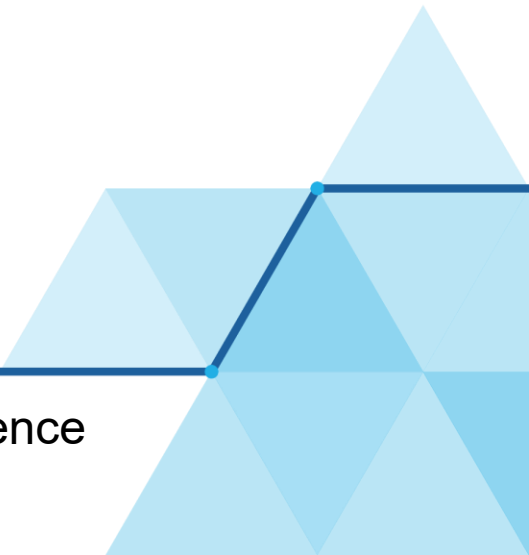
For more information on audits and best practice visit - [Legal Aid Agency audits - GOV.UK](#)



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Further Information & Resources

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Further Information & Resources: Key Documentation



Contract Documentation

[Crime Contract 2025 – Standard Terms](#)

[Crime Contract 2025 – Specification](#)

[Crime Supervisor Guidance](#)

Police Station Accredited Representatives Guidance

[Police Station Representatives Register](#)

[Police Station Representatives Arrangements](#)

Duty Solicitor Information

[Duty Solicitor Rotas & Guidance](#)

Further Information & Resources: Applications & Billing

Legal Aid Applications Guidance

[Criminal Legal Aid Manual](#)

[Criminal Legal Aid Keycard](#)

Legal Aid Billing Information

[Guidance for Reporting Crime Lower Work](#)

[Criminal Bills Assessment Manual](#)

[Crown Court Fee Guidance](#)

[Criminal Legal Aid \(Remuneration\) Regulations](#)

**For Further Training & Guidance on Legal Aid Applications & Billing
please visit:**

[Criminal legal aid – Legal Aid Learning](#)

Further Information & Resources: Communications



To keep up to date with the latest news from the Legal Aid Agency – subscribe to our [bulletin](#)



For the latest updates on contingency arrangements please visit - [Legal Aid Agency cyber security incident - GOV.UK](#) and [Crime Contingency – Legal Aid Learning](#)



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