

Significant fee rise for criminal barristers confirmed in law

- legislation laid to increase barrister fees by 15 percent from the end of September 2022
- the typical criminal barrister will receive £7,000 extra a year
- fifteen percent increase for solicitors' work in magistrates' courts and police stations

The 15 percent fee increase will see a typical criminal barrister earn £7,000 more a year while criminal solicitors will also receive a 15 percent fee rise across a range of their work, including that undertaken in police stations, magistrates' courts and youth courts.

The legislation has been fast-tracked so legal professionals can see the pay rise before the end of the year with the new fees introduced at the end of September.

Justice Minister Sarah Dines said:

We are creating a sustainable legal aid system that is fit for the future and the typical criminal barrister will get a generous pay rise of £7,000 following a 15 percent fee increase.

The £135 million extra investment in legal aid will also help ensure that solicitors and other legal professionals are better paid for the important work they do to ensure victims get timely justice.

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.

Up to £74 million extra has been allocated to criminal legal aid per year over the last 4 years and the proposal to increase investment by £135 million a year is the biggest rise in a decade.

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 also 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.