

Key Messages – June 2023

1. Finance Related Issues

- 1.1. **LAMS Account Administrators** - the Agency's finance team often receives queries to the Agency's lsaaccounts@lsa.gov.uk mailbox requesting copies of remittances to support payments received by practitioners. Practitioners are reminded that remittances are emailed to the lead account administrators and any queries regarding payments received or a remittance should be raised with the lead account administrator in the first instance.
- 1.2. Solicitor businesses should ensure that the individual/s who hold the role of lead account administrator in their business is appropriate and that the account administrator can access their LAMS account. If there are any issues with the lead account administrator role these should be raised by emailing the LSANI Registration Scheme team on RegistrationScheme@lsani.gov.uk.
- 1.3. Due to the need to comply with GDPR/DPA 2018 requirements and avoid transferring information at risk, correspondence outside the secure environment of LAMS should be avoided as far as possible.
- 1.4. **LAMS Financial Reporting** - LAMS Practitioners are also reminded of the reporting functionality within LAMS which allows any user with financial access to run financial reports for the business they are attached to – please refer to section 32.3 of the LAMS Supplier Manual.
- 1.5. **LAMS Financial Access** - please note that if a LAMS user is unable to view the authorised totals for a payment request it may be because they have not been granted financial access by the account administrator for the business. Please raise such issues with the account administrator in the first instance.

Section 7.2 of the LAMS Supplier Manual provides guidance on how to apply and remove financial restrictions.

2. Improved Supplier Support Resources

2.1. **Instructional Videos** – A range of instructional videos were developed and published when LAMS was introduced; these can be found at [LAMS instructional videos | Department of Justice \(justice-ni.gov.uk\)](#). New users of LAMS will find these videos useful.

3. Arrest Warrants – Remittance

3.1. [LSA 10-2020 - Requesting payment in respect of cases where an arrest warrant has issued](#) , the Agency would like to remind Practitioners that this circular sets out the steps for practitioners to take when requesting payment in cases where an Arrest Warrant has been issued.

3.2. **Standard Approach:** Where an arrest warrant is issued by the court, practitioners should follow the process below:

- (a) Submit a request for payment consistent with the provisions of paragraph 12 of Schedule 1 of The Magistrates' Courts and County Court Appeals (Criminal Legal Aid) (Costs) Rules (Northern Ireland) 2009;
- (b) The request for payment should take the form of a request for an interim payment being 50% of the relevant standard fee;
- (c) Once the warrant is executed and the case disposed of, the practitioner is then at liberty to submit the request for payment as a report on case for the 2 final payment whether that is the remainder of the fee under paragraph 12(5) or the full fee if the practitioner considers paragraph 12(6) is engaged. The expense type to use for the request for payment is 'Bench Warrant' and a manual entry for the remaining fee will be possible.

3.3. **Change of Solicitor:** In the circumstances where there is a change of solicitor between the arrest warrant being issued and the defendant being brought back before the court, the process to be followed is set out below:

- (a) when arrest warrant issues the original solicitor (representative 1) should submit a request for an interim payment being 50% of the relevant standard fee;
- (b) the original solicitor (representative 1) at any time following the transfer of the client can submit a report on case, this will be a “nil bill” in that no further payment is authorised by the Rules. If the solicitor fails to do so the Agency will request the solicitor to submit the report on case; and
- (c) the new solicitor (representative 2), once the case has been disposed of, is then at liberty to submit the report on case, being the request for payment for the remainder of the fee under paragraph 12(5) or the full fee, if the practitioner considers paragraph 12(6) is engaged.

3.4. Defendant Convicted in Absentia: For completeness and to cover the scenario envisaged in paragraph 12A of the 2009 Rules, namely a case proceeds and the defendant is convicted in his absence and upon conviction an arrest warrant issues. The process would be as follows:

- (a) When the trial in absentia concludes the practitioner can submit their report on case and claim the appropriate fee; and
- (b) When the arrest warrant is issued upon conviction and the defendant is brought before the courts, the representative is at liberty to submit the report 3 on case, being 50% of the standard guilty plea fee under paragraph 12A(3) or the full fee, if the practitioner considers paragraph 12A(4) is engaged; or
- (c) When the trial in absentia concludes the practitioner can submit their Report on Case for the contest fee; and
- (d) When the arrest warrant is issued upon conviction and the defendant is brought before the courts, the practitioner, upon sentence, is at liberty to submit a report on case being 50% of the standard guilty plea fee under paragraph 12A(3) or the full fee, if the practitioner considers paragraph 12A(4) is engaged.

4. LAMS Changes

4.1 Please note that the following Circular has been uploaded to the LSANI website;

- [LSA 09-23 - Implementation of new functionality in the Legal Aid Management System \(LAMS\) - Changes to Payment and Authority Requests](#)

5. LAMS Reregistration 2023

5.1 The June window for reregistration of suppliers and businesses has now closed. 87% of suppliers have reregistered for the incoming year and almost 80% of businesses have been renewed. From 1 July any LAMS accounts not reregistered have now expired however you can still reregister – see LSA 06-23 circular for details [LSA 06-23 - LAMS Reregistration of Individual and Business accounts | Department of Justice \(justice-ni.gov.uk\)](#)

6. Practitioner File Review - Electronic File Submission

6.1 The Practitioner File Review has been underway for six months now, and we have established a simple and quick method to submit electronic files for review. We would encourage those with an electronic version of their file to submit in this way or those with small case files (under 30 pages) to scan and upload their file for review. To submit files electronically please email the CARB mailbox CARB@lsani.gov.uk and we will advise on next steps. Thank you for your ongoing cooperation.

6.2 Practitioner File Review - Barristers Files

As part of the Practitioner File Review if barristers are submitting a physical file to the Agency can you please use a cover note to specify the address where the file needs to be returned to. If no return address is noted on the file, it will be returned to the Bar Library.

7. What you might have missed

7.1 Please note that the Agency have published the following on the website:

- [LSANI corporate plan 2022-2025 & business plan 2023-2024](#) found on the [Legal Services Agency Northern Ireland - Business plan](#) page of the LSANI website.
- [LSA 07-23 - Exceptional preparation – Determination of additional hours in Crown Court cases](#)
- [LSA 08-23 – Account NI Update – Disruption to Payments in September](#)