



Criminal Defence Service
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Timothy Dutton QC
Chairman of The Bar
The Bar Council
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Dear Tim

VHCC Panel Commencement.

As you know the LSC concluded the Tender for Very High Cost Case (Crime) Panel Membership and recently issued revised contracts to all successful applicants. These contracts have now been returned to us.

The Ministry of Justice is today laying an amendment to the Funding Order that permits Solicitors who are members of the Panel to instruct Non-Panel Advocates in circumstances where they are unable to instruct Advocates who are members of the Panel.

The vast majority of Solicitors practices who were offered contracts have signed the contracts offered to them. Only a minority of advocates chose to do so and we are very disappointed by this, however, the increased number of Solicitor Advocates who chose to accept Panel Advocate contracts reassures us. The LSC and the MoJ consider that the number of Panel Advocates available to Panel Members and the ability of Panel Members to instruct Non-Panel Advocates will ensure that lay clients will continue to have access to sufficient and appropriate legal services should they require them.

We are pleased therefore to announce that the LSC will be signing all the returned contracts today and returning them to practitioners shortly and we will publish the Membership of the Panel shortly. All cases where the representation order was signed on or after 14 January 2008 will now be conducted under the terms of the Panel Member and Panel Advocate Contracts and the Statutory Instruments pertaining to Very High Cost Cases (crime).

The LSC is aware of your concerns regarding the Very High Cost Case (Crime) Panel and we remain open to constructive dialogue with both the Bar and Law Society on (the way forward and) future VHCC funding schemes.

Yours sincerely



Richard Collins
Executive Director - Policy