



Tel 0207 186 8270  
Email: [office@ncdv.org.uk](mailto:office@ncdv.org.uk)  
Web: [www.ncdv.org.uk](http://www.ncdv.org.uk)

## Solicitors Panel Application Process

Dear Solicitor

July 2023

### Our Work

The National Centre for Domestic Violence provides support to domestic abuse victims across England by specifically focusing on the legal protection that a court order can provide.

We have our own in-house legal department, National Legal Service, which supports the work that we do but we also rely on a national solicitors' panel for complete coverage.

Law firms are invited to apply to join our panel in areas where our existing coverage is not satisfying the demand for our service.

We are not government funded and we do not accept donations. We create our own income by providing solicitors with an optional document drafting service if they so require. We are proud of the quality of our work and we only succeed to thrive and therefore support vulnerable victims irrespective of their financial position if we give exceptional service.

In 2022 we provided over 4000 victims that could not afford legal aid or a solicitor with support to get a protective injunction, no other organisation provided this volume of support for free.

We had thought for a long time for a phrase that sums up everything we do which could instantly be recognised by anyone as to what our fundamental principle is.

We care for our clients, referrers, employees, solicitors' panel, the police and the courts, but what we really care about above all is the victim – our client. We exist to provide service on a level that cannot be matched and what makes us strive to achieve such a high service level is the core principle that if we don't then we will let our vulnerable clients down.

Of course we care about our income stream, without that we do not exist and we care about our taxes and our creditors which means we have to run our organisation with a business head. We have to have Managers, Directors, HR, Supervisors, Investors, fee earners, help line advisers, admin, accountants and many more and these have to be good people and we need to pay for them.

We try as hard as possible to deliver the best care we can for the income we receive. For us at NCDV–  
**Every Client Matters**

Solicitors that join our panel need to be hard working, compassionate, conform with all regulations, preferably have special skills in the domestic abuse and violence sector, have experience in helping vulnerable people and last but not least understand what we do and why we do it.





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To help us understand you we have developed a questionnaire for you to complete which enables us to learn about you and your business, we need to thoroughly trust you with our clients and to do that we need to know you are able provide the necessary support. We also want you to completely understand us, how NCDV works and the dedication we commit to every client. So we invite you as part of our application process to spend 40 mins with me over Zoom in a discovery virtual tour of NCDV.

The Legal Aid Agency have issued a statement in relation to the arrangements for legal aid firms to be on a NCDV panel which you can download via the link at the bottom of this letter.

Please complete the application form which you can download at <https://www.ncdv.org.uk/solicitors-panel> and return to me at [mark.groves@ncdv.org.uk](mailto:mark.groves@ncdv.org.uk) I will then liaise with you to make arrangements for the next step.

If you have any questions in the meantime, please do not hesitate to call me directly on 0203 328 3972

**Every client matters.**

Yours faithfully  
National Centre for Domestic Violence

**Mark Groves**  
CEO



[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/766652/Position\\_of\\_the\\_Legal\\_Aid\\_Agency\\_as\\_to\\_undertaking\\_work\\_with\\_the\\_National\\_Centre\\_for\\_Domestic\\_Violence3.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/766652/Position_of_the_Legal_Aid_Agency_as_to_undertaking_work_with_the_National_Centre_for_Domestic_Violence3.pdf)



## Solicitors' Panel Application Process – Application Form

### Solicitors' Panel Application Form

PANEL MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION		
DETAILS OF THE PERSON COMPLETING THIS FORM		
Name:		
Job Title:		
Your Qualifications:		
Address for correspondence:		
Office telephone number:		
Mobile telephone number:		
Fax number:		
DX number		
Email		
INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR FIRM		
Firm Name:		
Trading name (if different from above):		
Date of Incorporation:		
SRA number:		
Constitution: Limited Liability Company, General Partnership, Limited Liability Partnership, ABS etc		
Firm Address:		
Annual turnover:		
Office Telephone Number:	E-mail:	Fax Number:
DX Number:	Website Address:	





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### PANEL MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

How many fee earners do you have in your firm who deal with domestic abuse cases, please categorise them into solicitors, legal executives and paralegals including details of the number of years experience:

How many offices do you have that has the benefit of a legal aid family contract?



## Solicitors' Panel Application Process – Application Form

### PANEL MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

At each of your office locations that is covered by a legal aid family contract please:

- provide the address of that office
- how many people at that office carry out domestic abuse cases
- confirm that the office has a supervising solicitor at that office, at all times

Please provide a list of all your partners/members and the name of your senior partner and managing partner:





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### PANEL MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

What is the % of your family income as a proportion of your firm's total income?

Approximately how many 'live' domestic abuse cases is your firm dealing with at the moment?

How many Non Molestation orders have your firm dealt with in the last 12 months?





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Has any of your employees been convicted of a domestic violence incident in the last five years, if the answer is Yes please give details of the circumstances giving rise to the conviction.





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## Solicitors' Panel Application Process – Application Form

### PANEL MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Please provide a copy of your complaints procedure \_\_\_\_\_(tick)

In the last 3 years please let us know if you have received any complaints (in accordance with your complaints procedure) about the work you have done for victims of domestic violence and provide details of these complaints:





## Solicitors' Panel Application Process – Application Form

### PANEL MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

#### ACCREDITATIONS

Please list any accreditations relevant to your family law practice and the dates that such accreditation was given:

#### PRO BONO POLICY

Please set out your pro bono policy:





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## Solicitors' Panel Application Process – Application Form

### PANEL MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Please list any publications/articles you have had published relating to domestic abuse and in what publication/medium:

Please list courses or lectures you have given relating to domestic abuse; to whom and where:





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PANEL MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION		
<b>LEGAL AID CONTRACT</b>		
How long have you had a legal aid contract for family law:		
Please provide your Legal Aid Contract number:		
<b>COVERAGE</b>		
Which courts are you able to cover:		
What weekly number of cases are you able to take on:		
<b>REFERRALS</b>		
For reference purposes please indicate other organisations that you receive referrals from. Please note we may contact them for reference purposes.		
Name:	Name:	Name:
Contact:	Contact:	Contact:
Telephone:	Telephone:	Telephone:
Email:	Email:	Email:





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### PANEL MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

#### SOFTWARE

What PMS and other software packages do you use:

Do you have the facility to send text messages from email and/or direct from your PMS:



## Solicitors' Panel Application Process – Application Form

PANEL MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION	
DECLARATION	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I confirm that the answers I have given to the above questions are true and accurate to the best of my knowledge and belief.</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I understand that the information given in this form may be cross checked/verified with the Legal Aid Agency</li> <li>I understand that NCDV will require this application for to be completed and reviewed on a biannual basis.</li> </ul>	
SIGNATURES	
Signature of applicant:	Date:
Name in Capitals:	



## Solicitors' Panel Memorandum of Understanding

### Memorandum of Understanding

between

National Centre for Domestic Violence ("NCDV") and its Panel Firms

The aim of NCDV is to provide support and assistance to victims of domestic violence in securing an injunction regardless of their financial circumstances, race, gender or sexual orientation. Working with the police, our panel solicitors and other support agencies the aim is to help victims secure an injunction in the shortest time possible.

The link below is for our landing page which sets out what victims, the police and other support agencies say about the work we do.

<https://www.ncdv.org.uk>

#### Panel Membership, Criteria for Joining & Removing a Law Firm from a NCDV Panel

The panel operated by NCDV ("the Panel") is open to any law firm to join. The essential prerequisites are:

1. the firm undertakes family work, in particular domestic violence work
2. it has a legal aid contract
3. it can help the victim to secure an injunction quickly, effectively, compassionately and without delay following the allocation of the case
4. whether or not it has a pro bono policy for supporting and assisting victims of domestic violence who are not financially eligible for legal aid

NCDV:

1. will operate a national solicitors panel divided into areas determined by Family courts
2. it shall in its absolute discretion determine the number of firms that is registered to receive referrals to each court
3. in determining the number of firms that are registered to each court it will consider the following:
  - a. the number of courts in that region
  - b. the number of enquiries from victims in that region



## Solicitors' Panel Memorandum of Understanding

4. membership of each court will be reviewed bi-annually. NCDV will consider the following when deciding to admit a new law firm, remove a law firm, increase the number of law firms on the panel:
  - a. the matters mentioned at 3 a & b above
  - b. the quality and timeliness of the firm's service in helping a victim to secure an injunction
5. cases will be allocated to the firm located nearest to the victim; if that firm is not able to take on the case and act upon it within a period of 24 hours then it will be allocated to the next firm on the panel, nearest to the victim.

### Work of NCDV

NCDV receives a significant number of queries from the police and other support agencies such as Refuge, Womens Aid et al. When we receive an enquiry we will

1. call the victim and determine his/her means eligibility by using the LAA online civil legal aid calculator and merits.
2. if the means test returns a result that is not acceptable to the victim but the case has merit we will support and assist the victim on a pro bono basis
3. if the victim is eligible for legal aid, we will ascertain
  - a. the location of the court nearest to the victim
  - b. the solicitors that are registered to that court

and determine which firm is to be allocated the case based on the proximity of the victim to the law firm.

4. we will send the firm brief details of the victim and the respondent to enable them to do a conflict check and decide if they have capacity to take on the case.
5. Irrespective of whether or not they are able to act for the victim, they will respond to our email (draft attached) within the hour, indicating whether or not they can act and whether or not they would like us to prepare a bundle of documents for their use comprising:
  - a. Witness Statement
  - b. FL401
  - c. Notice of Acting
  - d. Draft Order
  - e. Statement Questionnaire
  - f. Triage Questionnaire



## Solicitors' Panel Memorandum of Understanding

6. We will make a charge of £196.35 plus VAT for the preparation of the bundle (the "Bundle Fee"). It is vital that the firm understands this is not a disbursement that can be reclaimed from the Legal Aid Agency when submitting their claim for costs. We will waive the Bundle Fee if for any reason the case does not proceed.
7. If we are instructed by the law firm to prepare the bundle we will usually produce the above documents and email them to the firm within 6 hours of their email instruction.
8. It is the law firm's responsibility to check that the bundle of documents that have been prepared for their use is fit for purpose.
9. If the law firm does not want us to prepare the bundle of documents we will email to them by return a completed Triage Questionnaire in the form attached.
10. Please note once an order has been obtained for the victim that law firm can use our process serving service which attracts a fixed fee of £100 plus VAT. One of the attractions of this service is that the details of the order (in particular the details of the victim and the respondent) are entered on our ASSIST database which is accessible by the police and the CPS. This affords the victim an increased level of protection in that in the event of further abuse the police can check the database for the terms of the order. Other process servers would not be able to access the ASSIST database. There is, however, no obligation for law firms to use this service.

### Commitment of Panel Firms

As a panel firm we expect our law firms to abide by the following code of conduct ("the Charter"):

The Charter is non-binding but is written to ensure law firms working with NCDV adhere to the highest quality standards so that our service users and those that refer survivors to us can be assured we are securing for the vulnerable the best protection possible.

1. **Care and consideration.** We deal with vulnerable victims of domestic violence and abuse and fully expect that they will be treated with compassion, respect and integrity. Occasionally, the stress victims are placed under may cause them to present in a way which may be challenging. We expect law firms specialising in the field of domestic abuse to ensure they are specifically trained and able to help our service users with appropriate adjustments to their procedures to ensure that as many victims as possible can be properly helped. Law firms found to have been rude or failed to show a professional level of empathy may be excluded.
2. **Timely working practices.** Victims are referred to us because of the speed of our service and law firms on our panel should use their best endeavors to respond to the needs of the victim as quickly as possible. These are emergency situations requiring emergency responses. We expect a law firm to call back victims within an hour and to use their best endeavors to





## Solicitors' Panel Memorandum of Understanding

progress a case to court as quickly as possible. Firms regularly failing to meet this may be excluded.

- Quality.** We expect a high quality service from all our panel firms. They must check the documents including the facts and merits of each case, give full and holistic advice and remain fully compliant with the robust quality and procedural obligations placed upon them by the courts, the Legal Aid Agency and their regulatory body the Solicitors Regulation Authority. They are responsible for adhering strictly to funding and best practice guidance and must take responsibility for adapting to changes in case law and practice. We expect our panel firms to report any serious quality breaches to us and we may exclude a firm who has a serious sanction imposed on their contract by the LAA, or has had an adverse finding made by the SRA or whose casework or preparation has been justifiably criticised by the client, court or a relevant third party.
- Equal Opportunity.** We would expect that our panel firms will not prejudice victims that are unable to afford a legal aid contribution. We provide pro bono assistance to thousands of victims and we would expect panel solicitors to have a pro bono policy.
- Serving documents.** It is critical that respondents are served in accordance with the Family Justice Council's guidelines. Proper service ensures the desired police reaction, if the order is breached. In the interests of protecting our clients and preserving their right to action in the event that an order is breached firms not following the guidelines may be excluded.
- Updates.** Our service extends to the referrer, and we have created a feedback system that updates referrers on the status of a case. Certain trigger points create an automatic update which satisfies the referrers need for information to offer support to the victim. Keeping our referrers informed is an extremely important part of our process. To do this we need case updates from our panel firms. However, firms should be fully aware of their obligations for client privacy and make any necessary arrangements with regards to any privacy rights of the victims and any privacy regulations set down by authorities. Firms not providing timely updates may be excluded.





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## Solicitors' Panel Memorandum of Understanding

From: mark.groves@ncdv.org.uk <mark.groves@ncdv.org.uk>  
Sent: 09 November 2018 14:30  
To: mark.groves@ncdv.org.uk  
Subject: GDPR anontesterymisation 25-5-2018 08NCD1599

We are contacting you because the individual below is a victim of domestic violence/abuse, they qualify for legal aid and need legal representation for an application to the court for a non molestation order.

They have authorised us to pass their details and any of their documentation to one of our panel solicitors. If you accept this case they will become your client.

Please find below details for you to perform a conflict check.

If you wish to use our chargeable bundle service please reply with the word 'ACCEPT'(op1) and we will forward you their details and a complete bundle.

If you would like to progress this matter without charge please email the phrase 'PROGRESS MATTER' (op2) and we will forward you their full details.

You are welcome to use our ASSIST process serving service which includes uploading the documents to the national database for which you can instruct us at a later date. ASSIST process serving is charged at specially agreed fixed LAA rate of £100+vat and is authorised by the LAA as a reclaimable disbursement.

If you cannot take this case please email back UNABLE TO TAKE and we will allocate to another firm.

If you have any queries please call operations on 0203 326 4952.

Applicant-----

NAME: GDPR anontesterymisation 25-5-2018

DOB: NZ06/03/75

POST CODE: RH1 2BJ

Respondent-----

NAME: Unknown





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## Solicitors' Panel Memorandum of Understanding

DOB: 23/02/57  
POST CODE: KT24 6NZ

Details-----

RECENT INCIDENT: 26/4/2018

POLICE ACTION: 27/10/08  
ASSOCIATION: Relative STATE  
LEGAL AID: Part legal aid  
TYPE OF CASE:  
Warning Letter

Other details-----

REFERRER: Warwickshire Police  
COURT: Bath County Court

The layout and structure of this email has been optimised for Blackberry and iphones, if you have a problem reading this message please let us know.

