

From the Chief Executive
Carolyn Downs

4 Abbey Orchard Street
London
SW1P 2BS

DX:328 London

t: (020) 7783 7000
f: (020) 7783 7636

www.legalservices.gov.uk

To all potential applicants

1 September 2011

Dear all,

Forthcoming tender for Family Services and Family and Housing Services

As we have previously announced, next week we will launch the tender process for Family and Family and Housing contracts to commence in February 2012. It is our intention that these will be interim contracts pending the introduction of legal aid reform, the bill for which is currently passing through Parliament.

Since the quashing of the Family tender process last year, we have worked hard to learn lessons and representative bodies have had significant input into the design of the tender. Whilst no process of this scale will be without some complexity we believe the tender that we are about to launch is as simple as possible given the number of prospective applicants and our obligations to operate an open and fair tender process.

Through this tender all applicants who meet our mandatory requirements (Pre Qualification and Selection Criteria) will be awarded a contract. However, our budget is not without limit - the impact of which is that some applicants may not receive all the work for which they bid.

We understand the difficulties to which this can give rise to and where successful applicants' bids are not satisfied through the tender we will consider if this can be addressed using existing provisions within the contract to allocate any available supplementary matter starts.

I must stress that although we have simplified the approach for applicants so far as we are able, it is each organisation's responsibility to exercise diligence and to ensure that they complete their tender response fully and accurately. Applicants will not have the opportunity to submit or revise their tender after the deadline and in assessing tenders we will not undertake any process that will improve an applicant's bid.



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Criminal
Defence Service



Community
Legal Service



community
legal advice

0845 345 4 345

www.communitylegaladvice.org.uk

The rules of the tender are set out in full in the Information for Applicants. This letter is for headline information purposes only and does not constitute any substitute or addition to the rules of the tender. I therefore urge any organisation that wishes to tender for Family and/or Family and Housing Services from its office(s) to carefully read the Information For Applicants document when it is released on Monday and to complete their tender response in good time. Where organisations have questions about the content of the Information for Applicants, Pre Qualification Questionnaire or ITT, there is a facility for them to submit those questions up until 12 noon on 19 September through the e-tender system.

Organisations can also check and amend their response in the e-tender system upto the deadline and I strongly advise applicants to check their response in the system to ensure that all sections, including the Tender Information Form, have been completed and properly attached prior to the deadline on 3 October. There can therefore be no future discussions if blank or incomplete information is submitted.

Once awards have been made, there will be no opportunity for successful applicants to return or hand-back part of the matter start allocation they have received. I cannot therefore stress enough the importance that applicants bid only for the number of matter starts they reasonably intend to deliver as we will require that this be used once the contract starts.

I recognise that the environment we work in is a difficult one and that the need to successfully tender for legal aid contracts is a cause of uncertainty for many organisations. We hope that applicants find the process easier to follow than last year's tender process. We will continue to work with representative bodies during the tender and afterwards to learn any lessons from this process once it concludes. I hope applicants will feedback their experiences via their representative body.

Yours sincerely



Carolyn Downs
Chief Executive