

Consultation to enhance legal support for those facing eviction or repossession

- new proposals will improve access to legal aid for anyone at risk of losing their home
- consultation set to run for 12 weeks and follows extensive stakeholder engagement on how to improve current scheme
- plans were announced by Justice Minister Wendy Morton MP at the Legal Aid Practitioners Group Annual Conference

The Housing Possession Court Duty Scheme (HPCDS) offers free 'on-the-day' legal advice to anyone in danger of being evicted from their home or having their property repossessed, regardless of their financial circumstances. Given the vital role the HPCDS plays in ensuring access to justice and the timely resolution of legal problems, the continuation of the service is of paramount importance. The proposed changes will ensure it keeps pace with changes in the wider justice system.

Over a number of months, the Ministry of Justice has worked with stakeholders and agreed a package of measures that would ensure the sustainability of this vital scheme, improving access to legal advice and representation for anyone facing possession proceedings in court.

Justice Minister, Wendy Morton MP said:

Housing repossession and homelessness are two of the most serious civic problems that any person can experience. This ambitious new model will provide greater support for those who rely on it most, while being more financially viable for providers and ensuring long-term sustainability.

The consultation proposes:

- contracts for individual courts rather than larger geographical areas
- allowing providers to claim for the HPCDS fee in addition to the follow up Legal Help fee
- introducing a set attendance fee for all schemes, replacing the existing nil session payment
- introducing reasonable costs for travel as part of the competition element of the bid

Notes to editors

- The consultation will be open for 12 weeks, closing in January 2020
- A paper summarising responses will be published within 3 months of the

closing date of the consultation