Guidance updates for travel and subsistence

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Providers and experts requesting approval for overnight accommodation should know guideline rates in certain cities are increasing with immediate effect.

With effect from 17 March 2026, the guideline rates for overnight accommodation in certain cities are increasing for both providers and experts. LAA guidance is also being updated to ensure a consistent approach to travel and subsistence across criminal and civil legal aid.

What will the new rates be?

The rates will increase to up to £120 in Liverpool, Manchester, Birmingham, Leeds and Newcastle (per person, per night, inclusive of VAT).

Where necessary, our caseworkers will retain their discretionary authority to agree rates in excess of the guidelines. This applies where providers are able to demonstrate a lack of suitable accommodation at these prices.

Why is this happening now?

In December 2024, the LAA increased overnight accommodation rates to £165 inclusive of VAT in London and £100 inclusive of VAT elsewhere. These changes resulted in more flexibility and greater choice for providers seeking accommodation in London, and in the majority of UK towns and cities.

However, for providers looking for hotels in Manchester, Liverpool, Leeds, Birmingham and Newcastle, the increases meant a decrease in real terms, as the previous rates were capped at £100 exclusive of VAT.

In response to concerns raised by providers over this unintended consequence of the 2024 uplifts, the LAA has agreed to increase the rates for these five cities to £120 inclusive of VAT.

Following feedback received as part of the latest annual review of travel and subsistence, the LAA has also taken the opportunity to make further changes to the billing guidance documents. These changes look to ensure a consistent approach to travel across criminal and civil legal aid, aligning some of the wording around first class travel, taxis, and LAA discretion.

Where can I find out more?

Details of the new rates and updated guidance can be found on GOV.UK. Resources include the Crown Court fee guidance, and the escape cases electronic handbook which sit on their own pages.

The criminal bills assessment manual and the civil finance electronic handbook are both on our legal aid guidance page.

The resources are listed below, including the enabling civil and criminal legal aid regulations.

Further Information

- Crown Court fee guidance
- Escape cases electronic handbook
- Graduated fee travel expenses

The legal aid guidance page has the following resources

- Criminal Bills Assessment Manual
- Civil Finance Electronic Handbook

Regulatory links

- The Civil Legal Aid (Remuneration) Regulations - regulation 6(2)

- The Criminal Legal Aid (Remuneration) Regulations - regulation 13(3)

https://www.gov.uk/government/news/guidance-updates-for-travel-and-subsistence