Legal Aid Agency

Introduction to 'Apply for criminal legal aid'

A first look at the 'Apply for criminal legal aid' service

'Apply for criminal legal aid' is a modern processing service for legal aid applications. The service is designed to provide a cost effective, transparent, and simple service for all legal aid applicants. It uses modern and innovative technology solutions which are accessible and driven by user needs.

This guide gives a brief insight into what the service looks like. It also shows the functionality within the service and the simple and efficient way that applications can be submitted.

Contents

When 'Apply for criminal legal aid' can be used

Apply for criminal legal aid service can accept up to 98% of application types. It should be used for **all applications**, excluding those listed below, which should still be submitted via eForms:

- applicants who are self employed
- applications that are non means tested
- applications for a change in financial circumstances
- post submission evidence for applications that were originally submitted in eForms

If you start an application that does not meet the criteria, the service will direct you to use eForms. Data will not transfer from the 'Apply for criminal legal aid' service to eForms.

We are developing the service in stages and will provide updates as functionality becomes available to use.

Accessing the service

A link to the 'Apply for criminal legal aid' service will be on the LAA Portal which can be found here. Once you have signed in, click on the link for 'Apply for criminal legal aid' to access the service.

All providers now have access to the 'Apply for criminal legal aid' service. If you cannot see the link, or it does not give you access, you can contact LAAapplyonboarding@justice.gov.uk

Useful information

Here you can find a list of useful pointers on how the service functions. This list will be updated as development progresses:

- Use dropdown menus to select offence type.
- Additional dates can be added to an offence if there has been more than one instance within the same offence.
- *The representation order and supporting emails are sent to the email address of the user signed into the Apply for criminal legal aid service. See Receiving emails from the service section of this document for details on how to check and amend this email address.
- *When submitting an application, you can request that the representation order be sent to another member of your firm (in addition to the user signed into the service). See Receiving emails from the service section for details.
- If you have multiple offices, you will be asked to confirm your office account number. This will be the office that the application is submitted for. You can change office if needed. (See Multiple offices)

*We are developing this service in stages, and as such some features will not be available in this early iteration of the service. Items above marked with an asterisk (*) are temporary steps in the application process. These will be replaced by in-service features as development progresses. For example, once the feature is developed the legal aid decision will be visible within the service.

Applicant declaration

It is still a requirement to complete the applicant declaration form when using the 'Apply for criminal legal aid' service. An Application Reference Number will be displayed when an application is submitted. This number should be entered on the applicant declaration form instead of a USN.

Legal aid decision

The legal aid decision will not be visible in the 'Apply for criminal legal aid' service in this early iteration of the service. This is something that we will be developing as the service progresses.

If legal aid is refused for any of the offences, the reasons for the refusal will be communicated by email.

There is no change as to how you will receive the representation order and correspondence.

Returned applications

If the LAA returns an application for further information, an email will be sent to the provider that submitted the application to notify them that an application has been returned. You will need to sign into the 'Apply for criminal legal aid' service to view the return reason and the action needed before resubmission.

Receiving emails from the service

The representation order and supporting emails are sent to the email address of the user signed into the Apply for criminal legal aid service. This email address is the user account email address on record within CWA (Contracted Work & Administration) for the specific user submitting the application.

To ensure representation orders and supporting emails are sent to the appropriate email address you can:

- Use CWA to check and update the user account email address on record. See pages 12 to 19 of the CWA user guide CWA Administration Guide Version 6 (publishing.service.gov.uk) for details of how to do this. (This guide can also be

found using the help link on the LAA portal) The person in your firm with the CWA Firm Sysadmin role would need to make any amendments. Please note that CJSM email addresses should not be used for receiving emails from LAA criminal application services.

If you need the documents to be sent to another member of your firm (in addition to the person submitting the application):

- Use the free text box on the 'Do you need to add any more information to this application?' page to confirm the additional email address to send correspondence to.

Offence names

It is important that when you come to the section where you input the offence name, you use the drop-down menu as shown below. You start typing the offence name and suitable options will appear in a drop-down menu. If the offence does not appear on the list, you can manually add an offence.

The options provided in the list are taken from the CPS list of offences.

Here is an example of the drop-down list:

Multiple offices

If you submit applications for multiple sites, then you must change the office account number depending on what office the submission relates to. Any submissions that you make will be shown under that specific office code. If you want to view submitted applications, then you must select the correct office code to view the submissions for that specific site.

Technical support

For support with a technical issue please contact apply-for-criminal-legal-aid@justice.gov.uk

For support with an issue relating to being onboarded onto the Apply for criminal legal aid system please contact LAAapplyonboarding@justice.gov.uk

For a crime specific query please contact the Crime Customer Service Team as per the standard contact methods.

Feedback about your experience of using the service

We would value your feedback about your experience of using the service. There is a link to a feedback questionnaire at the top of each page in the 'Apply for criminal legal aid' service in addition to showing after each new application has been submitted. You can also find the questionnaire here.

A look at the screens

When you sign in through the portal you will see a link to the new service.

This is the opening screen which explains the criteria you need to meet to use 'Apply for criminal legal aid' (please note this information will be updated as the functionality increases).

If you have multiple offices, you will be asked to confirm your office account number.

This is what your homepage will look like. This is where you will see all of the applications that you have in progress, and you can move across the tabs to see any applications that are submitted or returned. You are also able to make a new application from this page by clicking on the green "Make a new application" button.

You will be asked to enter the client and case details over several screens. We will use your answers to determine what information we require.

Please note that some screens may look slightly different due to the continual updates that are being made to the service.