

FOI RESPONSE ISSUED - 13 February 2023

REQUEST

Please provide me with a list of the 15 highest legal aid payments recorded for 2022.

Please include the name of the applicant and the amount of money paid out.

If you are able to provide the information within the £600 compliance limit, please include a breakdown of what the payments went towards for each case.

OUR RESPONSE TO THE INFORMATION REQUEST UNDER THE 2002 ACT

The top 15 payments made in criminal cases in 2022 are as listed in **Table 1** below. All the payments were in cases heard under solemn procedure. They all include VAT and have been rounded to the nearest £10,000. The rounding has been performed to ensure that our data does not reveal the identity of an individual, or any private information about them.

The use of rounding also makes the data clearer.

Table 1: Top 15 Legal Aid Payments in Criminal Cases in 2022

Subject matter	Total Payment Amount	Payment breakdown			
		Solicitors Fees	Solicitor Advocate Fees	Advocate Fees	Outlays
Murder	£70,000	£0	£0	£70,000	£0
Offences under explosive substances act	£70,000	£0	£0	£70,000	£0
Embezzlement	£70,000	£0	£0	£70,000	£0
Murder	£70,000	£70,000	£0	£0	£0
Murder	£60,000	£0	£0	£60,000	£0
Rape	£60,000	£0	£60,000	£0	£0
Murder	£60,000	£0	£60,000	£0	£0
Murder	£60,000	£0	£0	£60,000	£0
Murder	£50,000	£50,000	£0	£0	£0
Offences under explosive substances act	£50,000	£0	£0	£50,000	£0
Murder	£40,000	£0	£0	£40,000	£0
Sexual Offences - Other	£40,000	£0	£0	£40,000	£0
Murder	£40,000	£40,000	£0	£0	£0
Fraud	£40,000	£40,000	£0	£0	£0
Offenses under explosive substances act	£40,000	£0	£0	£40,000	£0

Please note that these represent the 15 highest payments made in criminal cases. A payment is a single payment transaction following an account (invoice) lodged by a solicitor or advocate, whether for fees or case outlays. The term outlays covers non-fee expenses such as the use of expert witnesses or certain travel costs.

These figures are not overall case costs, nor do they represent the cases with the highest total aggregated payments over the life of the case. A case may involve one payment or more than one payment as the case takes place over time, and the time taken for a case might be weeks, months or years.

For example the three payments in the table above relating to offenses under the explosive substances act all relate to the same case.

Furthermore the timeframe for lodging accounts for payment means that at any given date, SLAB only knows accounts received, and not whether further procedure and further accounts are likely. Considering the definition of a case more widely there are also a number of further variables such as the number of accused in a case, all of which can contribute to the cost profile of a case, and not all of which will be known to SLAB at the same time.

We recognise the possibility that you may also be interested in overall case costs notwithstanding your current request for the highest payments.

Some care is required with determining what is possible to produce by way of costs information due to the characteristics of the SLAB database system, but to offer you a view of the sort of costs information that we are able to produce, we would be able, should you wish, to provide information such as:

- (a) the fifteen cases in which the highest level of aggregate payments were made in the year 2022 and the resulting total;
- (b) the total of all payments (including any previous years and not just 2022) of the fifteen cases listed under (a);
- (c) the fifteen cases in which their main solicitor payments were made in 2022 and which overall since their commencement have incurred the highest cost (whether or not those cases figure in (a) or (b)).