



## **Costs protocol relating to legal representation at public expense**

*This protocol sets out the mechanism for applying for legal expenses  
and how they are assessed.*

### **Introduction**

1. This Protocol relates to:
  - applications by persons who claim to be eligible under section 40(3)(a) or 40(3)(b) of the Inquiries Act 2005 (**"the Act"**) (**"applicant"**) for an award to be made under section 40(1)(b) of the Act for expenses to be incurred in respect of legal representation (**"legal expenses"**); and
  - following a decision to make an award, the assessment of legal expenses which become payable under it.
2. Issues relating to the designation of a person as a Core Participant in the Inquiry, and of a qualified lawyer as the recognised legal representative of a Core Participant and/or an individual witness, are dealt with separately to the question of funding and are not intended to be within the scope of this Protocol.
3. The procedures set out in this Protocol are subject to, and should be read in accordance with, the provisions in the Act, specifically but not limited to sections 17 and 40 and the Notice of Determination made by the Minister under section 40(4) of the Act (**"Minister's Determination"**) set out in the Annex to this Protocol, and Rules 19 to 34 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 (SI 2006/1838) (**"the Rules"**).

### **General principles concerning applications for awards**

4. A person is eligible to be considered for an award only if they are:
  - a. producing documents as requested by the Inquiry;
  - b. providing a written statement as requested by the Inquiry;
  - c. answering written questions put by the Inquiry; or
  - d. attending a hearing to give oral evidence.

5. In exercising her power to make an award relating to legal representation at public expense:
  - the Chair will act with fairness and with regard also to the need to avoid any unnecessary cost (whether to public funds, to witnesses or to others); and
  - will ensure that she complies with the qualifications and conditions set out in the Minister's Determination.
6. Subject to the qualifications and conditions in the Minister's Determination, the Chair will, when determining an application for an award relating to legal expenses to be incurred, take into account:
  - the financial resources of the applicant (see paragraph 8 below); and
  - whether making an award is in the public interest
7. Having regard to the criteria set out in this Protocol, the considerations set out in the Minister's Determination and to her powers under section 17(1) of the Act, the Chair envisages that normally awards will be made only in cases where she decides that:
  - the applicant has a direct link to, and evidence to provide in respect of, the matters set out in the Inquiry's terms of reference; and/or
  - has a significant interest in an important aspect of the matters set out in those terms of reference; and/or
  - may be subject to explicit or significant criticism during the Inquiry's proceedings or in the report, or in any interim report; and
  - it is fair, necessary, reasonable, and proportionate to make an award.
8. In respect of financial resources, awards will generally not be made in respect of the legal expenses of substantial bodies, or those of individuals or organisations who could reasonably expect those expenses to be met by such bodies, or where there is an umbrella group which could adequately represent their interests, unless there are special circumstances which justify a call on public funds.

### **The scope for legal representation in the Inquiry at public expense**

9. Where the Chair determines to make an award, it will normally be limited to a recognised legal representative having a role in relation to some or all of only the following matters:
  - considering and relaying initial instructions from those they have been instructed to represent ("**the client**");

- advising the client in relation to the making of a witness statement, and/or otherwise providing evidence to the Inquiry, in accordance with any request made by the Inquiry under Rule 9 of the Rules;
  - considering the material contained in the Inquiry Bundle(s) (or any limited Bundle in the case of an individual witness who is not a Core Participant) so far as is necessary properly to represent the client's interests;
  - advising the client in relation to any warning letter issued by the Chair under Rule 13 of the Rules;
  - making an opening statement, where permitted;
  - representing the client during their oral evidence (and the evidence of others, should that be necessary);
  - making an application for permission to examine any witness giving oral evidence in the circumstances specified by the Chair;
  - making final submissions on behalf of the client, where necessary.
10. Under rule 7(2) the Chair must direct that core participants shall be represented by a single recognised legal representative where she considers that:
- their interests in the outcome of the inquiry are similar;
  - the facts that they are likely to rely on in the course of the inquiry are similar; and
  - it is fair and proper for them to be jointly represented.
11. Therefore, wherever possible, and to minimise the expense, applicants are and will be encouraged to instruct recognised legal representatives who are already retained by other parties.
12. Where the Solicitor to the Inquiry has reason to believe that the interests of any applicant may conflict with the interests of any other parties, she shall ensure that the fact of such potential conflict is made known to those involved and to the Chair, and that fact will be taken into account when determining whether public funding for legal assistance should be made available.

### **Applications for awards and the procedures for agreeing the level of funding**

13. An applicant who wishes to apply for an award relating to legal expenses to be incurred should submit an application to the Chair in writing specifying the following:
- the reason(s) why legal representation is considered necessary;
  - the nature of the public interest that will be served by an award being made from public funds (see Rule 21(2)(b) of the Rules);
  - whether paragraph 8 above applies;
  - the nature, function and extent of the legal representation for which the award is sought;

- the size and composition of the team that the applicant's recognised legal representative proposes to engage, including the seniority and proposed hourly charging rate for all solicitors and paralegals to be so engaged, subject to the following maximum hourly rates:

	Hourly rate
Leading Counsel (Whether a member of the Bar or a Solicitor as advocate)	£180 - £200
Junior Counsel (Whether a member of the Bar or a Solicitor as advocate)	£100
Solicitors with over eight years' post qualification experience	£150
Solicitors and legal executives with over four years' experience	£125
Other solicitors, legal executives and fee earners of equivalent experience	£100
Trainee solicitors, paralegals and other fee-earners	£75

- where it is thought necessary to instruct Counsel, the reasons for so doing, the date of call of that Counsel and proposed hourly rate, subject to the maximum hourly rates specified above (Note that the employment of Counsel will be funded only on the basis of payment for time spent. It will not be acceptable to submit general claims along the lines of a 'brief fee', 'refresher' or 'preparation');
- the estimated duration of the recognised legal representation;
- the number of hours each week for which it is anticipated that the recognised legal representative's team will be engaged on Inquiry work, having regard to the interest of the applicant and the part of the Inquiry in which they are seeking to participate;
- the number of hours each week for which it is anticipated that Counsel (if permitted at public expense) will be engaged on Inquiry work;
- the amount of time that it is anticipated will be spent in conference at the end of each day of the oral hearings; and
- particulars of any other foreseeable expenses relating to legal representation.

14. Subject to the cap on the maximum number of hours that can be charged by an applicant's recognised legal representative—

- the representative will agree with the Solicitor to the Inquiry in advance the hourly rates that are to apply to them and/or to any other qualified lawyer who, if the Chair approves their involvement, will be appointed to assist them in the discharge of their function; but
  - in the event that no agreement can be reached regarding hourly rates, the Chair will determine such rates as she considers appropriate upon receipt of representations in writing on behalf of the applicant.
15. The maximum hourly rates for travel and waiting time by the members of an applicant's legal team shall be half the agreed hourly rate relating to legal work. Any travelling and/or waiting time must be included within the cap on the maximum number of hours that can be charged by an applicant's recognised legal representative and in no case will it be in addition to the cap on hours.

### **Determination of applications by the Chair**

16. Having regard to the provisions of the Act, the Rules and the provisions set out in this Protocol, the Chair will determine an application for an award within a reasonable time.
17. The Solicitor to the Inquiry will notify the applicant and, where applicable, their or its recognised legal representative in writing of the Chair's determination and, where an award is made, the terms of the award. Such terms may include (but are not limited to) the following:
- the nature and scope of the work that is to be funded, as agreed in advance with the Solicitor to the Inquiry; this is likely to be in relation to some or all of the matters set out in this Protocol. (Normally, an applicant's recognised legal representative will not be reimbursed for investigative work as this is the role of the Inquiry. Similarly, payment will not be made for obtaining items such as expert reports, unless previously authorised by the Solicitor to the Inquiry);
  - the size and composition of the recognised legal representative's legal team to be engaged, including the seniority and number of counsel where that is agreed to be necessary;
  - the hourly rates for all counsel, solicitors and paralegals to be engaged;
  - any capping of legal fees that is to be applied whereby legal teams (including Counsel) will be capped as to the maximum number of hours that can be charged for any working day or working week, even though the number of hours actually worked exceeds that maximum;
  - that disbursements in excess of £100 (net of VAT) will not be paid unless authorised in advance by the Solicitor to the Inquiry. Disbursements under £100 will only be paid where the expenditure is adjudged to have been

reasonable and necessary and where they are supported by evidence of payment;

- that the award is subject to the condition that payment will only be made for work that is properly evidenced and can be identified as having been done in an efficient and effective manner, avoiding unnecessary duplication and making the best use of public funds;
  - the form in which bills relating to legal expenses are to be submitted;
  - the frequency with which bills are to be submitted.
18. Expenditure incurred before the making of an award will not normally be recoverable, except where it has been expressly agreed in advance by the Solicitor to the Inquiry on behalf of the Chair. Any such prior agreement will be without prejudice to the Chair's consideration of any subsequent application made.
19. It will be open to the Chair, either initially or at any time after making an award, to impose further conditions on the award. In particular, she may determine that a lower cap should be imposed in relation to legal expenses that may be incurred at public expense. This may amount to an overall financial limit and/or a limit on the number of hours to be spent on Inquiry business.

### **Billing procedures**

20. An applicant, in relation to whom the Chair has decided in accordance with this Protocol that an award should be made, should submit claims relating to their legal expenses at monthly intervals to the Solicitor to the Inquiry at the email address stated below. Such claims are to be received no later than 7 days immediately following the end of the month to which they relate.
21. Claims submitted in accordance with the above should contain the following information:
- a breakdown of the number of hours worked by each person on each day specifying, in each case, details of the work undertaken and the time spent on it;
  - the hourly rates charged for each person. These will be those specified by the Chair in her original determination of the application for expenses to be incurred in relation to legal representation;
  - a list of all disbursements claimed;
  - where work has been undertaken by Counsel, details of Counsel's fees (supported by fee notes which must specify precisely which work was done and how much time was spent on it).

### **Procedure for the assessment of amounts payable under an award**

22. The relevant part of the United Kingdom for the purposes of the assessment of an award shall be England and Wales.
23. The Solicitor to the Inquiry will assess the amount of the award and issue an Initial Assessment. In assessing the amount that is to be awarded pursuant to the claim, the Solicitor to the Inquiry will have regard to all the circumstances, including in particular whether the expenses—
  - were proportionately and reasonably incurred; and
  - are proportionate and of a reasonable amount.
24. Any work undertaken by an applicant's recognised legal representative which relates to matters outside the Inquiry's terms of reference and/or the issues it identifies for investigation, or which otherwise does not comply with the terms of the award notified to the applicant as described above in this Protocol, will be disallowed.
25. Where the Solicitor to the Inquiry determines that the full amount of an applicant's legal expenses should be paid, that assessment is also the final assessment.
26. If the applicant or their recognised legal representative disagrees with the Solicitor to the Inquiry's initial assessment of a claim relating to their legal expenses, the procedure set out in Rule 29 shall be followed (Points of Dispute).

### **Review of an assessment of an amount payable under an award**

27. Where there remains a disagreement following completion of the procedure set out in Rule 29 the Chair must, in accordance with Rule 31, either—
  - engage the assistance of a Costs Judge of the Senior Courts of England and Wales by referring the assessment together with all relevant evidence and documentation to that Costs Judge; or
  - require the Solicitor to the Inquiry to issue a final assessment of the disputed Bill of Costs.

### **Making an award**

28. Where:
  - the Chair decides further to Rule 31(1)(b) that an award is not to be reviewed in accordance with sub-paragraph (1)(a) of that Rule, or
  - the Solicitor to the Inquiry and the applicant agree on the amount of the assessment at any time after the Chair's referral of the application to the Costs Judge and before the date of the review hearing, the Chair will make

an award and arrange for payment of the final assessment in accordance with Rule 34(1).

29. Where the Costs Judge has reviewed the amount of the award in accordance with Rule 31, the Chair will make an award and arrange for payment of the Costs Judge's assessment in accordance with Rule 34(2).
30. All payments will be made either by Bankers' Automated Clearing System (BACS) or payable order at the Inquiry's discretion. To enable payment to be made, a party seeking payment will be required to complete the appropriate documentation supplied by the Inquiry and/or provide bank account details. When completed and signed, the documentation should be returned to [Solicitor@NottinghamInquiry.uk](mailto:Solicitor@NottinghamInquiry.uk) and any queries relating to the processing of payments should also be directed.
31. It should be noted that failure to adhere to, and comply with, any of the matters or procedures set out in this Protocol or its Annex could result in payment being delayed or refused.
32. The Chair and Solicitor to the Inquiry retain the discretion to vary the application of the terms of this protocol on a case-by-case basis where it is considered necessary for the proper conduct of the Inquiry, subject to the constraints of any Minister's Determination.

**Dated 23 May 2025**



## **ANNEX**

### **Notice of Determination by the Lord Chancellor to the Chair of the Nottingham Inquiry under section 40(4) of the Inquiries Act 2005**

1. The Lord Chancellor has determined under section 40 (4) of the Inquiries Act 2005 (“the Act”) that the power of the Chair of the Nottingham Inquiry (“the Inquiry”) to award amounts in respect of legal representation under section 40 (1) and (2) of the Act to persons eligible for an award under section 40 (3) shall be subject to the qualifications and conditions set out below.

#### **2. The qualifications and conditions are:**

2.1 The Chair shall only make an award relating to a person’s costs of legal representation in relation to the Inquiry where she considers it necessary, fair, reasonable and proportionate to make an award.

2.2 An award shall be subject to the condition that payment will only be made for work that is properly evidenced and can be identified as having been done in an efficient and effective manner, avoiding unnecessary duplication and making the best use of public funds.

2.3 An award shall be made only in respect of legal work undertaken by an applicant’s legal representative whom the Chair has designated under either Rule 6 or Rule 7 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 to be that person’s recognised legal representative in relation to the Inquiry.

2.4 The Chair shall only make an award if she has approved the size and composition of any legal team to be engaged by a person’s recognised legal representative, including any changes to a person’s legal team or the number and seniority of any legal member or counsel whose retention she agrees to be necessary.

2.5 In determining whether to make an award the Chair shall specify the broad areas of work that are to be covered by the award and the hourly rates applicable to all members of the applicant’s approved legal team subject to the maximum hourly rates specified at paragraph 3 below.

2.6 Having regard to the inquisitorial nature of the Inquiry, an award shall not be made in respect of investigative work undertaken by an applicant’s recognised legal

representative or in relation to obtaining an expert's report unless the Chair has given her express written permission in advance for such work to be undertaken.

2.7 The maximum number of hours that can be claimed by any member of an applicant's legal team shall be 40 hours per week save that exceptionally, the Solicitor to the Inquiry may authorise an increase to a maximum of 60 hours during the eight-week period immediately preceding the commencement of the oral hearings and during the oral hearings where the Solicitor to the Inquiry is satisfied that such increase is justified in all the circumstances. For the purposes of this paragraph a week shall be taken to commence on a Monday and end on the following Sunday, and no unused hours below the maximum in any one week may be set off against any other week.

3. The maximum hourly rates for legal work by the members of an applicant's legal team shall be:

**Leading Counsel**

Whether a member of the Bar or a Solicitor acting in the role of advocate – a range between £180 – £200.00

**Junior Counsel**

Whether a member of the Bar or a Solicitor acting in the role of advocate - £100.00

**Solicitors**

Solicitors with over eight years' post qualification experience - £150.00

Solicitors and legal executives with over four years' experience - £125.00

Other solicitors, legal executives and fee earners of equivalent experience - £100.00

Trainee solicitors, paralegals and other fee-earners - £75.00

4. The maximum hourly rates for travel and waiting time by the members of an applicant's legal team shall be half of the applicable maximum hourly rate relating to legal work specified at paragraph 3.

5. Expenditure incurred by an applicant in respect of legal representation before an award is made by the Chair shall not be recoverable except where (and to the extent that) it has been incurred:

- a) with the prior agreement of the Solicitor to the Inquiry who in giving such approval shall have regard, to the extent applicable, to the conditions and qualifications set out in paragraph 2 that would apply if the award had already been made and to the maximum hourly rates set out in paragraph 3.
- b) in respect of responding to the Chair's consultation on the Terms of Reference.

6. The Chair shall only make an award relating to compensation for loss of time where the person to be compensated would otherwise face actual financial loss, for example (but not limited to) receipt of monies related to that person's employment.