



An Roinn Dlí agus Cirt,  
Gnóthaí Baile agus Imirce  
Department of Justice,  
Home Affairs and Migration

# Criminal Legal Aid Reform

## Flat Fee Payment System for District Court Cases

**DRAFT** June 2026

Prepared by the Department of  
Justice, Home Affairs and Migration  
[justice.ie](http://justice.ie)



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## From 1 July 2026, a new flat fee payment structure will apply to Criminal Legal Aid Certificates granted in the District Court.

This will simplify the payment process for solicitors, reduce administrative requirements and provide certainty regarding remuneration for Criminal Legal Aid work in the District Court.

This guide explains:

- which payment system applies;
- the revised claims process;
- key operational rules;
- common scenarios and payment outcomes; and
- panel membership arrangements.

### One certificate, one claim form

Under this new payment structure, one Legal Aid Certificate will issue to a solicitor in respect of all charges listed against a defendant in the same court, on the same day. This Legal Aid Certificate will also be the Solicitor's claim for payment form (See Appendix A). Under the new system, only one form is required to be paid for Criminal Legal Aid work in the District Court.

From 1 July 2026, a solicitor will retain their certificate for the duration of all court appearances for the defendant they are representing. Once Final Orders (for cases disposed in the District Court) have been made in respect of all the charges, the solicitor can submit it **via post** to Financial Shared Services, Deerpark Road, Killarney, Co. Kerry.



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## A full flat fee for each defendant

Solicitors will no longer be paid a reduced fee for representing different defendants on the same day. A separate, full flat fee will be paid to solicitors in respect of each defendant they represent, even if these defendants appear as co-accused on the same day. Solicitors will also receive a full flat fee when Counsel is assigned under the Non-Statutory District Court (Counsel) Scheme.

## Efficient payment processing

The Department recognises that Final Orders relating to charges initially listed on the same day may be concluded on different dates. The claim should therefore be submitted once all matters on the form have been finalised. To facilitate timely processing and payment, solicitors are asked to ensure that:

- The claim form is signed by the solicitor named on the certificate.
- The declaration is signed using a handwritten ('wet') signature.
- The claim form is submitted within six months of Final Orders being made in respect of all charges listed on the form.



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# DISTRICT COURT CRIMINAL LEGAL AID – WHAT’S CHANGING FROM 1 JULY 2026?

A visual guide for solicitors

1. DOES THE NEW OR OLD SYSTEM APPLY?	2. CLAIMS PROCESS – WHAT YOU NEED TO DO		3. KEY RULES AT A GLANCE			
<p><b>When were the charges first listed in the District Court?</b> This is the key date that determines which payment system applies.</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: 45%;"> <p><b>ON OR BEFORE 30 JUNE 2026</b></p> <p><b>Old System (S.I. 742/2024)</b></p> <p>Appearance-based sliding-scale fees apply.</p> </div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: 45%;"> <p><b>ON OR AFTER 1 JULY 2026</b></p> <p><b>New System</b></p> <p>One flat fee of €455 applies.</p> </div> </div> <p><i>i</i> The date of the certificate or the date of the final order is <b>NOT</b> relevant.</p>	<p><b>OLD SYSTEM</b> Charges first listed on or before 30 June 2026</p> <p>Use LA1 form to claim.</p> <p>Submit LA1 to the Courts Service for verification.</p> <p>After verification, Courts Service forwards to FSSK for payment.</p> <p>€ Fees paid per appearance in line with current sliding-scale.</p>	<p><b>NEW SYSTEM</b> Charges first listed on or after 1 July 2026</p> <p>The Criminal Legal Aid Certificate is also the claim form.</p> <p>Complete Part 2 (self-declaration) and sign (handwritten).</p> <p>Once final order is made in respect of ALL charges on the certificate...</p> <p>Send the completed certificate directly to FSSK for payment. No need to return it to the Courts Service.</p>	<p><b>One Certificate Rule</b> Only one certificate may issue for charges listed together on the first day in Court.</p> <p><b>Certificate Transfer</b> If a certificate (new system) is transferred, the solicitor who acts at the time of final order is paid the €455 fee.</p> <p><b>Multiple Defendants</b> A separate flat fee (€455) is payable for each legally aided defendant.</p> <p><b>Non-Statutory District Court (Counsel) Scheme</b> A full flat fee (€455) is payable to solicitors. Only one payment to Counsel is due.</p> <p><b>Multiple Certificates Issued in Error</b> Only one payment will be made.</p> <p><b>Signatures</b> Only original handwritten signatures are accepted. No electronic or third-party signatures.</p> <p><b>Expenses</b> Travel and subsistence expenses can still be claimed, but must be submitted before or with the final claim. Expenses submitted after the €455 fee is paid, will not be processed.</p>			
4. QUICK REFERENCE SCENARIOS			5. PANEL MEMBERSHIP			
<p>Certificate granted on or after 1 July 2026 but charges first listed on or before 30 June 2026 Old system applies (S.I. 742/2024).</p> <p>Appearance-based fees</p>	<p>Charges first listed on or after 1 July 2026 New system applies.</p> <p>Flat fee of €455</p>	<p>Certificate transferred to another solicitor (New system cases) Solicitor at time of final order is paid.</p> <p>Flat fee of €455</p>	<p>Solicitor acts for 2 defendants in same case (New system cases) Separate fee for each defendant.</p> <p>€455 per defendant</p>	<p>Counsel assigned under Non-Statutory DC (Counsel) Scheme (New system cases) A full flat fee (€455) is payable to solicitors. Only one payment to one counsel is due.</p> <p>Full flat fee of €455 to solicitors</p>	<p>Multiple certificates issued in error Only one payment will be made.</p> <p>One payment only</p>	<p><b>Do I need to reapply to be on the panel after 1 July 2026?</b></p> <p><b>No.</b></p> <p>If you are already on the panel, you will remain on the panel and can continue to provide services under the scheme.</p>



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## Questions and answers

From 1 July 2026, the date charges were first listed before the District Court determines which payment regime will apply.

- Charges first listed on or before 30 June 2026 remain under the existing appearance-based system.
- Charges first listed on or after 1 July 2026 fall under the new €455 flat-fee system.

## Fees and Payment Arrangements

### What fees will be payable to solicitors in the District Court from 1 July 2026?

The fee payable depends on when the relevant charges were first listed before the District Court.

- **Charges first listed on or before 30 June 2026:**

The existing fee structure under S.I. No. 742 of 2024 will continue to apply. Payments will remain appearance-based and calculated using the current sliding-scale fee model. This applies regardless of when the Criminal Legal Aid certificate is granted.

- **Charges first listed on or after 1 July 2026:**

A new payment system will apply. A single flat fee of €455 will be payable in respect of a Criminal Legal Aid certificate granted for those charges. The flat fee of €455 will also apply to District Court appeals.

### What happens if a certificate is granted on or after 1 July 2026, but relates to charges first listed on or before 30 June 2026?

The existing arrangements under S.I. No. 742 of 2024 will continue to apply.

The relevant date is the date on which the charges were first listed before the District Court, not the date on which the certificate was granted.



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### **What fee is payable when multiple accused (including co-defendants) are defended on the same day?**

A full flat fee of **€455** is payable in respect of each defendant.

### **What fee is payable where counsel is assigned under the Non-Statutory District Court (Counsel) Scheme?**

A full flat fee of **€455** is payable to the solicitor assigned on the certificate, and one separate fee of **€679** is payable to one counsel only. Forms to be used and procedures to be followed by Counsel to be paid under the Non-Statutory District Court (Counsel) Scheme remain unchanged.

## **Claims and Payment Process**

### **Will solicitors continue to use LA1 forms to claim payment?**

Only for cases governed by S.I. No. 742 of 2024. For charges first listed on or before 30 June 2026, the existing claims process remains unchanged. Solicitors must continue to submit LA1 forms to the Courts Service for verification.

### **For charges first listed on or after 1 July 2026, a new and simplified claims process will apply:**

- The Criminal Legal Aid certificate will also serve as the claim form.
- Part 2 of the certificate will contain a solicitor declaration replacing the LA1 form.
- Once a final order (cases disposed in the District Court) has been made in respect of all charges covered by the certificate, the completed certificate may be sent **directly via post** to the Financial Shared Services in Killarney (FSSK) for payment processing.

This removes the need for certification by the Courts Service and is intended to facilitate faster payment.



### **Can solicitors submit LA1 forms directly to FSSK?**

LA1 forms must continue to be verified by the Courts Service. Any LA1 form submitted directly to FSSK by a solicitor will not be processed.

### **Under the new system, how will FSSK know that a claim is ready to be paid, i.e., that a final order (cases disposed in the District Court) has been made in respect of all charges?**

The Courts Service and the Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration have developed an information sharing system, which notifies FSSK of all certificates that are ready to be processed for payment.

### **Can a claim be submitted before a final order (cases disposed in the District Court) has been made?**

For claims under the existing LA1 process, no changes apply and solicitors may continue to submit claims in accordance with current arrangements.

For claims under the new flat-fee system, a claim may only be submitted after a final order (cases disposed in the District Court) has been made in respect of all charges covered by the certificate.

### **What happens if some charges covered by a certificate conclude before others?**

No claim may be submitted under the new system until a final order has been made in respect of all charges covered by the certificate.



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### **How long will it take for payments to be processed?**

FSSK will process claims as quickly as possible upon receipt of a properly completed certificate or claim. Solicitors should ensure that all required information and signatures are included to avoid delays.

## **Criminal Legal Aid Certificates**

### **Can separate legal aid certificates be issued for charges initially listed against the same defendant on the same day in the same court?**

No. Where multiple charges are first listed together on the same day in the same court, only one certificate shall issue in respect of those charges. Solicitors may note that Regulation 7(4) of the Criminal Justice (Legal Aid) Regulations 1965 (S.I. No. 12 of 1965) has also been amended with effect from 1 July 2026.

**Example:** Jennifer appears before the District Court in Naas for the first time on 1 July 2026 in respect of five charges. Only one Criminal Legal Aid certificate shall issue for those charges. When a final order has been made in respect of all five charges, a single payment of €455 will be payable. If Jennifer subsequently appears in court on new and unrelated charges that are listed for the first time on a different occasion, a separate certificate may issue for those charges and a separate fee may become payable.

### **What happens if multiple certificates are issued in error?**

Where multiple certificates are issued in respect of the same charges in error, only one payment will be made.



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### **Under the new system, what happens if a legal aid certificate is transferred to another solicitor?**

Where a certificate relates to charges first listed on or after 1 July 2026 and is transferred to another solicitor, the solicitor representing the defendant when the final order is made will be entitled to claim the €455 fee.

## **Signatures and Supporting Documentation**

### **Are electronic signatures accepted on Part 2 of the Criminal Legal Aid certificate?**

No. For audit, compliance and data protection reasons, only original handwritten signatures will be accepted. Claims submitted with electronic signatures or signatures completed by a third party will not be paid.

### **What should a solicitor do if a certificate is lost or damaged?**

The solicitor should contact the relevant court office as soon as possible for guidance on obtaining a replacement of the original certificate.

## **Expenses**

### **Can travelling and subsistence expenses still be claimed?**

Yes. Claims for travelling and subsistence expenses remain payable in accordance with the applicable scheme rules.

### **When should expenses be claimed?**

All expenses should be claimed before, or at the same time as, the final claim for payment. Expenses submitted after the €455 fee has been paid will not be processed.



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### **Can photocopying expenses for cases in the District Court be claimed after 1 July 2026?**

No. As of 1 July 2026, expenses related to photocopying for cases that begin and end in the District Court will no longer be processed, both for cases falling under the old system (i.e., S.I. No. 742 of 2024) and under the new system. Solicitors who wish to make a claim for existing and already incurred photocopying expenses in the District Court must submit them by 30 August 2026.

### **Solicitor Panel**

#### **Do practitioners need to apply again to remain on the Criminal Legal Aid panel after 1 July 2026?**

No. Solicitors and Counsel who are already members of the relevant panel will remain on the panel if they wish to continue to provide services under the Scheme.



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## Appendix A

### DUBLIN METROPOLITAN DISTRICT

Criminal Justice (Legal Aid) Act, 1962 - Criminal Justice (Legal Aid) Regulations 1965 - as amended  
Legal Aid (District Court) Certificate - (where charge is OTHER THAN one of MURDER)

John Doe  
of Doe & Co Solicitors  
Middle Third Avenue  
Third Avenue  
Doe Street  
Dublin

Legal Aid No. 2026/986451

Case Number(s):2026/7896466, 2026/64569799 -

Application having been made by or on behalf of Jim Doe of Ard Na Grainne Road, Dublin 99, 11/98/1900 who is charged before this Court with Breach of Peace –for a Legal Aid (District Court) Certificate and it appearing to the Court that his/her means are insufficient to enable him/her to obtain legal aid and that by reason of

(1) the gravity of the charge, 2) exceptional circumstances, or (3) the gravity of the charge and exceptional circumstances

it is essential in the interests of justice that he/she should have legal aid in the preparation and conduct of his/her defence before it, the Court hereby grants in respect of him/her this certificate for free legal aid, and assigns to him/her as solicitor:

John Doe

First Court Date 2nd July 2026, Dodder Court, Dodder Venue, Dublin 99

Dated this 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2026

Signed:

Judge of the District Court

### FOR SOLICITOR USE ONLY

I declare that:

- (i) the particulars in this form are correct,
- (ii) I have not received, nor will I accept any payment towards the cost of the case/s associated with this certificate from, or on behalf of, the defendant(s),
- (iii) I will not make any claim for payment to which I am not entitled,
- (iv) I am liable for V.A.T.,
- (v) no other certificates were granted or sought for the same person in whose name legal aid was granted for the above case number(s) and related charge(s) on the First Date in Court (\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/20\_\_\_\_) in this form, and
- (vi) I further declare that I was on the Criminal Legal Aid panel when assigned to this case and I, and the firm I represent, where applicable, am/are in receipt of an up to date Tax Clearance Certificate.**

Name in capitals: \_\_\_\_\_

Payee no: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
/ /20

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### Please forward to

Criminal Legal Aid

Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration

Financial Shared Services, Deerpark Road, Killamey, Co Kerry V93 KH28

