

LEGAL SERVICES AGENCY NORTHERN IRELAND

GRANT 1: VARIATION 8

GRANT TO HOUSING RIGHTS SERVICE

Mortgage Repossession and Ejectment Proceedings

1. The Legal Services Agency Northern Ireland (“the Agency”) issued a Grant to the Housing Rights Service under Article 12(2)(c) of the Access to Justice (Northern Ireland) Order 2003 to provide funding for a three year period commencing 1 April 2015. The Grant was for £66,000 per annum to provide 600 acts of advice and assistance at one court appearance per client in relation to:
 - (a) Order 88 possession proceedings in the High Court based on mortgage arrears in respect of residential property, where the debt is admitted and there is no defence to the proceedings; or
 - (b) Ejectment proceedings in the County Court and the Recorders Courts based on rent arrears in respect of residential property, where the debt is admitted and there is no defence to the proceedings.
2. The original grant was varied, variation 1, for financial year 2016/17 to reduce the level of funding to £29,700 per annum in respect of 270 acts of advice and assistance. This variation reflected changes in the volume of work.
3. A subsequent variation, variation 2, was put in place to further reduce the funding for 2017/18 to the sum of £20,925 based on 155 acts of assistance. This further revision reflected actual business transacted.

4. Variation 3, was put in place to extend the funding beyond the original three year to provide funding for 2018/19. This continued funding at 2017/18 levels being £20,925 based on 155 acts of assistance.
5. Variation 4, continued the funding for 2019/20. The continued funding reflected the 2018/19 levels, namely £20,925 per annum in respect of 155 acts of assistance.
6. Variation 5, extended the funding provided for the first six months of financial year 2020/21, with the option to extend the grant further for a period of up to a further six months. The funding reflected the 2018/19 levels, namely £20,925 per annum in respect of 155 acts of assistance.
7. The six month extension to the grant was intended to allow completion of a review on the services provided under the grant which was undertaken by the Enabling Access to Justice Division of the Department. The terms of the grant included a review mechanism to accommodate a significant increase in the volume of work being undertaken with the option to extend the duration of the grant if that proved to be necessary to enable the review to be completed.
8. Following consideration of the terms of variation 5 and the impact of Covid19 which prevented progress on the review and the delivery of at court services, Variation 6 permitted the use of the funding which was unused under variation 5 to deliver services during the second six months of 2020/21 without further funding.
9. Variation 6 meant that the total funding available for 2020/21 was £10,462.50 in respect of 77 acts of assistance.
10. Variation 7, reflected the fact that it was not possible to provide the funded services during 2020/21 due the pandemic. As such this variation provides for the unused sum of £10,462.50 from 2020/21 to be used in the provision of services from October 2021 to March 2022. This permitted the delivery of services virtually or in person.

11. This latest variation, Variation 8, confirms that the funding available for 2022/23 is £10,462.50 in respect of 77 acts of assistance.



Paul Andrews

Chief Executive and Director of Legal Aid Casework

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