

Criminal barristers to receive 15 percent fee rise in September

- fee rise will see typical criminal barrister receive £7,000 extra a year
- solicitors will receive 15 percent increase for work in magistrates courts and police stations
- response brought forward so new fees reach pockets before the end of the year

It follows the recommendation made in an independent review of the criminal legal aid system and will see the typical criminal barrister earn £7,000 more a year.

Criminal solicitors will also receive a 15 percent increase for their work in police stations and magistrates' and youth courts, with further multi-million-pound reforms to solicitors' pay still under consideration.

The fee increase is being fast-tracked with the legislation required being laid in July so that legal professionals begin to see the pay rise before the end of 2022.

The remaining proposals in the recent consultation on criminal legal aid will be responded to later this year, with potential further increases for solicitors and other legal professionals as part of longer-term reforms, with £20 million set aside for this work.

Justice Minister James Cartlidge said:

Our energetic efforts to tackle the courts backlog are working but the strike action by criminal barristers threatens all that progress, despite the very generous pay offer on the table.

The typical criminal barrister will earn an extra £7,000 a year from September, so I urge the Criminal Bar Association to accept this offer to stop victims having to wait longer for justice.

The confirmed 15 percent rise is on top of up to £74 million extra allocated to criminal legal aid per year over the last 4 years that is increasingly reaching barristers and solicitors as more of the cases outstanding from the pandemic are concluded.

The proposal to increase investment in criminal legal aid by £135 million a year is the biggest rise in a decade and raises taxpayer spending on it to a record £1.2 billion.

The Independent Review of Criminal Legal Aid found that, before expenses, the median fee of a criminal barrister in 2019-20 was £79,800 and that 80 percent earn at least £45,000 after expenses. While junior barristers earn much less

in their first couple of years of practice, by their third year of practice the average criminal barrister will earn £65,000 before expenses.

The government is investing £477 million into the justice system to reduce backlogs in the courts caused by the pandemic and has also removed the cap on how many days courts can sit for a second year. The investment means more trials can take place and the same decision last year meant that nearly 17,000 more days were sat in the Crown Court than the year prior to the pandemic.

Video technology has been rolled out to over 70 percent of all courtrooms and 3,265 virtual court rooms have been opened so that more hearings can take place.

Since May, magistrates have been able to sentence offenders to up to a year in prison, doubling their previous powers, helping to free up an estimated 1,700 extra sitting days of Crown Court time each year.

Notes to Editors