

legal services

COMMISSION

Cracking the Code – Important Information about changes to the LSC coding framework

New civil and criminal codes from 2007–08

A group of independent peer reviewers has recently undertaken a detailed review of civil legal help and criminal claiming codes to ensure that we have a comprehensive set of codes that accurately reflect the way legal aid cases are conducted and concluded.

The review has informed major changes to both the structure of the codes and the accompanying descriptions; new codes have been added and existing codes changing in format to include additional characters.

Why the new codes?

The current set of codes presents difficulties for you to accurately report your case outcomes. It is essential that we obtain accurate data about the type of cases we fund and how these cases end. The new category-specific codes will deliver significant improvements to the quality of case data that we can derive and use, giving us a clear and consistent understanding of legal aid cases and the work you are conducting.

What does this mean for you?

All CMRF, CDS6 and CDS7 claims, for cases closed on or after 1st April 2007, must be reported using the revised set of claim codes, matter types, stage reached and outcome codes. This applies to all contracted providers making monthly claims under the Civil Unified Contract or the Criminal Contract.

From 1st May 2007, the old codes will no longer be valid / available for use on claims forms or through LSC Online. We have communicated details of the changes to software vendors of case management systems and accounting packages, who have confirmed they will be able to implement the codes the 1st April 2007 transition date.

Which codes should be used?		
When was the case concluded?	When were the case data submitted?	What codes should be used?
Before 1st April 2007	Before 1st May 2007	Old codes
Before 1st April 2007	On or after 1st May 2007	New codes - old codes to be translated
On or after 1st April 2007	On or after 1st May 2007	New codes

The guidance for translating old Civil codes into new codes can be found at <http://www.legalservices.gov.uk/civil/forms/contracting.asp>.

Guidance for translating old Criminal codes into new codes can be found at <http://www.legalservices.gov.uk/criminal/forms/cds.asp>.

There is specific guidance for each affected category of law, which can be found in the 'Related Documents' panel on each web page.

How will we use the new codes?

The improved information that the new codes will deliver will be incorporated into our current provider management activity and into the new Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), which will form part of the Civil Unified Contract for all contracted providers.

Accurate reporting is crucial in the Preferred Supplier Scheme and the following monitoring tools will also rely on the accuracy of claim information:

- File Assessment – Value for Money
- Peer Review
- Quality Profiles

It is our intention that the Preferred Supplier Scheme will develop less intrusive relationships with our providers, which will rely on the timely provision of accurate case data. In the meantime, we will use case data to drive and focus our provider management activity.

Ultimately, inaccurate billing will have a direct impact of a provider's profile, Peer Review rating and File Assessment results. Consistent inaccuracies could lead to contract sanctions.

Need help with the transition to the new codes?

The simple solution to ensuring a smooth transition to the new codes is to sign up to LSC Online, our free and secure electronic billing service.

Thousands of providers already submit their controlled work online and benefit from the system's robust online error and omission checking function. One of LSC Online's key features is that it will automatically validate all submissions so that only acceptable combinations of matter types and codes can be entered, giving you peace of mind and helping to ensure the integrity of your case data.

The scheduled Spring Forms Masterpack update will be distributed to all contracted providers in March 2007, for cases concluding on or after 1st April 2007. The updated forms, which will also be available to download from the LSC website, will include all correct new codes.

All CMRF and CDS6 claims using the old codes must be submitted to the LSC by your usual existing deadlines in April 2007.

Paper submissions with the incorrect codes will be rejected and will need to be re-submitted with the correct codes.

If you are still submitting paper claims, now may be the right time to switch to LSC Online. For more information and to get registered, call the LSC Online Marketing Team (0117 3002 3117) or visit the LSC website, www.legalservices.gov.uk/register.html

Frequently Asked Questions:

Q: Who should I contact with queries?

A: For information on Civil code changes, please contact Alex Ashcroft (alex.ashcroft@legalservices.gov.uk). For information on Criminal code changes, please contact Stephen McGowan (stephen.mcgowan@legalservices.gov.uk)

Q: Why are these new codes necessary?

A: We must ensure that we have accurate data on cases and their outcomes to effectively manage the provision of legal aid. The existing set of codes presents difficulties for you to accurately report on the progress and conclusion of cases.

Q: If I conclude a case in March 2007 and submit the claim by my usual deadline in April 2007, which codes should I use?

A: You should use the old codes for any cases completed before 1st April 2007 and submitted before 1st May 2007

Q: If I conclude a case in March 2007, but don't manage to submit my claim until May 2007, what codes should I use?

A: Any case data submitted on or after 1st May 2007 should use the new codes. If you have already used the old codes, you will need to translate them to the new codes, using the guidance found at <http://www.legalservices.gov.uk/civil/forms/contracting.asp> (Civil codes) or <http://www.legalservices.gov.uk/criminal/forms/cds.asp> (Criminal codes)

Q: If I conclude a case on 2nd April 2007 and submit the claim in April 2007, what code should I use?

A: Any cases concluded on or after 1st April 2007 should be reported using the new codes.

Q: What if I don't receive my Forms Masterpack update?

A: You can always download the correct forms from <http://www.legalservices.gov.uk/civil/forms.asp>. You should also contact [Theresa Iley](#) on 020 7759 1794, who will assist with any Masterpack-related query.