



## Press Release

### Countdown for Legal Aid Online

From 1st April, solicitors will submit all applications for advice and assistance and legal aid using the Board's online system, Legal Aid Online.

Currently:

- Over 85% of legal aid firms use legal aid online
- Around 90% of advice and assistance applications are now made online
- Over 75% of civil legal aid and summary criminal legal aid applications are made online.

The Board's Chief Executive, Lindsay Montgomery CBE, said, "We have been delighted by the profession's positive response to Legal Aid Online. It is reducing firms' administration costs and shortening timescales for dealing with cases. The move to wholly online applications is enabling the Board to substantially reduce its running costs and make savings for the taxpayer. We are now on the final countdown to the 1<sup>st</sup> of April when all legal aid applications will be done online."

Diane Ireland, the Board's Online Marketing Manager comments, "We urge firms that are not yet using the online service or not using it fully to get in touch and ensure that they are ready for the 1st April.

It's easy to set up and use. Firms just need a basic pc with internet access. There is an online learning pack and we're happy to visit firms to give free training, whilst helpline staff can talk you through any problems. There are no ongoing costs and it all links to the Board's systems. You can be up and running in minutes. The sooner firms start, the sooner they can reap the benefits, build up experience before the deadline and make best use of our support. We will soon give firms a breakdown of how they are using the service to highlight where they might have any gaps to fill on training."

Currently, the following can be done online:

- Solicitor intimations of grants of advice and assistance / ABWOR
- applications for
  - increases in authorised expenditure for advice and assistance and ABWOR
  - summary and solemn criminal legal aid
  - civil legal aid
  - applications for sanction and other post-grant work in a civil or criminal case
- accounts for
  - advice and assistance or ABWOR
  - summary criminal fixed fees
  - civil stage payments

Coming soon:

- civil reimbursements and full civil defended and non-defended accounts
- solemn accounts
- exceptional criminal legal aid applications and accounts
- children's legal aid applications and accounts

The Board expects online facilities to be available for all types of account by the end of March 2011. However, it will still accept paper account submissions after April 2011. The Board is also developing other online support services including law accountant access and case management integration.

Training is available to existing and new legal aid online users. Contact Diane Ireland; t - 0131 240 2013, email [irelanddi@slab.org.uk](mailto:irelanddi@slab.org.uk) or visit [www.slab.org.uk](http://www.slab.org.uk).

**Ends**

**Journalists please contact:**  
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**Notes for editors**

Legal aid is help towards the costs of legal advice and representation, for those who qualify, paid for out of public funds. It is designed to help individuals on low and modest incomes gain access to the legal system. There are two main types of legal assistance: advice and assistance and legal aid. Together these are called legal assistance. Legal aid may be free, or someone may have to pay towards the cost of their case, for example through paying a contribution or from the money or property that they win or keep as a result of their legal action. Legal aid is accessed through a solicitor. Unlike most public expenditure, the legal aid fund is not cash limited. The Scottish Government will provide the Board with the funds required to meet the cost of cases which have been granted.