

LSA Circular 01/23

23 January 2023

Dear Practitioner,

Implementation of New Financial Eligibility Functionality in the Legal Aid Management System (LAMS)

The Legal Services Agency (LSA) is pleased to advise that it will be introducing new functionality to its case management system LAMS. This functionality will be available from 26 January 2023. The changes which will be visible to practitioners are:

1. **Flag to supplier if the applicant is assessed over the upper financial limits in Advice and Assistance (AA) and Representation Lower (RL) application requests**
 - 1.1 Currently suppliers are submitting application requests in AA or RL when the applicant is over the upper limits in either income, capital or both. If an applicant is over these limits Agency staff are having to refuse the application request and the case is closed.
 - 1.2 When inputting the financial details, LAMS will now flag when the applicant is deemed to be over the upper financial limits. You will be able to either delete your draft application request or if you wish to continue and submit your application you will be required to **provide details in the mandatory notes box** as to why you are submitting the application knowing the applicant is financially ineligible. You will be unable to submit the application until reasons have been provided.

2. Validation error when date of initial advice or date of first PACE interview does not match the date the applicant signed the declaration

2.1 A significant number of queries are raised by Agency staff when the date of initial advice, or date of first PACE interview does not match the date the applicant signed the declaration. In most cases these dates should be the same.

2.2 If the dates do not match LAMS will now show a validation error and a **mandatory notes box** will be displayed. You will not be able to submit your application request until either the dates match or an explanation is provided in the notes box as to why the dates are different.

3. Removal of supplementary question “Has your client advised you that he/she has no capital or income?”

3.1 This question was being completed incorrectly, resulting in emergency application requests being withdrawn and the submission of a fresh application becoming necessary, which has been time consuming and frustrating for both practitioners and Agency staff.

3.2 This question has now been removed from LAMS in Representation Higher and Exceptional Funding emergency application requests. Solicitors will now be asked to complete limited or full financial information if the applicant is not in receipt of a passport benefit.

4. Request for further financial eligibility in Representation Higher (RH) and Exceptional Funding (EF) cases

4.1 Under Regulation 20 and 21 of the Civil Legal Aid (Financial) Regulations (NI) 2015, the Agency may amend or make a further financial assessment to ensure continued financial eligibility for civil legal services.

4.2 The Agency will now be able to activate this request through LAMS and an email notification will issue to the solicitor who submitted the application request. A draft change of circumstances request will have generated in the list of requests for the case which you will need to complete and submit.

5. LAMS guidance, help and support

- 5.1 To support practitioners with this new functionality, the [LAMS Supplier Manual](#) has been updated. Guidance on the flag for applicants assessed over the upper income and capital limit in AA and RL cases can be found at section 16.1 and 16.2 of the manual.
- 5.2 Guidance on the validation error for the date of initial advice or date of first attendance under PACE not matching, can be found at section 16.4 of the manual.
- 5.3 Guidance on the completion of the further financial eligibility change of circumstances request can be found at section 16.3 of the manual.
- 5.4 If, having consulted the manual, you are unable to use this new functionality, telephone support is available on 028 9040 8888 between 9am and 5pm Monday to Friday (excluding Bank and Public Holidays). If the issue cannot be resolved during the call, details will be logged and the issue escalated to the LAMS Support Team. You should provide details of the issue you are facing. The Support Team will prioritise issues referred to them and will contact you by telephone or email to assist you in resolving the issue.

Yours faithfully,



Paul Andrews
Chief Executive