

LSC Wales New Matter Start Plan

1 Introduction and Objectives

As part of a wider Public Service Agreement target agreed with the Department for Constitutional Affairs and the Treasury, the Legal Services Commission has a target to fund 650,000 acts of advice and assistance in each of 2005/6 and 2006/7.

This plan sets out the proposals of the Legal Services Commission in Wales (LSC in Wales) to contribute to that target by funding a 10% increase in the number of Controlled Work matter starts in non-immigration cases.

In the twelve months from April 2004 to March 2005 the LSC in Wales supported 43,000 acts of assistance through its contracts. 73% of these were provided through contracts with private practice solicitor firms and 27% through not for profit organisations.

To achieve the required Welsh contribution to the overall target, we intend to increase by 10% the number of clients helped at the specialist level. Our intention therefore is to increase the number of acts of assistance provided by our suppliers to 47,500 for the period April 2005 to March 2006.

We will wish to ensure that acts of assistance increase in accordance with our strategic priorities. The Commission will be encouraging suppliers to provide integrated and seamless services across a number of areas of law, targeting client groups that currently do not access mainstream services as well as working to fill gaps identified in the Wales Report 2004/5 and the Wales Contracting Strategy 2005.

It is important that the increased case numbers represent additional problems dealt with - and we will be reviewing any proposals for expansion in that light.

Of course Controlled Work still operates within a fixed budget – and we will also be looking at value for money in awarding case starts.

This plan therefore sets out:

- Our priorities for this bid round. Suppliers interested in bidding for extra matter starts or a contract to meet these priorities should complete the Wales Expression of Interest form which is also available on the website and return to Jo-Anne Hubbard at the Cardiff office by **Monday 26th September 2005**. The form should give specific proposals as to how to meet the priority – and state whether a bid is being made for setup/support costs from the CLS Development Fund –see section 4 below.
- The extra incentives that may be available to help suppliers expand – see section 4 below.

Suppliers should note that this plan is the first revision to the original plan.

2 Note

No specific targets for New Matter Starts have been allocated to the identified priorities for this version of the Plan as we are keen to encourage suppliers to identify proposals based on your knowledge of the market. It should be stressed, however, that we will expect you to deliver against any allocation of New Matter Starts, and our preference is for you to bid for a **realistic** amount – if it subsequently turns out that the initial bid was too low, it may well be possible to further increase the allocation. Depending on responses to invitations to submit bids, we may attach specific New Matter Start targets to priorities identified in later versions of the plan.

To assist suppliers wishing to submit a bid(s) for New Matters Starts in the identified priority areas, we have developed a pro-forma for completion in the first instance. This sets out the key

information that you will need to submit for us to be able to assess 'fit' against the priorities, and to enable us to focus on the 'best fit' proposals in the first instance.

3 Key areas for expansion

a) Family

Priority will be given to applications requesting Family Matter Starts, from suppliers who fall into the following categories:

*Suppliers specialising in at least one priority area of family law (domestic violence or public law children or private law children), or

*Family suppliers with social welfare law categories or who are prepared to expand into those categories, or

*Suppliers with social welfare law contracts who want to do Family work.

b) Holistic social welfare law services

Priority will be given to those applications requesting Holistic Social Welfare Law services from suppliers who are able to undertake a mix of social welfare law (SWL) categories. Suppliers will need to be able to deliver services in three or more SWL categories (or two SWL categories plus family). This will include suppliers currently able to do 1 or 2 categories of law who are able to recruit and/or are applying for further SQM(s) in this financial year.

Where an applicant proposes to recruit new staff to deliver the new matter starts (in whole or in part) the application should demonstrate that the recruitment process can be completed within eight weeks of any award being made.

By SWL categories for these purposes we mean all categories of civil non-family except, immigration, clinical negligence and personal injury.

c) Mental Health

Priority will be given to applications from existing and new suppliers requesting Mental Health Matter Starts.

d) Housing: Possession Court Duty Schemes

Priority will be given to supporting Possession Court Duty Schemes in any court with more than 500 possession hearings per year and where currently no funded schemes are in place.

In particular, we would welcome applications from suppliers seeking to set up Duty Schemes in the courts at Pontypridd and Rhyl.

Proposals for outreach work in the provision of the above services will be welcomed. Please see section 4 below for details of financial help towards outreach work.

4 Incentives and the CLS Development Fund

All matter starts granted under this plan will be guaranteed until April 2007. This means that we will not remove the extra matter starts even if your running rate is more than 10% below or reduce them in the next schedule.

Where relevant to the particular initiative:

We will also allow matter starts to be switched between priority categories of law in which suppliers have the SQM without seeking our authority.

In priority areas we will also allow suppliers to self authorize additional matter starts up to an additional limit if demand proves higher than expected.

Suppliers, whether solicitor or not for profit can include, as part of their bid, a request from an amount from the CLS Development fund: up to £131,000 is available in Wales to pay expenses needed to support expansion in supply. Examples might be paying for:

- training, recruitment or external supervision costs for a new member of staff
- paying for the cost of outreach services
- providing grants or loans to cover set-up costs for a new service.

Suppliers should include bids for CLS Development Fund money on the Wales Expression of Interest form, but the cost will be taken into account in deciding between suppliers on a value for money basis. A separate document providing further information on the fund is available on the website.

5 Future developments

We will be undertaking work to identify new initiatives and priorities for service development (in conjunction with partners and other stakeholders in the Community Legal Service in Wales) on an on-going basis throughout 2005/6.

6 Contact

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7 Bids

Completed bids must be received at the Legal Services Commission's Cardiff office at the above address by no later than 1pm on Monday 26th September 2005.