

LSA Circular 09/25

18 December 2025

Dear Practitioner,

- **The Civil Legal Services (Remuneration) Order (Northern Ireland) 2025**
- **The Legal Aid for Crown Court Proceedings (Costs) (Amendment) Rules (Northern Ireland) 2025**
- **The Magistrates' Courts and County Court Appeals (Criminal Legal Aid) (Costs) (Amendment) Rules (Northern Ireland) 2025**
- **Direction No.2 of 2025 – Interim Payments of Disbursements in Magistrates' Courts and County Courts 2025**
- **General Authority to Increase Upper Limits for Advice and Assistance in PACE Interviews and Immigrations, Asylum and Human Trafficking Matters December 2025**

This Circular sets out the arrangements for the implementation of the above instruments, Direction and General Authority which come into operation on 7 January 2026. It also sets out how the Agency will pay any additional remuneration ("Further Fee") as a result of the increased fees in cases which have already been paid by the Agency.

1. The three instruments, Direction and General Authority are now available on the Agency's website within the '[Legal aid legislation and guidance](#)' page at:
 - [The Legal Aid for Crown Court Proceedings \(Costs\) \(Amendment\) Rules \(Northern Ireland\) 2025 - SR 2025 No. 197](#);
 - [The Civil Legal Services \(Remuneration\) Order \(Northern Ireland\) 2025 - SR 2025 No. 198](#);
 - [The Magistrates' Courts and County Court Appeals \(Criminal Legal Aid\) \(Costs\) \(Amendment\) Rules \(Northern Ireland\) 2025 – SR 2025 No. 199](#);
 - [DoJ Direction No.2 of 2025 - interim payment of disbursements in the Magistrates Courts](#); and

- [LSANI General Authority - Increase to upper limits & authority for Advice and Assistance for interviews conducted under the Police and Criminal Evidence \(Northern Ireland\) Order 1989 and immigration, asylum and human trafficking matters](#)
2. The new rates will be available on LAMS from 7 January 2026. Practitioners will only be able to see the new fees on LAMS from 7 January 2026 when they are submitting bills in respect of legal aid granted on or after 1 December 2024 or in respect of advice and assistance where the date of the first advice is also on or after 1 December 2024.

Bills already paid in respect of certificates granted on or after 1 December 2024

3. **Practitioners do not need to take any action. The Agency has calculated the further fee payable under the new rates. The Further Fee will be paid automatically.** Practitioners must not submit an additional fee request for these fees as these will be rejected.
4. These Further Fees will be authorised by the Agency on 12 January 2026. Practitioners will be advised of the payment in the normal way and funds will be in accounts within 3–5 working days.
5. Practitioners should note that the payment of the Further Fees will be part of the normal daily payment process. The standard remittance advice will **not** highlight that individual payments are Further Fees payable at the new rates. However, practitioners can access the LAMS Financial Reporting Tool, and this will highlight Further Fee payments - the assessor notes will state "*Further Fees 2025 Fees*". Guidance on the use of the Financial Reporting Tool can be found in *section 33.3* of the [LAMS Supplier Manual](#). This report can be filtered to highlight Further Fees payable because of the new rates. The Financial Reporting Tool is available to any staff within a business who have been given financial access to cases by an Account Administrator. Please see *section 7.2* of the [LAMS Supplier Manual](#) for guidance on financial access.

6. An overview of how the Agency has calculated Further Fees is provided in the [‘LSANI Further Fee Guidance’](#). If a practitioner disagrees with the Further Fee paid in an individual case, a review request can be submitted in the usual way. However, practitioners should use the newly created Secondary request type of “*Further Fee Review*” to distinguish it from the normal review request. A Further Fee Review must be submitted within 21 days of the Further Fee being authorised.
7. There are a small number (currently under 200) of Further Fees which the Agency will have to calculate manually as the cases involve nonstandard activities, for example recoupments. **These Further Fees will be processed by the end of February.**

Bills submitted but not yet paid in respect of a certificate granted or first advice given on or after 1 December 2024

8. **Practitioners do not need to take any action.** The Agency will assess and pay the bill as presented. The Agency will then calculate and pay the Further Fee separately as outlined at paragraph 3–7 above. As there will be several bills awaiting assessment when the new rates come into operation, the Agency will process Further Fees for these cases once the bill has been paid. These Further Fees will be authorised each Monday commencing 19 January until all bills which attract Further Fees have been paid.
9. If practitioners have had bills queried back to them or individual lines of the bills have been the subject of messages, it is in practitioners’ interests to address these bills expeditiously.

Bills yet to be submitted

10. Practitioners should not delay submitting bills until the new rates come into operation on 7 January 2026. The Agency’s processing times and the

arrangements to pay further fees set out at paragraph 8 above mean that there is no purpose in delaying the submission of bills.

Deduction of 5% on Taxation

11. The 2025 Remuneration Order removes the requirement for the Agency to pay ninety-five percent of the fees assessed on taxation in civil cases. This applies to cases granted on or after 1 December 2024. There are a small number of cases which have been taxed and paid at ninety-five percent which are entitled to receive a further fee. These cases will be processed in the same way as non-taxed Further Fees.

Payment of Interim Disbursements

12. The new legislation, together with Direction 2 of 2025, provides a consistent approach for practitioners securing payment for disbursements. From 7 January 2026 if practitioners incur disbursements which in total exceed £250, they can seek payment without having to discharge the cost of the disbursement. The Direction indicates that a claim for payment of disbursements shall not exceed £3,500 or the maximum fee authorised under the prior authority, whichever is greater.
13. Guidance on how interim disbursements should be claimed on LAMS is set out at [LSANI interim payments and disbursements guidance](#). Practitioners must upload an invoice on LAMS on the experts headed paper when requesting a payment for an interim disbursement.

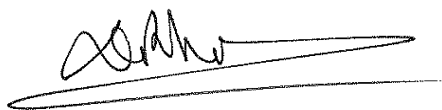
General Authority for Advice and Assistance – Upper Limits

14. To support the new remuneration arrangements, the Agency has issued a new General Authority which increases the threshold beyond which solicitors must seek an authority to provide advice and assistance in all matters save for those

covered by a composite fee under Tables 2 and 3 of Schedule 2 of the Civil Legal Services (Remuneration) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015. The new General Authority is available at [LSANI General Authority - Increase to upper limits & authority for Advice and Assistance for interviews conducted under the Police and Criminal Evidence \(Northern Ireland\) Order 1989 and immigration, asylum and human trafficking matters.](#)

15. For all points of Northern Ireland law, save for those at 16 and 17 below, the £88 limit prescribed by Regulation 32(1) of the General Regulations will no longer apply and will be replaced by automatic authority for up to two hours work at the prescribed rates, applicable at the date of initial advice, before a prior authority for any additional work is required. With the exception of PACE, Immigration, Asylum and Human Trafficking, the new limit will be £102.
16. For advice and assistance for interviews conducted under the **Police and Criminal Evidence (Northern Ireland) Order 1989**, work can be undertaken up to the cost of **£2,500** prior to seeking an extension of authority. Attention is drawn to Paragraphs 7-9 of the [General Authority](#) which sets out the provisions for extensions being required during unsociable hours or weekends.
17. For advice and assistance in the areas of **Immigration, Asylum or human trafficking**, work can be undertaken up to the cost of **£1,000** prior to seeking an extension of authority. Practitioners are asked to note that work ancillary to these matters such as Judicial Reviews are not subject to this upper limit extension but will be covered by the standard provisions.

Yours faithfully,



Paul Andrews
Chief Executive