



Civil legal aid forms update

Update 1: 9 January 2005

In late January we will be issuing new versions of all civil legal aid application forms and one accounts form. This update provides you with information on:

- background on the new forms
- about the forms changes
- what forms are changing
- online forms
- how to get the new forms - the starter pack and how to request a change
- our contact details

Background

As part of the reforms to civil legal aid introduced in October 2003, we issued new application forms. We are making changes in response to comments received from solicitors and following consultation with a number of legal profession bodies, including the Law Society of Scotland. We have also made revisions to improve their usability and to assist the Board's processes for considering applications, which because of our new paperless computer system, will assist us improve our service to you and your clients.

The revised forms include changes to make it easier for you to provide the information that we need to consider the application. We will also be publishing a number of new forms and updated guidance on how to complete our forms.

The new forms are currently being printed and "starter packs" containing a set number of each new form will be sent automatically to you in late January. Packs are being issued to practitioners, rather than firms.

The starter pack size is based on the number of civil legal aid applications you made last year. If you wish to make a change, please

read the later section on how to revise the size of pack we send to you.

About the form changes

While most of the changes are minor more extensive amendments have been made to the CIV/SOL application form and the stage reporting form. The new CIV/SOL will include a list of category codes that solicitors need to tick to allow us to know the extent of the legal aid cover being sought.

The stage reporting form has been revised to better enable you to provide us with the information we require to decide if legal aid should continue. We will be asking for more information about the progress of the case rather than simply concentrating on whether your view of the merits of the case and its cost has changed. We have also created a separate form for you to report on cases that have concluded.

We will also be introducing civil legal aid versions of the application for sanction, amendment or extension, request for transfer of agency and notification of solicitor ceasing to act. There will also be a

special urgency mandate form (sometimes known as the pro-forma calculation sheet) to replace the version that practitioners currently have to photocopy.

We will publish updated guidance to assist you complete the new forms. The new guidance will be included within the starter packs. The revised guidance will be essential to help you with all of the changes and to assist in your preparation of an application. This will minimise the opportunity for difficulties to arise that might stand in the way of the smooth running of your client's case.

The new forms will also feature a revised design style to better meet the requirements of our paperless civil computer system. In particular, you will notice that most civil forms have a red colour instead of blue.

Forms being changed

The starter pack will contain the following new forms:

- CIV/SOL - Solicitor's application form.
- CIV/STAT - Statutory statement (memorandum) - *new form*
- CIV/SU2 - Special urgency - notification
- CIV/SU4 - Special urgency - request
- CIV/SU/MAN - Special urgency mandate (pro-forma calculation sheet) - *new form*
- CIV/REP - Reporting Form
- CIV/CONC - Conclusion of proceedings reporting form - *new form*
- CIV/SANCTION - Civil application for sanction by solicitor - *new form*
- CIV/AMEND - Civil application for amendment or extension by solicitor - *new form*
- CIV/TRANSFER - Civil request for transfer of agency - *new form*
- CIV/CEASE - Civil notification of solicitor ceasing to act - *new form*

- CIV/FIN/1 - Financial Eligibility Form 1
- CIV/FIN/2 - Financial Eligibility Form 2
- CIV/FIN/3 - Earnings statement by applicant's employer - use with Form 2
- CIV/SLA/POA3 - Payment on account of fees

Please note that no revisions are being made to the information booklet CIV/INFO "Civil legal aid - information for applicant's booklet." We also previously advised that the form CIV/INTDOC - Notice to opponent is no longer in use.

Online versions

The new forms will be available in pdf format from our website to let you complete them on computer. You can type into the answer boxes, and then when completed, print out the form.

You need Adobe Reader (formerly called Adobe Acrobat Reader) to use these forms. This software is free and can be downloaded from Adobe's website at www.adobe.co.uk

If you wish to electronically save the information in the form, you need to have purchased software, such as Adobe Acrobat to enable you to do this.

In the coming months, we will be introducing Civil Legal Aid Online services, which will enable you to transact electronically with us, for example by making an application using your web browser. This system will bring benefits to civil legal aid practitioners. Updates on the service will be published in the Recorder.

The new pdf forms will be available on our website www.slab.org.uk later in January when we begin to issue the new printed forms.

How to get the new forms

We will automatically send civil legal aid practitioners who submitted a civil legal aid application last year a starter pack containing a set number of each of the new forms. The starter pack will also contain guidance on completing the forms.

The front page of this update tells you the size of the starter pack we will send to you. The starter pack size is based on the number of CIV/SOL civil legal aid applications you made in 2004-2005. We have used this to estimate the number of forms you would typically use over a six month period.

Changing the starter pack size

If you are content with the size of starter pack that we have set out on the cover page, you do not need to do anything.

If you wish to change the size of the starter pack that we will send to you, please complete and return the cover page by Friday 20 January. We will start sending out the starter packs from that date.

Packs are being sent to solicitors and not offices. You may therefore wish to discuss with other colleagues if they are receiving forms, to help identify if you wish to change the number of forms we will send to you automatically. You may wish to revise the starter pack size to reflect any changes in the type of civil legal aid cases you expect to take on this year.

You will be able to order the new forms for ongoing use in the usual way from our printers, Stewarts. The starter pack will include an updated order form. Please note that if you expect to need more of the new civil forms at an early stage, it would be more helpful if you revise the size of the starter pack that will be sent to you.

Starting to use the new forms

You should start to use the new forms when you receive them. Stocks of the current civil forms can then be destroyed - you may

wish to consider using a local paper recycling service to do this.

We will advise you in the starter pack of the date that we will stop accepting applications made on the current forms.

Questions and next steps

We will issue in late January the starter packs of civil forms, which will include a cover letter, guidance and order form for ongoing supplies.

You should also note that new advice and assistance forms will also be issued in February. We will be writing to you about these new forms, and again a starter pack of these will be sent to you.

If you have any questions about your order for the starter pack of forms, please contact our Communications Department on tel 0131 240 1985, or email general@slab.org.uk