




Ministry
of Justice

Crime Contract 2025

Key Information for New Providers

October 2025

Working with others to achieve excellence
in the delivery of legal aid



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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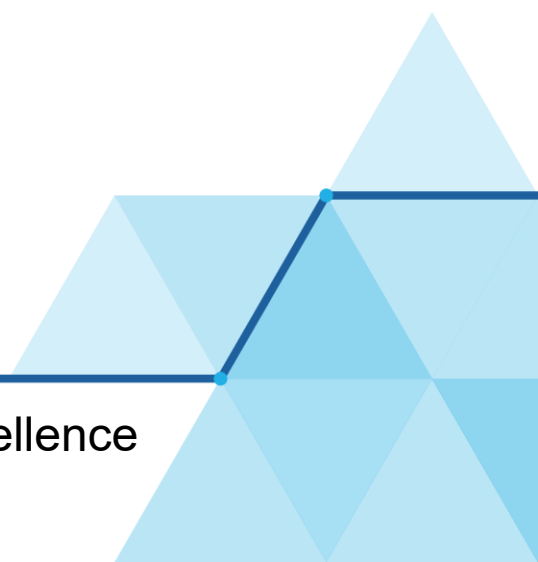
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Overview of the Crime Contract 2025

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The Crime Contract 2025: Overview

The Crime Contract 2025 governs the delivery of publicly funded criminal defence services in England and Wales from 1 October 2025. It sets out the terms, standards, and remuneration mechanisms for providers delivering legal aid in criminal matters.

Standard Terms

This is the core legal framework for the contract.

Covers obligations, compliance, and termination clauses.

Service Specification

Sections 1–4: Introduction, service standards, qualifying criteria, and how to carry out contract work.

Section 5: Remuneration rules, including payment structures and eligible costs.

Section 6: Duty solicitor scheme provisions.

Section 7: Very High-Cost Cases (VHCCs) guidance.

Section 8: Claims, costs, assessments, and review processes.

Sections 9–13: Covers criminal investigations, proceedings, appeals, prison law, and associated civil work.

Overview of the Crime Contract 2025: Remuneration

Remuneration

Under the 2025 Crime Contract, providers are remunerated for delivering legal aid services through a structured system of fixed fees, standard fees, hourly rates, and escape fee provisions.

The payment framework is governed by the [Criminal Legal Aid \(Remuneration\) Regulations](#), which set out the rates and thresholds applicable to different classes of work.

Compliance & Monitoring

Providers are subject to audits and performance reviews.

Non-compliance can lead to sanctions or contract termination.

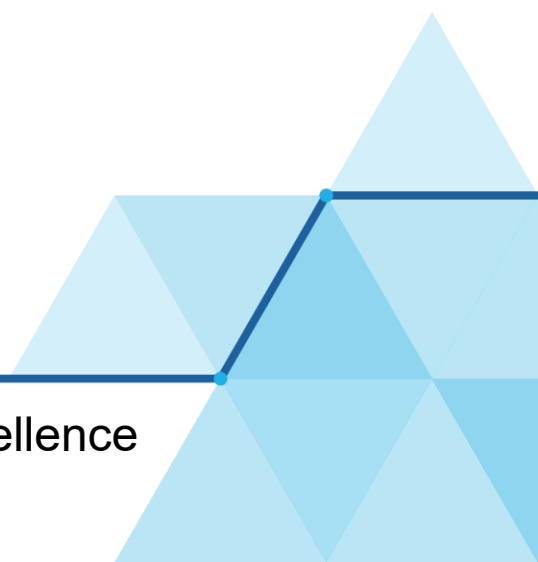
To find out more visit [Legal Aid Agency audits - GOV.UK](#) and see Clause 9 2025 Crime Contract Standard Terms



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Your Responsibilities and Obligations

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Your Responsibilities & Obligations: Client Care

Client Care and Communication

Providers must act in the best interests of clients and potential clients, and be uninfluenced by any factor.

Providers must ensure clear, timely, and appropriate communication with clients.

Clients should be informed of their rights, the progress of their case, and any decisions affecting them.

Quality of Legal Advice and Representation

Legal services must be delivered to a high professional standard.

Practitioners must be appropriately qualified and supervised.

Providers must follow relevant professional conduct rules and LAA guidance.

Your Responsibilities & Obligations – Client Care

Timeliness

Work must be carried out promptly, especially in time-sensitive situations like police station attendances or court hearings.

Client Feedback and Complaints

A clear complaints procedure must be in place.

Feedback should be used to improve service delivery.

You are required to have a written procedure that encourages clients to provide feedback about the quality of service they receive.

Your Responsibilities & Obligations

Record Keeping

Record Keeping and File Management

Accurate and complete records must be maintained.

Files should be accessible and auditable for quality assurance and compliance checks.

Equality and Diversity

Providers must ensure services are accessible and non-discriminatory.

Reasonable adjustments should be made for clients with disabilities or specific needs.

Compliance and Monitoring

Providers are subject to audits and reviews by the LAA.

Non-compliance can lead to sanctions, including contract termination.

Your Responsibilities & Obligations: Files

A file must be opened for every case that you conduct under the Crime Contract 2025 – the following steps should be undertaken:

1) Client Engagement

- Confirm client identity and eligibility for legal aid.
- Conduct initial assessment (e.g. offence type, urgency, funding status).

2) Assign a Unique File Number (UFN)

- Format: DDMMYY/XXX (e.g. 280725/001)
- Must be unique to each client matter.
- Used for all correspondence, billing, and audit tracking.

Your Responsibilities & Obligations: Files (Continued)

3) Complete File Opening Documents

- Legal Aid application (where applicable)
- Client care letter and terms of business
- Conflict check and risk assessment

4) Record Key Details

- Client contact info
- Offence and case type
- Funding status (e.g. duty, legal aid, private)

5) Create and Store File

- Open physical or digital file in line with LAA and GDPR requirements.
- Ensure secure storage and access controls.

Your Responsibilities & Obligations: Key Performance Indicators

Key Performance Indicator	Requirement	Failure Condition
Cost Reduction on Assessment	Avoid more than 15% cost reduction on assessed claims for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Police Station Advice and Assistance (Escape Fee Cases) • Free Standing Advice and Assistance • Advocacy Assistance • Magistrates' Court non-Standard Fees • Prison Law Escape Fee Cases • Prison Law non-Standard Fees 	If costs are reduced by more than 15% in any 3-month rolling period, KPI 1 is not met.
DSCC Communication Handling	Accept and appropriately deal with at least 90% of communications from the DSCC for Police Station Advice and Assistance when on a Duty Solicitor Scheme Rota	If fewer than 90% of DSCC communications are accepted in any 3-month rolling period, KPI 2 is not met.
Case Completion Before Provider Change	Ensure 95% or more of cases are concluded before any change of provider under the contract	If fewer than 95% of cases conclude before a provider change, KPI 3 is not met.

Your Responsibilities & Obligations – Offices

For all providers, other than prison law **only** providers, each provider must have at least one office that:

- **Meets regulatory standards** - i.e. it must comply with professional registration and regulatory requirements.
- **Is accessible during business hours** - providers must have constant access to the office during standard business hours.
- **Is open to clients** – the office must be open and accessible to clients and others for at least 5 hours between 8am and 8pm on each business day.
- **Is staffed** – A representative (not necessarily directly employed) must be present to arrange appointments and emergency advice.

This is as per 2.38 Specification Crime Contract

Your Responsibilities & Obligations: Offices

- **Can schedule appointments** – Must be able to arrange client appointments on all open days (subject to staff availability).
- **Has private interview space** – Must include a private room suitable for confidential interviews.
- **Meets all standards** – Must comply with health and safety, quality, and service standards as outlined in the contract.

For **Prison Law Only** offices requirements are more flexible, and their offices must 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

Your Responsibilities & Obligations: New Offices

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 using the CRM12 Form 2025 :** The provider must email their request (and completed CRM12 Form) 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.

Your Responsibilities & Obligations

Moving Offices

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](#)

Your Responsibilities & Obligations – Supervision



Supervision is a core requirement under the Crime Contract 2025.



Providers must ensure that legal work is overseen by qualified supervisors who meet specific criteria and maintain compliance throughout the contract period.

Your Responsibilities & Obligations - Supervision

- Each provider must have at least one full-time equivalent (FTE) supervisor for each Relevant Class of Work
- Supervisors must be employed by the provider, not engaged on a freelance basis.
- Under the Crime Contract 2025 there are no fixed Supervisor ratios, 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.

Under the Crime Contract 2025 remote supervision is allowed if Supervisors:

- Set aside dedicated time for supervising each Designated Fee Earner or Caseworker.
- Tailor the level of Supervision to the individual's skills, knowledge, and experience

Your Responsibilities & Obligations

General Supervision Requirements

Requirement	Details
Named Supervisor	Each office must have at least one supervisor for each class of work(e.g. Criminal Investigations, Criminal Proceedings, Prison Law).
Notification Duty	Providers must notify the LAA within 21 days of any changes affecting supervision (e.g. supervisor departure or change in eligibility).
Audit Compliance	Supervisors must be available for verification and may be asked to submit updated Supervisor Standard and Declaration Forms at any time.

Your Responsibilities & Obligations

Supervisor Requirements

Supervisors must meet minimum casework and experience thresholds in the relevant class of work:

Criminal Investigations and Criminal Proceedings

Casework Requirement:

350 hours in the past 12 months or 1050 hours over five years for part-time Supervisors.

Additional Requirements:

- Must hold CLAS accreditation.
- Must have held a non-conditional practising certificate for the past three years.
- In the last 12 months must have completed at least:
- 6 Police Station Advice & Assistance cases (no more than 2 telephone advice only cases) and:
- 20 magistrates' court representations, or
- 10 magistrates' court representations and 5 Crown Court representations

Your Responsibilities & Obligations: Supervisor Requirements (Continued)

Prison Law

Casework Requirement:

350 hours in the past 12 months or 1050 hours over five years for part-time Supervisors.

Additional Requirements:

- Must have completed at least four representations before the Parole Board or Independent Adjudicator/Prison Governor in the past 12 months.
- Legal qualification is not mandatory, but the Supervisor must meet the standards outlined in the contract

Appeals and Reviews

Requirements:

- Must have completed 350 hours of direct casework in the past 12 months or 1050 hours over five years for part-time Supervisors
- Must have held a non-conditional practising certificate for the past three years

Your Responsibilities & Obligations: Duty Solicitors

A **Duty Solicitor** is defined as:

‘a person who has previously been a member of a Scheme under a Previous Contract or is a current member of the Law Society’s Criminal Litigation Accreditation Scheme and passed the PSQ;’

Duty Period / Duty Slot: A scheduled time during which a Duty Solicitor must be available to provide services.

Back-up: A system where the Defence Solicitor Contact Centre (DSCC) contacts another Duty Solicitor if the primary one is unavailable.

Call-In Scheme: A court-based system where the Duty Solicitor is contacted directly by the court when needed

Your Responsibilities & Obligations: Duty Solicitors (Continued)

Key Points to Note

Accreditation: Must hold current CLAS accreditation.

Registration: Must be registered with the DSCC.

Availability: Must be available during scheduled duty periods to provide legal services.

Scope of Work:

Police Station Duty Solicitor: Provides legal advice to individuals detained or interviewed by police.

Court Duty Solicitor: Represents unrepresented defendants at magistrates' courts.

Duty Solicitors must cover both the Police Station and Court duty rotas for the scheme they are a member of.

Your Responsibilities & Obligations Duty Solicitor Criteria

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.

And

Complete at least 50 hours of Criminal Defence Work per calendar month from the relevant office.

Every 3 months, complete at least 1 in-person Police Station Duty attendance or 1 Duty Slot in your name (telephone advice doesn't count).

Providers must keep sufficient evidence of this work to comply with Clause 8.3 of the Standard Terms and Section 6 of the Specification.

Your Responsibilities & Obligations: Duty Solicitor Process

To apply for Duty Solicitor rota slots under the Crime Contract 2025, providers must follow a structured process managed by the LAA and the Duty Solicitor Call Centre (DSCC).

1. Complete the CRM12 Form

It must include:

- Solicitor's name and CLAS accreditation
- Office and scheme allocation
- Confirmation that the solicitor is not listed on another provider's CRM12

2. Submit the CRM12 to the LAA

- Email the completed CRM12 to crm12@justice.gov.uk.
- Use the CRM12 form issued by the LAA for the relevant rota period.
- You can find the full guidance and CRM12 forms on the [GOV.UK Duty Solicitor Rotas page](#)

Your Responsibilities & Obligations: Duty Solicitor Process (Continued)

3. Check the Duty Solicitor Members List

- The LAA publishes a provisional members list before rota production.
- Providers must verify that all solicitors are listed correctly.
- If a Duty Solicitor is no longer engaged, you must notify your LAA Contract Manager of this.
- Any inaccuracies must be reported by any deadlines published by the LAA on Gov.uk

4. Amendments and Confirmation

- If changes are needed, submit an amended CRM12 before the deadline.
- Ensure Duty Solicitors confirm in writing that they are not applying through another provider.
- **We may reject applications if a Duty Solicitor appears on CRM12s for multiple providers.**

Your Responsibilities & Obligations: Duty Solicitor Process (Further Continued)

5. Await Rota Allocation

- The Duty Rota Team at the LAA allocates rota slots based on scheme rules and availability.
- Final rotas are published on Gov.uk in advance of the rota start date.

Important Points to Note

- Deadlines are strict – late submissions may result in exclusion from the rota.
- Accreditation must be current – solicitors must hold valid CLAS certificates.
- Duty Solicitors may only apply for membership of Schemes from a single Office for a single Provider'. – dual applications are not permitted.
- You can find the full guidance and CRM12 forms on the [GOV.UK Duty Solicitor Rotas page](#)

Your Responsibilities & Obligations: 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 the LAA with a copy of the Cyber Essentials Certificate as part of the verification process and to your Contract Manager, if requested, 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>

Your Responsibilities & Obligations: 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.

Your Responsibilities & Obligations: 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.

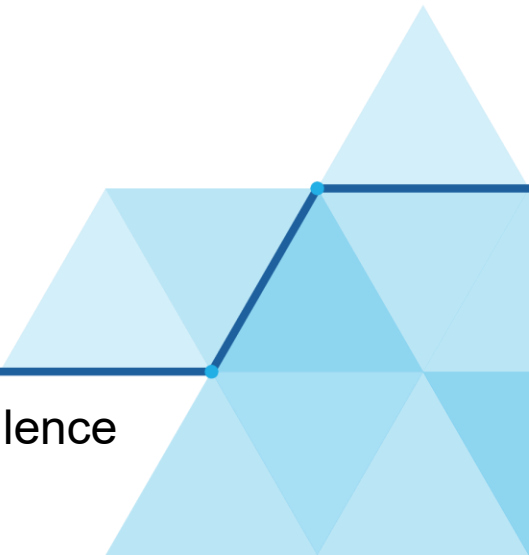
For more information visit : [Legal Aid Agency data security requirements - GOV.UK](#)



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Classes of Work

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Classes of Work: Overview

The Crime Contract 2025 covers:

- Criminal Investigations Work (including Duty Solicitor provision at the police station)
- Criminal Proceedings
- Appeals & Reviews
- Prison Law
- Associated Civil Work

Qualifying Criteria – Financial Eligibility Tests

This test determines whether a client qualifies for legal aid based on their income and capital.

Applies to: Most types of Advice and Assistance, Criminal Proceedings, Appeals, Prison Law, and Associated Civil Work.

Not required for: Police Station Advice (under arrest or voluntary with a constable present).

Evidence: Documentary proof of means must be obtained and retained unless:

- It's impracticable before starting work.
- Only telephone advice is given.
- Exceptional personal circumstances apply.

Limits: If evidence is not provided, claims may be restricted or disallowed.

For more information visit [Criminal legal aid: means testing - GOV.UK](#)

Qualifying Criteria – Sufficient Benefit Test

This test ensures that the legal aid provided offers meaningful benefit to the client.

Applies to: All Advice and Assistance, including Free Standing Advice, and Advocacy Assistance

Criteria:

The issue must concern English or Welsh law.

There must be sufficient benefit to justify the work, considering the client's personal and legal circumstances.

Ongoing Requirement: Must be reassessed throughout the case. If no longer met, work must cease.

Qualifying Criteria – Interests of Justice

This test applies to representation in criminal proceedings and determines whether it is in the interests of justice for the client to receive legal aid.

Applies to: Representation in Magistrates' Court and Crown Court.

Factors considered include:

Risk of imprisonment or loss of liberty.

Seriousness or complexity of the case.

Client's ability to understand or present their case.

Interests of another person (e.g. child protection).

Outcome: If not satisfied, legal aid for representation must be refused.

For more information visit [Work out who qualifies for criminal legal aid - GOV.UK](#)

Classes of Work – Qualifying Criteria

TYPE OF LEGAL AID	FINANCIAL ELIGIBILITY TEST	SUFFICIENT BENEFIT TEST (SBT)	OTHER KEY CRITERIA
Police Station Advice (under arrest)	✗ Not required	✗ Not required	The SBT is automatically satisfied for clients who are being interviewed but there are other circumstances where it must be satisfied – see slide 44)
Voluntary Interview (Police, with Constable)	✗ Not required	✗ Not required	Treated as Police Station Advice if a constable is present.
Voluntary Interview (Non-Police, no Constable)	✓ Required	✓ Required	Must be claimed as Free-Standing Advice and Assistance.
Free Standing Advice & Assistance	✓ Required	✓ Required	Applies to non-custody criminal investigations not covered by Police Station Advice.
Criminal Proceedings (e.g. Magistrates' Court)	✓ Required	✓ Required	Must also meet the Interests of Justice test.
Appeals & Reviews	✓ Required	✓ Required	Must relate to a criminal matter and meet benefit and means criteria.
Prison Law	✓ Required	✓ Required	Only available for specific issues (e.g. parole, categorisation, disciplinary hearings). Note SBT may be automatically met in some cases
Associated Civil Work	✓ Required	✓ Required	Must be directly linked to criminal proceedings (e.g. restraint orders).

Criminal Investigations: Scope

Legal aid providers may deliver services under this section in the following contexts:

Police Station Attendance: Representing clients detained or interviewed by police.

Voluntary Interviews: Advising clients attending interviews under caution.

Pre-Charge Engagement: Supporting clients during early engagement with investigators.

Free Standing Advice & Assistance means-tested legal support during criminal investigations not covered by Police Station Advice, subject to the Sufficient Benefit Test and a cost limitation

These come under Advice & Assistance, Advocacy Assistance can also be provided in criminal investigations for further details see the next slide.

Criminal Investigations: Scope (Continued)

Advocacy Assistance on a Warrant of Further Detention

- Applies when a client is involved in an application for a warrant of further detention or its extension.
- Can occur in a magistrates' court, High Court, or before a judicial authority/senior judge.

Covers cases under:

*Sections 43 or 44 of PACE

*Paragraphs 29 or 36 of Schedule 8 of the Terrorism Act 2000

Advocacy Assistance for Armed Forces Custody Hearing

- Applies to clients facing an application to extend detention in military custody.
- Excludes cases involving Services Police investigations outside England and Wales.

Criminal Investigations: Scope (Further Continued)

Advocacy Assistance in Magistrates' Court to Vary Police Bail Conditions

- Applies when a client seeks to vary bail conditions (including “street bail”) imposed by police.

Relevant legislation:

- Sections 30CB or 47(1E) of PACE, amended by the Criminal Justice Act 2003

Advocacy Assistance in Magistrates' Court to Extend Pre-Charge Bail

- Applies when a client is subject to an application to extend pre-charge bail.
- Can be based on written evidence or involve an oral hearing.

Relevant legislation:

- Sections 47ZF or 47ZG of PACE

Work That Sits Outside Crime Contract 2025: Criminal Defence Direct

The Criminal Defence Direct Service operates twenty-four hours a day on each day of the year and provides non-means tested telephone based legal advice directly to members of the public who are suspected of non-indictable offences and who are detained at a police station in England and Wales.

Under the Criminal Defence Direct scheme, certain situations are **excluded** from the scope of the Crime Contract 2025, unless an exception applies, these include:

- Non-imprisonable offences – if the client is detained for one of these.
- Bench warrant arrests – unless there's clear documentary evidence that could lead to the client's release.
- Road traffic offences, including:
 - Driving with excess alcohol (Section 5, RTA 1988)
 - Failure to provide a specimen (Sections 6, 7, 7A, RTA 1988)
 - Driving while unfit or drunk in charge (Section 4, RTA 1988)
- Breach of police or court bail conditions

Work That Sits Outside Crime Contract 2025: Exceptions

You may claim for Police Station attendance in otherwise excluded cases if:

One of the following exceptions applies, and the Sufficient Benefit Test is met:

- An interview or identification procedure is scheduled.
- The client qualifies for an appropriate adult under PACE.
- The client cannot communicate by phone.
- The client alleges serious police maltreatment.
- The investigation includes another offence outside the excluded scope.
- The advice concerns an indictable offence.
- The request is a Special Request.

If you're already at the Police Station and none of these exceptions apply, you may attend, but you can only claim the Telephone Advice Fixed Fee.

Work That Sits Outside Crime Contract 2025: Further Information

For more information on Criminal Defence Direct see 9.3 and 9.4
Specification Crime Contract 2025 and visit [Criminal Defence Direct
Contract 2026 - GOV.UK](#)

Criminal Investigations

Police Station Advice & Assistance

Free legal advice to individuals being questioned by the police or who meets the definition of a 'constable', whether under arrest or voluntarily, and is a core part of the legal aid system

All individuals being interviewed by police are automatically eligible, regardless of income or means.

Please note that this only relates to the first interview/attendance at the police station. Any subsequent attendances have to be justified and meet the sufficient benefit test.

Furthermore, any bail to returns must be effective to meet the eligibility requirements. For further information refer to 9.89 Specification.

All cases need to be logged by the DSCC before you attend the police station (subject to a few exceptions, as set out in 9.14 Specification)

Remuneration of Police Station Advice & Assistance

Remunerated on a fixed fee basis – [Schedule 4 Criminal Legal Aid Remuneration Regulations 2013](#) (as amended)

Police Station Advice & Assistance

Providing Advice In Custody – Duty Work

Duty/Work	Duty Solicitor (DS)	Accredited Rep (AR)	Probationary Rep (PR)	Solicitor with PSQ	Solicitor Without PSQ
Accept initial call from the DSCC requesting DS	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No
Provide initial telephone advice or attend in person	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No
Provide Police Station Advice and Assistance on an indictable only offence	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No

Police Station Advice & Assistance

Providing Advice In Custody – Own Client Work

Own Client Work	Duty Solicitor (DS)	Accredited Rep (AR)	Probationary Rep (PR)	Solicitor with PSQ	Solicitor Without PSQ
Accept initial call from the DSCC; provide initial telephone advice or attend in person	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Provide Police Station Advice and Assistance on an indictable only offence	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes

Police Station Advice & Assistance

Providing Advice In Custody - Representatives

Accredited Representatives

- Non-solicitor staff who are accredited under the Police Station Representatives Accreditation Scheme (PSRAS). Can attend police stations independently if fully accredited.
- Must be supervised as per 9.27 Specification

Probationary Representatives

- Must not provide Police Station Advice and Assistance on an indictable only offence.
- Must only provide Police Station Advice and Assistance for the Provider at which his or her supervising Solicitor is based.

For more information on using Accredited and Probationary Representatives see 9.23 -9.33 Specification

Criminal Investigations

Voluntary Interviews

A voluntary interview is a police interview conducted under caution, but without arrest. The individual attends voluntarily, meaning they are not detained and can leave at any time.

Voluntary interviews are treated as part of Police Station Advice and Assistance, and are fully covered by legal aid, provided:

- The interview is conducted under caution.
- The provider is contacted via the Defence Solicitor Call Centre (DSCC) or has an existing relationship with the client.

Criminal Investigations

Voluntary Interviews

Legal aid providers must:

- Maintain accurate records of advice given and attendance.
- Confirm that the interview meets the criteria for claiming under the contract.

You cannot claim under Police Station Advice and Assistance if:

- The client attends a voluntary interview conducted by a non-police agency (e.g. HMRC, DWP).
- No constable is present during the interview.

In such cases, the work must be claimed as Free-Standing Advice and Assistance under Paragraphs 9.134–9.136 Crime Contract Specification

Criminal Investigations: Pre-Charge Engagement

Pre-Charge Engagement (PCE) refers to voluntary discussions between the defence and investigators after the first police interview but before a charging decision is made. It is governed by the [Attorney General's Guidelines on Disclosure \(2020\)](#) and the Criminal Procedure and Investigations Act 1996 (CPIA).

Criminal Investigations: Pre-Charge Engagement Scope

To claim legal aid for PCE under the Crime Contract 2025:

The Sufficient Benefit must be satisfied:

- The matter must have progressed beyond the initial interview.
- There is an agreement (formal or informal) between the Client and the prosecution/investigators to undertake Pre-Charge Engagement
- If there is no agreement in place but you have either:
 - (i) You've done preparatory work showing Pre-Charge Engagement would be beneficial, but the prosecution/investigators refuse to agree.
 - (ii) You've done preparatory work showing Pre-Charge Engagement would not be beneficial.
 - (iii) The prosecution/investigators initiate Pre-Charge Engagement, but your preparatory work shows it would not be beneficial.

See 9.109 Specification for more information

Criminal Investigations: Pre Charge Engagement Key Information

The provider must:

- Keep a clear record of the scope and content of the engagement including:
- the preparatory work,
- the information obtained during the Client's interview or subsequently which indicated engagement may be beneficial

Points to Note

- PCE is voluntary and must be in the client's best interests.
- Providers must ensure that the Sufficient Benefit Test is met.
- PCE is not means tested

Criminal Investigations: Pre - Charge Engagement (Remuneration)

Remuneration Rules

PCE is not covered by the standard Police Station fixed fee.

It must be claimed as per the rates set out in [Paragraph 3A Schedule 4 Criminal Legal Aid \(Remuneration\) Regulations](#).

Key features:

- Hourly rates apply (not fixed fees).
- Subject to a cost limitation (upper limit) unless an extension to the upper limit is obtained.
- Time must be clearly recorded and justified.

Criminal Investigations: Free Standing Advice & Assistance

Means-tested legal support for criminal investigations outside police stations, typically when the client is not under arrest and no officer is present.

This type of work can be claimed for **non-police station work**, such as **office-based assistance**.

Both the Financial Eligibility and Sufficient Benefit Tests must be satisfied:

Financial Eligibility Test

- Client must pass a means test and complete CRM1 & CRM2 forms
- You must retain documentary evidence of income and capital on file

Sufficient Benefit Test

- There must be clear benefit to the client in receiving legal advice.
- A note must be retained on file on how the sufficient benefit test is met.
- Must be reassessed throughout the case.

Criminal Investigations : Free Standing Advice & Assistance (Remuneration)

Examples of Free-Standing Advice & Assistance:

- Voluntary interview by HMRC, DWP, or Trading Standards (no constable present).

Remuneration Rules

- Paid under hourly rates, not fixed fees.
- Subject to an upper cost limit as per the [Schedule 4 Criminal Remuneration Regulations](#).
- [Prior approval](#) to extend the upper limit may be required if costs are going to exceed the limit.
- Time must be clearly recorded and justified

Criminal Proceedings: Magistrates Court

When representing clients at the Magistrates Court under the Contract (other than when acting as the court duty solicitor) solicitors must:

Initially assess whether the case qualifies for legal aid based on:

- Client's financial situation and
- Interests of Justice (IoJ) test

The financial means test is one aspect of determining if someone qualifies for legal aid to cover some or all of their defence costs. It considers:

- income
- family circumstances, such as number of children
- essential living costs, such as mortgage or rent
- Eligibility also depends on the type of case and where it's heard.

Criminal Proceedings

Magistrates Court: Refused Representation Orders

If the application for a representation order is refused you may make a claim for one of the following if the claiming criteria is satisfied:

- **Pre-Order Cover**
- **Early Cover**
- **Means Test Form Completion Fee**

You must not claim more than one of these for the same case.

Please note

That if a Representation Order is granted, you may include work completed before the

Representation order is granted in your magistrate court fee claim, subject to the pre-order work criteria being met at 10.28 to 10.30 Specification

Criminal Proceedings

Magistrates Court: Pre-Order Cover

A representation application is refused in the magistrates' court on Interests of Justice (IoJ) grounds, regardless of financial eligibility.

A qualified solicitor (not a Prison Law Supervisor) confirms the case meets IoJ and documents the reasons.

The claim is limited to specific work types (e.g. prep, advocacy, travel) and must follow the Criminal Remuneration Regulations.

If you appeal the refusal:

- Work on the appeal is covered by the Pre-Order Cover Fixed Fee.
- If the appeal fails, no further claim can be made.
- If successful, all work since the original application date is claimed under the Representation Order.

The Pre-Order Cover Fixed Fee only includes any combination of preparation, advocacy, routine letters and telephone calls, travel and waiting at the applicable rates, up to the limit set out in the [Schedule 4 Paragraph 6 Criminal Remuneration Regulations.](#)

Criminal Proceedings: Magistrates Court Early Cover

You may claim this if:

The representation application is refused due to failing the financial test, and:

- A complete application is submitted by 9am on the sixth business day after first instruction.
- You helped the client submit it with supporting evidence.
- The application was still pending at the first hearing.
- You represented the client at that hearing.
- The hearing progressed the case.
- The case passed the IoJ test but failed the financial test.

You may still claim if the application was submitted after the first hearing, provided the above conditions are met.

The Early Cover Fixed Fee is in [Schedule 4 Paragraph 6 Criminal Legal Aid Remuneration Regulations](#)

Criminal Proceedings: Magistrates Court Means Test Form Completion

You may claim this fee only if:

- You completed the representation application.
- You are **not** claiming Pre-Order or Early Cover.
- You advised the client (within 10 working days of charge/summons) that the case likely meets IoJ but fails the financial test.
- You recorded your reasoning on file.
- The client does **not** instruct you privately for the case.

The Means Test Form Completion Fee is in [Schedule 4 Paragraph 6 Criminal Legal Aid Remuneration Regulations](#)

Criminal Proceedings: Magistrates Court Means Test

Applicants will passport the means test to automatically get free legal aid if they're under 18 or receive:

- Income Support (IS)
- income-based Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA)
- Universal Credit (UC)
- State Pension Guarantee Credit
- income-based Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)

If a client is not passported you will need to conduct an initial means test

Criminal Proceedings

Magistrates Court: Initial Means Test

Take the client's gross income (before tax and National Insurance deductions) and, if they have a partner, add their partner's gross income.

The means test includes income from employment and/or self-employment, as well as income from:

- relatives and friends
 - pension
 - property (including rent from lodgers)
 - student loan payments
 - interest from savings
 - maintenance received from former partners
-
- You also need to include any benefits that aren't as passporting benefits or included in the [Criminal Legal Aid Manual](#) as disregarded benefits.
 - See Annex S of the Criminal Legal Aid Manual or contact the Criminal applications helpline for more information.
 - You can also use the [online calculator](#) to assist you

Criminal Proceedings: Magistrates Court Means Test Thresholds

Income	Magistrates' court	Committal for sentence	Appeal to the Crown Court	Crown court trial
£12,475 or less	funded	funded	funded	funded, no income contribution
More than £12,475, less than £22,325	depends on full means test	depends on full means test	possible fee, depends on full means test and outcome of appeal	possible income contribution, depends on full means test

Criminal Proceedings: Magistrates Court Legal Aid Applications

Once you have conducted the initial means test your client needs to complete a legal aid application with you using the **Apply for criminal legal aid** service.

Depending on the case and where it's being heard, they might need to give details about:

- their income
- their spending
- any savings or property they own

The service will tell you what documents or evidence are needed based on the answers provided.

To qualify, they may need to pass:

A means test AND a merits test

For more information visit:

[Introduction to the Apply for Criminal legal aid service – Legal Aid Learning](#)

Criminal Proceedings

Magistrates Court: Interests of Justice Test (IoJ)

If the client passes the means test they must also pass the Interests of Justice Test (IoJ) for legal aid in the Magistrates Court

IoJ considers the merits of the case, for example, a person's previous convictions, the nature of the offence and the risk of custody, to determine if an applicant qualifies for legal aid.

The more serious the charge or possible consequences for your client, the more likely that their case will qualify for legal aid (Crown Court trials are deemed to automatically satisfy this test).

As part of the IoJ test you must consider the 'Widgery criteria' and decide which applies to your client's case

Find out how the Legal Aid Agency makes a determination on an application for criminal legal aid in the **Criminal Legal Aid (Determinations by the Court and Choice of Representative) Regulations 2013.**

Criminal Proceedings

Magistrates Court: IoJ Continued

Applicants automatically pass the IoJ test if applying in relation to:

- cases committed, sent or transferred to Crown Court for trial
- voluntary bills of indictment
- retrials
- committals for sentence

Your client's case may not meet the IoJ test and in this instance you or your client can make an appeal if you feel the decision is incorrect.

Applications to appeal grant of legal aid refused on interests of justice criteria, including any new information you would like considered, should be emailed to iojappeals@justice.gov.uk and we will consider the appeal administratively within 2 working days.

Criminal Proceedings

Magistrates Court: Remuneration of Work

Magistrates' Court work is primarily paid through standard fees, with additional mechanisms for complex or high-cost cases

The rates payable are laid out in [Schedule 4 Criminal Legal Aid Remuneration Regulations](#)

The fees payable are dependant on the type of proceedings; the proceedings and case categories can be found in 10.75 Specification.

Criminal Proceedings

Magistrates Court: Fees Information

Mechanism	Description	When Used
Lower Standard Fee	Fixed fee for straightforward cases	When total case cost is below the lower threshold
Higher Standard Fee	Higher fixed fee for moderately complex cases	When case cost exceeds lower but remains below higher threshold
Non-Standard (Escape) Fee	Hourly rates for preparation, advocacy, travel, etc.	When case cost exceeds the higher standard fee limit
Disbursements	Reimbursement for necessary external costs (e.g. experts, interpreters)	Must be reasonable and sometimes pre-approved

Criminal Proceedings

Magistrates Court: Claiming Information

Lower & Higher Standard Fees are paid through your monthly submissions for payment.

These payments can then be audited by our assurance team and/or your contract manager.

[CWA codes guidance - GOV.UK](#)

Non-Standard Fees are subject to LAA assessment. A CRM7/Claim for Non-Standard Fees should be submitted along with your relevant file of papers. =

[CRM7: non-standard fee magistrates' court claim and appeal form - GOV.UK](#)

Criminal Proceedings: Court Duty Work

Court Duty Work refers to Advocacy Assistance provided by Duty Solicitors to unrepresented defendants at Magistrates' Courts. It ensures immediate access to justice for individuals without a solicitor on the day of their hearing.

It can only be provided by solicitors who are:

- CLAS-accredited (Criminal Litigation Accreditation Scheme)
- Listed on the current Duty Rota
- Must meet minimum case thresholds and monthly work requirements to retain duty solicitor status.
- Please note that you cannot use agents to conduct Court Duty Work as per 5.40 – 5.44 Specification.

Criminal Proceedings: Scope of Court Duty Work

A Court Duty Solicitor can provide Advice & Assistance and/or Advocacy Assistance for:

1. Guilty Plea in Custody (Imprisonable Offences Only)

- Represent clients in custody who wish to plead guilty and conclude their case at first appearance.
- May advise adjournment if it's in the client's best interests.

2. Enforcement Proceedings

Assist clients facing imprisonment for:

- Non-payment of fines
- Breach of court orders

Criminal Proceedings: Scope of Court Duty Work (Continued)

3. Imprisonable Offences (Not in Custody)

Provide Advocacy Assistance to unrepresented clients charged with imprisonable offences, if the solicitor believes it is necessary.

4. Representation Order Applications

- Help clients apply for legal aid for future hearings.
- Must ask whether the client wishes to instruct another solicitor for ongoing representation.

For more information on Court Duty Work see 10.7 Specification

Criminal Proceedings: Court Duty Work Advocacy Assistance

Advocacy Assistance must be provided in the following situations:

1. Custody Cases

Give legal advice to individuals currently held in custody.

2. Bail Applications

Represent individuals applying for bail, unless they've already received assistance for a previous bail application.

3. Prescribed Proceedings

Provide advice and representation in specific proceedings defined by regulation (e.g. breach of court orders, enforcement actions).

4. Police Bail Variation Applications

Assist clients applying to vary bail conditions imposed by police, including “street bail” under: Section 30BC or Section 47(1E) of PACE (as amended)

5. Police Bail Extension Applications

Represent individuals subject to police applications to extend bail under: s47ZF or s47ZG of PACE

Criminal Proceedings: Court Duty Work Remuneration

Providers should claim for their court duty work as part of their monthly submissions

[CWA codes guidance - GOV.UK](#)

The costs should be calculated using the appropriate hourly rates set out in [paragraph 4, Schedule 4 Criminal Legal Aid Remuneration Regulations](#)

Criminal Proceedings: Crown Court Work

Holding a Crime Contract 2025 allows legal aid providers to deliver publicly funded criminal defence services in the Crown Court and Higher Courts (Court of Appeal & The Supreme Court). This includes:

✓ Crown Court Work

- Legal representation for cases:
- Sent/Committed for Trial in the Crown Court,
- Breaches of Crown Court Orders and
- Appeal Against Sentence and/or Conviction from the Magistrates Court.

Further information on how to apply for legal aid in these cases can be found here - [Criminal legal aid: means testing - GOV.UK](#)

The [Crown Court Fee Guidance](#) and [Schedule 2 Criminal Legal Aid Remuneration Regulations](#) explain how these cases are remunerated

Criminal Proceedings: High Court Work

✓ High Court Proceedings

Legal aid may be available for certain criminal-related High Court proceedings, including:

- Contempt of court proceedings.
- Appeals by way of case stated.
- Extradition cases.

Eligibility, scope and the application process for these proceedings are detailed in [25.1.4 & Annex E Criminal Legal Aid Manual](#)

To find out more on remuneration and billing of this work please see

[Schedule 4 Criminal Legal Aid Remuneration Regulations](#)

[Legal Aid Learning](#)

Appeals & Reviews Work : Units of Work

The Appeals and Reviews Class of Work covers three specific areas:

- Advice & Assistance
- Representation in the Crown Court under a Representation Order in Prescribed Proceedings on appeal from the magistrates' court provided under section 16 Legal Aid Sentencing & Punishment of Offenders Act 2012
- Representation on an appeal by way of case stated provided under section 16 Legal Aid Sentencing & Punishment of Offenders Act 2012

Appeals & Reviews Work : Advice & Assistance

Free-standing Advice and Assistance for:

Appeals against conviction or sentence, including:

- Appeals by way of case stated.
- Applications to vary an order or sentence, if not already covered by a Representation Order.
- Applications to the Criminal Cases Review Commission (CCRC).

In cases that have an existing Representation Order:

Covers advice on appeal and preparation of:

- Applications for leave to appeal.
- Notice of appeal.
- Steps for stating a case by the magistrates' or Crown Court.
- No separate application for Advice and Assistance is needed in these cases.

Appeals & Reviews Work: Advice & Assistance (Continued)

When No Representation Order Exists:

- Covers advice on prospects of appeal.
- Solicitor should confirm the grounds of appeal.

Further Opinions on Appeal:

- If a client has received an adverse opinion:
- No further work should be done if the opinion is recent and comprehensive.
- Further work may be justified if:
 - 1) New evidence emerges or
 - 2) There's a defect in the original opinion or proceedings.

Appeals & Reviews Work: Advice & Assistance (Further Continued)

Court of Appeal Considerations:

If all authorised steps under a Crown Court Representation Order are complete, or there's been a change of provider:

The solicitor must check if Legal Aid is available directly from the Court of Appeal.

If so, the must apply to the court rather than using Advice and Assistance.

Advice and Assistance should not be used as a substitute or supplement for Court of Appeal funding.

Appeals & Reviews Work: Advice & Assistance (Remuneration)

To conduct this, work the client/case must satisfy:

Sufficient Benefit Test and [Financial Eligibility Tests](#)

When claiming for payment the following rules apply:

Submit one claim for all work done for a client in the same case, unless:

A previous claim was submitted due to uncertainty about future work
(see 11.42 Specification).

Appeals & Reviews Work: Advice & Assistance (Remuneration Rules)

A claim can only be submitted for Advice & Assistance when:

- (a) The case has concluded, or
- (b) It's clear no further work will be done, or
- (c) It's uncertain if more work is needed, and at least one month has passed since the last work.
- (d) If you're claiming Advice and Assistance for an appeal against a conviction or sentence (including appeals by case stated or applications to change a sentence), you must submit the claim as soon as the Representation Order is issued and the court has made its decision

Claims are subject to the Upper Limit set by the [Paragraph 8, Schedule 4 Criminal Remuneration Regulations 2013](#), unless an extension has been granted.

Claims must be made at the specified rates in [Paragraph 8, Schedule 4 Criminal Remuneration Regulations 2013](#)

Appeals & Reviews Work: Crown Court Representation in Prescribed Proceedings

Representation in the Crown Court under a Representation Order in Prescribed Proceedings on appeal from the magistrates' court provided under section 16 of the Act

This Unit of Work may only be undertaken for a Client in appeals from the magistrates' Court in Prescribed Proceedings.

For you to provide Representation under this Unit of Work, the Client must have had a Representation Order issued by the Representation Authority by completing forms [CRM14 and 15](#).

[Contribution Order Regulations](#) may require your Client to repay some or all of their defence costs under a Representation Order, during his or her Case and after the Case concluding. You must advise your Client about the Crown Court means test at the outset of his or her Case.

Appeals & Reviews: Remuneration of Crown Court Prescribed Proceedings

An Upper Limit specified in the [Schedule 4 Paragraph 10 Criminal Remuneration Regulations](#) applies to work undertaken under this part of the Contract and operates as a Costs Limitation.

You must submit one claim using the appropriate rates in the Remuneration Regulations (above)

If you are representing two or more clients in the same case, you must submit one combined claim.

Appeals & Reviews: Representation on Appeal by Way of Case Stated

Representation on an appeal by way of case stated provided under section 16 of the Act in the following situations:

- An application under s111 of the Magistrates' Court Act 1980 or s28 of the Senior Courts Act 1981 for the magistrates' court or Crown Court (respectively) to state a case.
- Application to the magistrates' court or Crown Court to state a case is covered and paid for under the Representation Order in existence in the relevant proceedings.
- Where a court refuses to state a case, you should without delay apply for permission to bring judicial review, seeking either a mandatory order to compel the court to state a case or an order quashing the decision under challenge.
- Applications for judicial review in the circumstances may only be made under the Associated Civil Work part of this Contract.
- If the magistrates' court or Crown Court does state a case, you must apply to the High Court (Administrative Court) for a determination that an individual qualifies for Representation in respect of the High Court appeal proceedings.

Appeals & Reviews: Representation on Appeal by Way of Case Stated Scope

To provide Representation under this Unit of Work, the Client must have been issued with a Representation Order by the High Court for the purposes of the appeal.

- A single claim must be submitted to the Senior Court Costs Office for all work undertaken for a Client in an appeal by way of case stated in the Appeals and Reviews Class of Work in the same Matter or Case.
- An exception to this is where a Claim has been submitted already in the same Matter or Case because it is unclear whether further work will be required or not and a minimum of one month has elapsed since the last work in the matter was undertaken.

Appeals & Reviews: Representation on Appeal by Way of Case Stated Remuneration

Representation on an appeal by way of case stated provided under section 16 of the Act :

- A Claim under this Unit of Work may only be submitted when:
 - (a) the matter has concluded; or
 - (b) it is known that no further work will be undertaken for the Client in the same matter; or
 - (c) it is unclear whether further work will be required or not and a minimum of one month has elapsed since the last work in the matter was undertaken.
- You must claim for work undertaken in the High Court (Administrative Court) under this Unit of Work at the rates specified in the [Schedule 4 Paragraph 9 Criminal Remuneration Regulations](#)

Prison Law

Prison Law work includes legal advice and representation for individuals serving prison sentences. It covers:

Advice and Assistance on legal issues arising during imprisonment.

Advocacy Assistance where oral hearings are involved (e.g., Parole Board hearings).

Matters such as:

- Sentence calculation and categorisation.
- Parole Board reviews and reconsiderations.
- Disciplinary proceedings within prison.

Work must be genuinely legal in nature and not related to general complaints or non-legal issues

Prison Law: Qualifying Criteria

To undertake Prison Law work, two key tests must be satisfied:

1. Sufficient Benefit Test

- There must be a realistic prospect of a positive outcome that would be of real benefit to the client.
- The matter must raise a significant legal or human rights issue.
- A cost-benefit analysis is required: would a reasonable private client pay for the advice?
- A file note must document how the test is met and maintained throughout the case

2. Financial Eligibility

The client must be financially eligible under the [Criminal Financial Regulations](#), unless they are under 18.

Eligibility must be assessed before work begins, and no claim can be made if the client is not eligible or hasn't signed the application form.

Prison Law: Remuneration

Prison Law work is paid under [Paragraph 11 Schedule 4 Criminal Remuneration Regulations](#), with the following key points:

- **Fixed Fees** apply for Advice and Assistance matters, save for Escape Fee Cases.
- **Standard Fees** for Advocacy Assistance
- **Escape Fee Cases:** If work exceeds a set threshold, payment may be claimed at hourly rates, including limited travel time (up to 3 hours in special cases).
- To claim Escape Fee cases providers should complete [CRM18A form](#) and submit to the LAA.
- **Disbursements** over £500 require prior authority.
- **Counsel's fees** must be paid from the fixed or standard fee unless the case qualifies as an Escape Fee Case

Associated Civil

Associated Civil Work refers to civil legal services linked to criminal matters, including:

- Judicial review or habeas corpus proceedings challenging decisions or actions of public bodies.
- Restraint order proceedings under the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002, where the client is not yet charged with a criminal offence.
- Forfeiture proceedings under Part 5 of POCA 2002 (e.g., cash forfeiture in magistrates' court).
- Anti-social behaviour injunctions under the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014.
- Gang-related injunctions under the Policing and Crime Act 2009.
- Parenting orders related to youth court proceedings.
- Civil Legal Services in relation to proceedings for DAPO arising under Part 3 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021

This work is classified as either **Controlled Work** (Legal Help) or **Licensed Work** (Legal Representation), depending on the nature and complexity of the case

Associated Civil: Qualifying Criteria

To undertake Associated Civil Work, the following must be satisfied:

Merits Test:

- The case must meet the criteria in the Civil Merits Regulations (e.g., reasonable prospects of success, cost-benefit justification).

Financial Eligibility:

- The client must pass the Civil Financial Eligibility Test as set out in the Civil Financial Regulations.

Certification for Representation:

- For Licensed Work, a Legal Aid Certificate must be issued under the Civil Procedure Regulations .

Application Process:

Applications must follow the procedures and use the forms specified under the **Civil Contract** in force at the time

Associated Civil: Remuneration

Remuneration

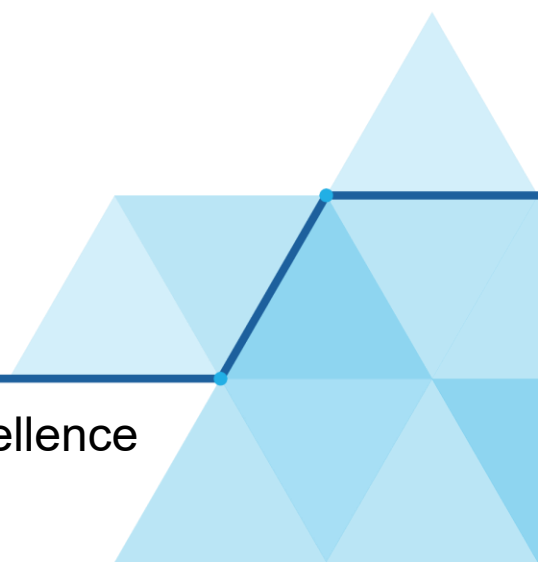
- Work is paid at rates set out in the Civil Remuneration Regulations.
- Legal Help is typically paid via fixed fees.
- Legal Representation may be paid via hourly rates, subject to assessment.
- Travel and waiting time is payable for civil representation, in accordance with the regulations
- Escape Fee Cases may apply if costs exceed the fixed fee threshold, allowing payment at hourly rates.



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Compliance & Audits

Working with others to achieve excellence
in the delivery of legal aid

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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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Role of Your Contract Manager

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Role of your LAA Contract Manager

The LAA's network of Contract Managers play a central role in managing the relationship with Crime Contract holders, ensuring that providers deliver high-quality legal aid services in compliance with contractual obligations, while offering support, oversight, and guidance throughout the life of the contract.

Their role includes:

Oversight and Compliance

- Ensures providers comply with the terms of the Crime Contract.
- Monitors performance against Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and contractual obligations.
- Reviews claims to ensure accuracy and value for money.

Partnership and Support

- Acts as a point of contact for providers, offering guidance and clarification on contract terms.
- Works collaboratively to resolve issues, improve service delivery, and support quality legal aid provision
- Conduct at least annual Contract checks of compliance and performance

Role of your LAA Contract Manager: Continued

Risk and Quality Management

- Identifies and addresses risks, such as patterns of over-claiming or non-compliance.
- Supports providers in maintaining high standards of legal service, including supervision and file quality.

Interpretation and Application

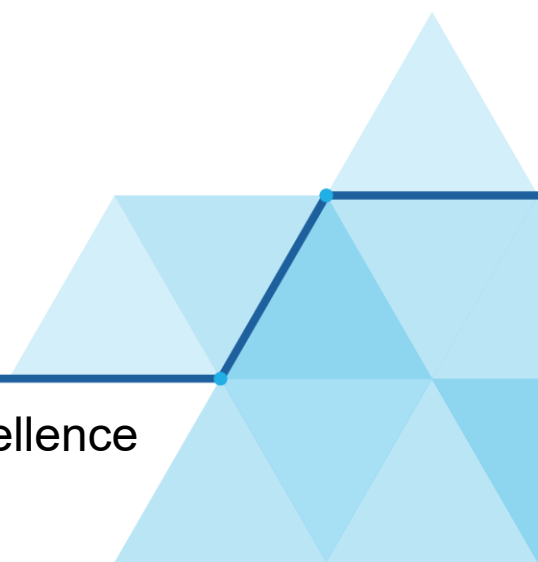
- Helps interpret complex contract provisions and applies them consistently across providers
- Collaborate with the LAA Operational Teams to identify and resolve issues affecting service delivery.
- Please note that LAA Contract Managers cannot overturn any decisions made by Case Management Teams in respect of applications and/or claim assessments.



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Further Guidance & Resources

Working with others to achieve excellence
in the delivery of legal aid

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Further Information & Resources: Obtaining a CJSM Account

All providers and practitioners must use CJSM Secure email to mitigate potential Data Protection Act breaches which could lead to prosecution by the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO)

You can apply for a CJSM account by visiting [CJSM – Login](#)

When applying for a CJSM account you will need to provide:

- an existing email address, and check whether your organisation is already connected to CJSM
- contact information, and details of someone within your organisation who will act as the Organisation Administrator for CJSM
- an application sponsor from the police, central government or the NHS (N.B. this can be your Legal Aid Contract Manager)
- signed terms and condition

Further Information & Resources: Defence Solicitor Call Centre

To manage your details via the Defence Solicitor Call Centre visit:

[Duty Solicitors – Home](#)

[Defence Solicitor Call Centre User Manual](#)

For DSCC call centre enquiries you can contact the helpline on 0345 543 8910 or email enquiries@dutysolicitors.org

If you wish to log any issues with the operation of the Defence Solicitor Call Centre:

complaints@dutysolicitors.org

This will allow our supplier, HGS UK, to collate issues with the operation of the service so that learning points can be identified. Service improvements can then be made where necessary.

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](#)

[Legal Aid Agency audits - GOV.UK](#)

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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