

85 Gray's Inn Road  
London  
WC1X 8TX

DX: 328 Chancery Lane

t: (020) 7759 0000

[www.legalservices.gov.uk](http://www.legalservices.gov.uk)

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Dear colleague,

### **Forthcoming Bid Round Activity**

Further to my letter in April, I am writing to announce further details on our bid-rounds for additional Legal Help services in certain civil categories of law. All firms/agencies that meet our quality standards, including those that do not currently deliver advice in a particular category of law, or indeed that do not deliver any legal aid work, can apply.

The numbers of people helped through early civil legal advice has risen by more than a third in two years – to more than 800,000 in 2006/7 – with very substantial increases in face to face advice alongside exciting growth through developments such as housing duty possession schemes and CLS Direct. Working with you, we would like to continue to increase the number of people helped and, to this end, we will shortly publish details of the areas and categories where we believe more services are required.

We hope you will take the opportunity to bid for further matter starts and/or expand into other specialist legal services so that more integrated services are available where they are needed. As is the case with new contracts, our bid-rounds will be open to all legal service providers who meet our tender and quality requirements, regardless of whether they currently have an LSC contract.

### **Family Services**

2,700 family service providers currently provide important legal aid services throughout England and Wales; recent research shows that 93% of legal aid clients are located within five miles of a family provider. As well as improving access where it is weakest, we want to increase Public Law Children and domestic violence service provision wherever we can. We also want to better join up family and social welfare law provision wherever we can.

Through a tender exercise this October, we will ask you to bid for work in general family advice in specific geographic locations where:

- we believe there are likely to be significant weaknesses in family supply; and/or
- you can offer Family services plus at least three of the five Social Welfare Law categories (Community Care, Debt, Employment, Housing & Welfare Benefits).



We will also consider awarding contracts through that tender exercise – irrespective of the particular focus outlined above - in any geographic location where a provider is able to deliver the full range of Family services, with a real focus on increasing access to specialist legal services relating to Public Law Children and domestic violence. Details on our quality standards for family and our strategy for Children and Family legal aid, can be found on our website:

[http://www.legalservices.gov.uk/docs/civil\\_consultations/CLS\\_strategy\\_children\\_and\\_families.pdf](http://www.legalservices.gov.uk/docs/civil_consultations/CLS_strategy_children_and_families.pdf)  
[http://www.legalservices.gov.uk/civil/qm/specialist\\_help.asp](http://www.legalservices.gov.uk/civil/qm/specialist_help.asp)

### ***Mental Health***

If you provide Mental Health services and would like to deliver additional services in this category of law, we would like you to participate in our forthcoming tendering exercise, planned for October, at which point we will specify geographic locations where we require further services, although we will consider bids from mental health providers anywhere.

As part of this tendering process we will also consider applications for contracts in any geographical area from providers currently without a mental health contract who can demonstrate they will be able to meet our quality standards. If you want to become a Mental Health contract-holder, your LSC regional office would be pleased to hear from you.

As with family you can find details of our quality standards on our website:

[http://www.legalservices.gov.uk/civil/qm/specialist\\_help.asp](http://www.legalservices.gov.uk/civil/qm/specialist_help.asp)

### ***Social Welfare Law (SWL)***

We will publish details of how and where we would like to tender for more SWL services shortly. Our focus will be on providing new services in areas where access to social welfare law services is weakest. These bid-rounds will help us deliver a more consistent access to SWL services across England & Wales.

We will tender for integrated services, covering all five SWL categories and combined with Family services wherever possible; and which provide the full service range, from early advice to litigation. In terms of the two SWL categories of Community Care and Employment, we are keen to hear from service providers that are able and willing to actively promote access across a wider geographical area, i.e. across more than one county/metropolitan area/London borough etc.

More information on how we intend to develop SWL services is available on our website:

[http://www.legalservices.gov.uk/docs/civil\\_contracting/CLS-Strategy-final-15032006cover.pdf](http://www.legalservices.gov.uk/docs/civil_contracting/CLS-Strategy-final-15032006cover.pdf)

### ***Next Steps***

Our regional offices will finalise their bid-round plans this month and publish invitations to tender at the beginning of October. We would advise you to check our website regularly around this time, although we will also alert you to any bid-rounds through our new electronic LSC Update. (Your firm should receive these electronic updates but if you find it is not registered for these please contact your LSC regional office). We will also publicise these bid-rounds and opportunities to obtain new contracts more widely.

As a potential bidder, you will have least 21 days to reply to our invitation to tender; and successful bidders will be expected to begin delivering services within 12 weeks of notification of having their bid accepted.

If we do not use all of our financial allocation on the above priorities in family, mental health and integrated social welfare law services we will consider bids for other legal aid services such as single social welfare law services, actions against the police etc.

These forthcoming bid rounds are only one way in which we intend to procure more services to meet legal needs. Therefore, we would like to take this opportunity to encourage you to discuss with your LSC Account Manager how you could potentially increase the amount of legal aid work you do.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M. Crowley". The signature is stylized and cursive.

Mike Crowley  
Director, Contracting