



Ministry of
JUSTICE

Highest paid solicitors firms and barristers from Legal Aid in 2007/08

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Contents

Highest paid solicitors firms and barristers from Legal Aid in 2007/08	2
Solicitors Firms – Criminal Legal Aid	3
Solicitors Firms – Civil Legal Aid	4
Barristers – Criminal Legal Aid	6
Barristers – Civil Legal Aid	7

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The Ministry of Justice and the Legal Services Commission frequently receive requests from Members of Parliament and the public for the disclosure of the highest paid barristers and firms for providing publicly funded legal services. The disclosures have usually been in response to questions tabled in Parliament or in response to requests from the public. However, in light of the frequency that this sort of information is requested, the department decided two years ago (in respect of 2005-06) to publish the list on an annual basis so that anyone requesting the information can simply be referred to it.

The lists of highest paid barristers paid from the Criminal Defence Service and the Community Legal Service as well as the highest paid solicitor firms paid through the Criminal Defence Service and the Community Legal Service are shown below.

The lists should be read in conjunction with the caveats below to gain a full understanding of what the figures represent.

Solicitors Firms – Criminal Legal Aid

Highest Paid Firms* - Criminal Defence Service (year ending 31 March 2008)

Tuckers Solicitors	£9,302,000
The Johnson Partnership	£6,192,000
Forbes Solicitors	£4,654,000
Kaim Todner Solicitors	£4,232,000
Meldrum Young Solicitors	£3,908,000
Ebr Attridge Law	£3,905,000
Bhatia Best Solicitors	£3,703,000
Noble Solicitors	£3,564,000
Martin Murray & Associates	£3,405,000
Cooper Kenyon Burrows	£3,342,000

* In addition to the private firms listed above, the Public Defender Service (PDS) a publicly administered body providing legal advice and representation received £4,593,000 in 2007-08

Solicitors Firms – Civil Legal Aid

Highest Paid Firms* - Community Legal Service (year ending 31 March 2008)

Duncan Lewis Solicitors	£6,182,000
Switalski's inc. Chadwick Lawrence Solicitors	£4,566,000
Stephensons LLP	£4,333,000
Blavo & Company Solicitors	£4,217,000
Wilson & Co	£3,767,000
Fisher Meredith	£3,698,000
Irwin Mitchell inc. Alexander Harris	£3,644,000
White Ryland	£3,472,000
Howells LLP	£3,408,000
Hodge Jones & Allen Solicitors	£2,782,000

* In addition to the firms listed above, the legal aid budget also funded services provided by the following not-for-profit organisations with charitable status during 2007/08. Contract funding to the Immigration Advisory Service of £14,134,000; contract funding to the Refugee Legal Centre of £13,092,000.

1. The figures represent payments made in the financial year 2007-08. They include payments for work done in previous years – in some cases over a number of earlier years. For example cases may well have lasted more than one year, overall payments may have been increased by one exceptional case lasting a number of years which have been paid in 2007-08 or there may have been delays in submitting relevant claims.

2. All the figures listed are inclusive of VAT (17.5 per cent.) as paid, and disbursements incurred (e.g. travelling and medical report fees). Individuals must pay that VAT to HM Revenue & Customs.
3. While these figures represent payments actually made to the organisations during the year, other parties may in the future repay some of this money to the Community Legal Service (CLS) Fund. This will happen in cases where the legally aided party wins the case and recovers costs from the opponent. Once those costs are recovered the legally aided party's solicitor refunds some or all of the money to the CLS Fund. In some cases where costs are recovered from the losing party the actual cost to the CLS Fund may be very little or even nothing. Costs can also be recovered from a legal aid client when they gain financially from a successful legal action.

In the Criminal Defence Service, when a case is completed, a crown court judge can order a defendant who is found guilty to repay all of their legal aid costs by issuing a Recovery of Defence Costs Order (RDCO).

4. Organisations will have to pay wages for solicitors, caseworkers, support staff and overheads, such as office costs or management out of these payments. In addition payments from the LSC will also cover disbursements paid to barristers and interpreters for work carried out in relation to cases being handled by the organisation.
5. Previously the Legal Services Commission has released figures for solicitors firms on the basis of the top-earning 'offices'. In order to provide figures on a more meaningful basis, amounts provided in the table combine individual account numbers and offices to give figures for firms overall.

Barristers – Criminal Legal Aid

Highest Paid Barristers - Criminal Defence Service (year ending 31 March 2008)

Charles N Salmon QC	£1,058,000
Howard A Godfrey QC	£ 988,000
David R B Whitehouse QC	£ 959,000
Charles J W Benson	£ 835,000
Kieran P Vaughan	£ 799,000
Anthony R Barraclough	£ 768,000
Lewis N Power	£ 703,000
Vincent W Coughlin QC	£ 688,000
Michael I Wolkind QC	£ 687,000
Abbas Lakha QC	£ 647,000

Barristers – Civil Legal Aid

Highest Paid Barristers - Community Legal Service (year ending 31 March 2008)

Simon D Hirst	£ 442,000
Michael J Keehan QC	£ 372,000
Alison Ball QC	£ 371,000
Paul M Storey QC	£ 354,000
Jeremy G Rosenblatt	£ 345,000
David H Southey	£ 344,000
Janet C Bazley QC	£ 318,000
Clive W Heaton QC	£ 306,000
John P Godfrey	£ 300,000
Stephen Knafler	£ 288,000

These figures must be interpreted carefully and do not represent the personal earnings of the individuals listed in any one year. There are a number of reasons for this.

1. The amounts paid to each barrister listed represent payments for work covering many years, for a variety of cases. The amount an individual receives in any year fluctuates widely, and is to a large extent due to the variety of payment processes and schemes used by the Legal Services Commission and the Courts. Fluctuations could also be attributed to legacy payments from cases paid under the old system of individual case assessment where payments were made once the case had finished, prior to the introduction of VHCC (very high cost case) contracts. Additionally the length of a particularly complicated case could make the figure appear inflated.

2. The amount attributed to a barrister may include payments subsequently made to other barristers as remuneration for work carried out on behalf of the named barrister. The figures exclude payments to the named barrister when they have carried out work on behalf of a colleague.
3. All the figures listed are inclusive of VAT (17.5 per cent.) as paid, and disbursements incurred (e.g. travelling). Individuals must pay that VAT to HM Revenue & Customs.
4. Barristers pay a percentage of their fees towards professional overheads. Additionally, barristers face the same expenses as any other self employed person, including income tax and National Insurance contributions.

A number of other qualifications need to be added to these figures.

1. Payments are made after claims are carefully scrutinised by the Legal Services Commission or the Courts, and where necessary adjusted. The Legal Services Commission and the Courts may make payments many years after cases conclude.
2. While these figures represent gross payments actually made to the barristers during the year, some of those monies have been (or may in the future be) repaid to the Community Legal Service Fund by other parties. This will happen in cases where the legally aided party wins the case and recovers costs from the opponent. Once those costs are recovered the legally aided party's solicitor refunds some or all of the money to the CLS Fund. As a consequence the figures may not reflect the actual cost of the barristers' fees to the Fund. In some cases where costs are recovered from the losing party the actual cost to the CLS Fund may be very little or even nothing.
3. Where possible, amounts have been verified by practitioners and adjusted where necessary.
4. For the CDS, not all payments are recorded centrally in a way that can be attributed to a barrister. Also not all payments made to barristers are recorded in the database used to compile the list. These include manual legal aid payments and a small number of bills paid on account and payments made in the high court. Therefore, it is possible that the list could change in future following the inclusion of such payments in light of further information and subsequent verification..

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