

GENERAL AUTHORITY GIVEN UNDER THE CIVIL LEGAL SERVICES (GENERAL) REGULATIONS (NORTHERN IRELAND) 2015

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

1. The Director of Legal Aid Casework hereby issues this general authority under regulation 32(2) of the Civil Legal Services (General) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 (“the General Regulations”). It replaces and revokes in full the Legal Services Commission Circular 01/10.
2. This general authority applies to Advice and Assistance applications with a date of initial advice on or after 7 January 2026 save for those matters which are covered by a composite fee under Table 2 and Table 3 of Schedule 2 of the Civil Legal Services (Remuneration) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015 such as Parole and Letter Before Proceedings Meetings.
3. Practitioners are reminded of the provisions of Regulation 31(2)(b) of the General Regulations which requires that only one application be opened where two or more matters are “so closely related that they should be covered under one application” in the view of the Director. Practitioners are therefore discouraged from concluding pre-existing Advice and Assistance grants and then seeking to reopen them under new applications under the new funding structure.
4. For the purposes of remunerating solicitors in respect of advice and assistance for interviews conducted under the Police and Criminal Evidence (Northern Ireland) Order 1989 and immigration, asylum and human trafficking matters, the

limit of £88 as prescribed by regulation 32(1) of the General Regulations shall not apply.

5. Solicitors shall instead be permitted to provide advice and assistance under this general authority at a cost of up to **£2,500 for practitioners undertaking PACE work** and at a cost of up to **£1,000 for practitioners working on Immigration, Asylum and human trafficking matters** prior to seeking an extension of authority.
6. Practitioners are reminded that work ancillary to PACE or immigration, asylum and human trafficking matters such as Judicial Reviews for example, are not subject to the upper limit at 4 above but will be covered by the standard provisions at 11 below.
7. Paragraphs 7-9 relate to PACE matters only. Where, owing to the advice and assistance being provided during unsociable hours or during weekends, solicitors are unable to seek an extension of authority prior to exceeding the limit as set above, a request must be made to the Legal Services Agency through the Legal Aid Management System within a period of 7 days from the date the limit was exceeded.
8. Unless there are exceptional circumstances, should a solicitor fail to seek an extension within the 7-day period, the £2,500 limit shall apply to the determination of remuneration in respect of the advice and assistance given.
9. "Exceptional circumstances", for the purposes of this authority, are limited to circumstances in which:
 - a. the solicitor who provided the advice and assistance has suffered serious illness;
 - b. a partner or dependent of the solicitor who provided the advice and assistance has died or suffered serious illness; or
 - c. some other special circumstances exist which are exceptional and relevant to the application and, as a result of those special circumstances, it was not practicable for the request for an extension to be made within the 7-day period referred to in paragraph 8.

10. Where an extension of authority is requested, the Agency expects comprehensive work records to be produced in support of the application, detailing the work undertaken within the above upper limits.
11. For all other points of Northern Ireland law the £88 limit prescribed by Regulation 32(1) of the General Regulations shall not apply. Solicitors shall instead be permitted to provide advice and assistance under this general authority for up to a maximum of two hours at the prescribed rates, applicable at the date of initial advice, prior to seeking an extension of authority.
12. Rates for remuneration for the purposes of this general authority are as prescribed by Schedule 2 to the Civil Legal Services (Remuneration) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015 or the equivalent provisions under the Civil Legal Services (Remuneration) Order (Northern Ireland) 2025 as applicable.



Signed:

Director of Legal Aid Casework

Dated: 16 December 2025