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TO: The Managing Partner
All firms on the provisional civil legal register

Helpline direct dial number:
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Email: civilreform@slab.org.uk

Your ref:

Please quote the department above and
our reference: **Civil Registration / 4**

26 September 2003

Dear Sir / Madam

CIVIL LEGAL AID REFORM MAILSHOT 4

NEW CIVIL LEGAL AID APPLICATION FORMS - EFFECTIVE FROM 1 OCTOBER 2003

This mailshot covers the new civil legal aid application forms and is the fourth in a series of mailshots issued by the Board to provide information about the civil legal aid reforms. This mailshot includes a starter pack with copies of all the new forms and details of how to obtain further supplies of the printed forms and electronic versions. This has been sent to the managing partner of each firm at the address shown on our provisional civil register.

If you require a copy of any of the first three mailshots please telephone 0131 226 7061 and ask for extension 342 or download one from our website www.slabpro.org.uk (the username for the website is procurator and the password is LAACT1986).

You should ensure that the following are made aware of this mailshot and the new forms:

- all other branches of your firm who will undertake civil legal aid – *please ensure that all branches have copies of the new forms*
- all practitioners in your firm who undertake civil legal assistance
- office staff who may have to order or assist complete the forms.

About the new forms

In the second mailshot we explained the key changes we have made to the forms and gave guidance on completing them. The second mailshot gave example forms - these should not be used as application forms and submitted to us.

The new forms, which are in the enclosed starter pack, should be used **with effect from 1 October**. You should thereafter destroy stocks of all old forms (apart from CIV/INTDOC Notice to opponent).

We recognise, however, that there will be cases in the system in the run up to 1 October in which old forms are still in use. These forms can continue to be used up until the end of October should, for

whatever reason, you are not able to secure a supply of the new forms. Where this is the case, we will ask you for any additional information which is contained in the new but not the old forms.

You should continue to use the existing form CIV/INTDOC Notice to opponent, until further notice. This form should be completed for each opponent and submitted with the Solicitor's Application Form.

The new forms have been designed with input from design, plain language and usability experts and to enable them to be electronically scanned. We anticipate that we will have to make some revisions to these new forms based on experience of use and feedback from the profession, as well as to best meet the Board's needs, such as for scanning requirements. We expect to make any changes before next spring and as a result, we have limited the number of forms issued to firms during this six-month period. We have also changed the number of forms in a pack for further orders and are limiting the number of packs that can be ordered.

We have assessed the number of forms we issue based on the number of civil applications each firm has made over the past few years. The supplies of forms that are available will meet the anticipated usage over the next six months. We seek your co-operation by asking you to limit your supply to the number that you anticipate will meet your needs for the next six months.

Starter pack

The enclosed starter pack includes 5 copies of the following application forms:

- Solicitor's application form - CIV/SOL
- Special urgency – notification - CIV/SU2
- Special urgency – request - CIV/SU4
- Reporting Form - CIV/REP
- Financial Eligibility Form 1 - CIV/FIN/1
- Financial Eligibility Form 2 - CIV/FIN/2 incorporating a checklist
- Earnings statement by applicant's employer - for use with Form 2 - CIV/FIN/3

In addition 5 copies of the information booklet that should be given to the applicant will follow under separate cover within the next few days:

- Civil legal aid – information for applicants booklet - CIV/INFO

The booklet must be given to the applicant before he/she completes the applicant's Financial Eligibility Form. A copy of the booklet is available on our website.

You should continue to use the existing form:

- Notice to opponent - CIV/INTDOC - *this is not included in the starter pack*

Ordering supplies of the new printed forms

Attached to this letter is an order form for the Board's printers, Stewarts, to let you order further supplies of all forms. To enable us to effectively manage supplies of the forms over the next six months, please only request one pack of each civil legal aid form per order. (For those firms who we have identified as dealing with the largest numbers of civil applications, different arrangements will apply).

To place an order you can call Stewarts on 0131 659 6010 or return the order form by fax or mail (if faxing an order, you do not need to also send as confirmation your order form by mail). When placing an order, you ***must*** give your firm code and/or practitioner number.

We are also in the process of revising the ancillary forms, such as the forms to request sanction or cease acting. You will receive further information about these shortly but, in the meantime, please continue to use the current forms. We will also change our forms for advice and assistance and criminal legal aid over the next year, and until you receive further information from us, you should continue to use the existing forms, as featured on this order form.

Electronic versions of the forms

All of the forms included in the starter pack and the information for applicants booklet are available in an electronic format on the Board's website at www.slabpro.org.uk (the username is procurator and password LAACT1986). The forms are available in pdf format, and you will need Adobe Reader (formerly called Adobe Acrobat Reader) to use them - this software is free and available from Adobe's web site at www.adobe.co.uk

All of the new civil forms are available in a format to let you print them and then complete them by hand. The following four forms will be available before 1 October in interactive versions to let you complete the details on screen (in the same way as the other legal aid forms):

- Solicitor's application form - CIV/SOL
- Special urgency – notification - CIV/SU2
- Special urgency – request - CIV/SU4
- Reporting Form - CIV/REP

To download the forms, you should visit the what's new page that welcomes you to our website, or the forms area of the site. You can open each form and then save it to your computer, or you can right-click on the form name and then save it to your computer.

If you use the interactive versions and wish to save the data you have typed into the form, you need to purchase Adobe Acrobat software. The standard version of Adobe Acrobat costs £259 and the professional edition is £395. Alternatively Adobe Acrobat Approval (version 5) which enables you to save data from forms costs £35 (all excluding VAT). You can find out more details of this software and buy it on Adobe's website at www.adobe.co.uk

All Board services will be available through e-business by 2005, which will reduce bureaucracy and make the legal aid system quicker and more cost effective. We plan to offer civil legal aid by e-business from autumn 2004. This will include being able to make your civil legal aid application online, and as a result we do not plan to develop any further provision of the new forms in pdf format. (You can read more about our e-business project in issue 36 of *The Recorder*).

We will also consider, following feedback from the profession on the new forms, whether we should issue a CD ROM when the ancillary forms are available.

Leaflets

We will publish in October the following leaflets for the public:

- *Civil legal assistance - a simple guide* - this will be a revised edition of leaflet 2
- *Civil legal aid – what you may have to pay at the end of your case if you win or keep money or property* - this is a new title and will be leaflet 5
- *Do I qualify financially for civil legal assistance?* - this will be a new title that replaces the current eligibility limits leaflet that we issued with the keycard mailshot on 31 March 2003, and will be leaflet 6. (Please note that the eligibility limits have not changed since 31 March, but this leaflet will be easier for the public to use.)

We will send your firm copies of these leaflets when published and you will be able to order further supplies from our printers.

We will issue early next week a further mailshot to all practitioners summarising the changes and highlighting some of the questions the profession has raised with us

Yours faithfully



Tom Murray
Director of Legal Services and Applications

Telephone Helpline

If you have a query about the registration process, the applications or reporting processes or fees and accounts under the new system please telephone our Civil Legal Aid Reform Helpline on
0131 240 2007

Alternatively, you can e-mail us with any queries - civilreform@slab.org.uk

*If you have any queries about the Quality Assurance system please telephone the Law Society on
0131 476 8147.*

Have you missed any information?

Previously issued mailshots about the civil legal aid reforms

Details of Mailshot	Date of Mailshot	Issued by	Issued to
Mailshot 1 – Registration	29 August 2003	Board	All firms
Mailshot 2 – Applications and Reporting	5 September 2003	Board	All legal aid practitioners
Mailshot 3 – Fees and Accounts	19 September 2003	Board	All legal aid practitioners