

Possession Claim Online - user guide and online help

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How to use Possession Claim Online (PCOL) to make a claim

Is PCOL suitable for your claim?

You must check that PCOL is suitable for your claim before you start.

How do I get more information on eligibility and the process of issuing a claim?

You can find out more in the guide 'Recover your debt through court: Possession Claim Online' on the Business Link website (www.businesslink.gov.uk/possessionclaimonline).

Alternatively, information is available from any court or you can find out about the claim process on the HM Courts Service (HMCS) website (www.hmcourts-service.gov.uk).

Hardware/software requirements

To use PCOL, you must:

- use either a personal computer running Windows or a Macintosh computer
- have a working internet connection
- use Microsoft Internet Explorer 5.5 (or later) or Netscape 7.0 (or later) or Mozilla 1.7 (or later)
- have an internet browser with JavaScript and cookies enabled and be capable of supporting 56-bit or 128-bit secure sockets layer
- have Adobe Acrobat Reader version 4.0 (or later) if you want to save your claim forms to your computer and print them

Registering to use PCOL

How to register for Possession Claim Online (PCOL)

Choose the 'Register' option from the PCOL homepage. Select the type of registration you require according to the type of claimant you are - ie an individual, solicitor or an organisation.

You must provide an email address and enter a unique username and password. You decide what your username and password should be. Both your username and password must be between eight and 12 characters long and be a combination of both letters and numbers. You are not allowed to use spaces. You will need these details each time you wish to use this service. Keep your password in a safe place, as it will not be provided to you again.

Individual claimant registration

Before starting your claim for possession using the online service you are advised to ensure that you and your claim are eligible to use the PCOL service. See the guide 'Recover your debt through court: Possession Claim Online' on the Business Link website (www.businesslink.gov.uk/possessionclaimonline) and the Civil Procedure Practice Direction covering possession claims. Read about the Civil Procedure Practice Direction on the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) website (www.justice.gov.uk/civil/procrules_fin/menus/rules.htm). Look for 'Practice Direction 55b - Possession Claim Online' in the Rules and Practice Directions section.

You can also find information on housing matters on the HMCS website (www.hmcourts-service.gov.uk/infoabout/housing/index.htm).

Solicitor registration

Before starting your claim for possession using the online service you are advised to ensure that you and your claim are eligible to use the PCOL service. See the guide 'Recover your debt through court: Possession Claim Online' on the Business Link website (www.businesslink.gov.uk/possessionclaimonline) and the Civil Procedure Practice Direction covering possession claims. Read about the Civil Procedure Practice Direction on the MoJ website (www.justice.gov.uk/civil/procrules_fin/menus/rules.htm). Look for 'Practice Direction 55b - Possession Claim Online' in the Rules and Practice Directions section.

You can also find information on housing matters on the HMCS website (www.hmcourts-service.gov.uk/infoabout/housing/index.htm).

Organisation registration

Before starting your claim for possession using the online service you are advised to ensure that you and your claim are eligible to use the PCOL service. See the guide 'Recover your debt through court: Possession Claim Online' on the Business Link website (www.businesslink.gov.uk/possessionclaimonline) and the Civil Procedure Practice Direction covering possession claims. Read about the Civil Procedure Practice Direction on the MoJ website (www.justice.gov.uk/civil/procrules_fin/menus/rules.htm). Look for 'Practice Direction 55b - Possession Claim Online' in the Rules and Practice Directions section.

You can also find information on housing matters on the HMCS website (www.hmcourts-service.gov.uk/infoabout/housing/index.htm).

Logging in to PCOL

How to log in

To log in you must enter the user name and password that you selected at registration, if you are a claimant or their representative. If you are a defendant, your username and password would have been provided with the documentation you received from the court.

Forgotten your password?

If you have forgotten your password, you will need to choose the 'forgotten your password?' link on the PCOL welcome page. You will then need to provide the username that you selected at registration. HMCS will then be able to provide you with a new one. If you have forgotten your username you will need to contact the HMCS Customer Help Desk on Tel 0845 601 5935. This helpdesk is open Monday to Friday, between 08.45 and 17.00.

Administration account functions available on PCOL

How to pay fees

You will be asked to pay a court fee to issue claims and warrants and other process online by debit or credit card. If you use this service regularly you may be eligible to pay fees by Direct Debit. In order to request payment of fees by Direct Debit you will be required to submit an application for consideration by HMCS.

Direct Debit mandate

Use this facility to view and print the Direct Debit mandate form. To request payment of fees by Direct Debit, you will need to complete this and submit it to the address provided on the form. If authorised, your registration details will be updated and you will be notified that fees will be collected on a monthly basis from your nominated account for the transactions completed through the PCOL service.

Submitting multiple claims online - creating a bulk claim account

Sometimes, you will want to submit large numbers of claims - for example, as a mortgage company or solicitor - and you can do this by creating a bulk claim account on PCOL.

In order to create a bulk claim account, you must be authorised to pay fees through the PCOL Direct Debit facility. You must also have set up the required interface described within the PCOL bulk claims interface. This sets out the format and manner of direct data exchange between PCOL and organisations wishing to submit possession claims in bulk. For more information on the necessary interface to make bulk claims online, read interface specifications for PCOL on the HMCS website (www.hmcourts-service.gov.uk/online-services/pcol/s2s.htm).

Add new delegate

Use this facility to register a delegate of your organisation with the PCOL Service. This registration process provides the delegate with the ability to transact with the service and submit fee-bearing items.

How to save and print claim details

When you are completing forms online and select any function in PCOL (eg 'continue', 'previous' or 'exit'), your work is automatically saved as a draft within your personal page in the system. You can also save information as you work by selecting the 'save' button when this is available. When you have submitted a form online and it is accepted by the court, it is then stored as a PDF document within your 'claim event' history.

You can also save your submitted forms and print them by selecting the specific document from within the 'claim event' history. The printed forms are for your reference only and cannot be accepted by a county court as an issue request, or served on the defendant personally.

If your claim does not meet all of the above requirements you cannot use this service and you should contact your local county court for advice. You can find your local county court using the HMCS CourtFinder search facility on the HMCS website (www.hmcourts-service.gov.uk/HMCSCourtFinder/FormFinder.do).

Customer Help Desk

If you are experiencing technical difficulties with the PCOL system then you should contact the HMCS Customer Help Desk on Tel 0845 601 5935. This helpdesk is open Monday to Friday, between 08.45 and 17.00. In order to assist them in dealing with your query please have as much detail of the procedure you were undertaking at the time of the problem and details of any error messages shown.

If you have queries relating to court procedures then you should call the court responsible for administering your claim.

Civil Procedure Rules Practice Direction

Read about the Civil Procedure Practice Direction on the MoJ website (www.justice.gov.uk/civil/procrules_fin/menus/rules.htm). Look for 'Practice Direction 55b - Possession Claim Online' in the Rules and Practice Directions section.

Help using PCOL

Begin a new claim

Before beginning a new claim you should ensure you have all relevant information regarding the claim. If required you can save a partial claim and return to complete it later if you need to gather more information. You should familiarise yourself with the contents of the Civil Procedure Rules Practice Direction that governs PCOL. Read about the Civil Procedure Practice Direction on the MoJ website (www.justice.gov.uk/civil/procrules_fin/menus/rules.htm). Look for 'Practice Direction 55b - Possession Claim Online' in the Rules and Practice Directions section.

How to monitor the progress of a claim

All claims that you have issued or are involved in are shown on your homepage. By selecting the link from these claims you are taken to a summary for that specific claim and from that summary a link to a summary of actions that have occurred on that claim.

How to request action to be taken on a claim

On each summary page a list of available actions for that claim is displayed, eg sending a letter or application to the court.

Submit General Correspondence

You can use this option within the PCOL application to send a letter to the court. You should provide as much information as possible in order to assist the court in dealing with your enquiry. It is not appropriate to use this facility if you are requesting a judicial decision or directions. In this case, you should make an application and pay the appropriate fee.

Submit General Application

You can use this option to submit an application to the court. If you intend that your application will rely on a separate witness statement or documentation you will not be able to submit the application online. Please be aware that a fee may be payable. The fee for each application will be displayed before payment details are requested. Some people who are in receipt of benefits may be eligible for exemption from paying the court fee. If you believe you may be eligible please read fee exemption guidance leaflet EX160A 'Court fees do you have to pay them?' on the HMCS website (www.hmcourts-service.gov.uk/HMCSCourtFinder/FormFinder.do).

If, having read the leaflet, you believe you are eligible, you can make an application online but will need to complete the fee exemption application in the presence of an

authorised officer of the Citizens Advice Bureau. You can find a list of current court fees in HMCS leaflet EX50 'Civil and Family Court Fees - High Court and County Court' on the HMCS website (www.hmcourts-service.gov.uk/HMCSCourtFinder/FormFinder.do).

Request Hearing Adjournment

You can use this option to submit an application to adjourn a forthcoming hearing. However, if the hearing is imminent (within five days) you cannot do this online and must apply directly to the court. If you intend that your application will rely on a separate witness statement or documentation you will not be able to submit your application online, and must apply directly to the court. Please be aware that a fee may be payable. The fee for each form will be displayed before payment details are requested. Some people who are in receipt of benefits may be eligible for exemption from paying the court fee. If you believe you may be eligible please read fee exemption guidance leaflet EX160A 'Court fees - do you have to pay them?' on the HMCS website (www.hmcourts-service.gov.uk/HMCSCourtFinder/FormFinder.do).

If, having read the leaflet, you believe you are eligible, you can make an application online but will need to complete the fee exemption application in the presence of an authorised officer of the Citizens Advice Bureau. You can find a list of current court fees in HMCS leaflet EX50 'Civil and Family Court Fees - High Court and County Court' on the HMCS website (www.hmcourts-service.gov.uk/HMCSCourtFinder/FormFinder.do).

Reply to a Claim

You can use this function to reply to the claim made against you. Before making your reply you are advised to read all the documentation served on you by the court and familiarise yourself with the guidance notes on replying to a claim. Do not ignore the claim made against you. If necessary, you should seek advice from a solicitor or advice agency.

Withdraw Claim

You can use this option to withdraw your claim online. It is your responsibility to ensure that you inform every other party concerned that you are withdrawing the claim. Once the claim has been withdrawn it will become 'view only' within the PCOL system, with no further online actions available.

Terminate Party Representation

You can use this option to remove your solicitor as acting as your representative. It is your responsibility to ensure that you inform every other party concerned, as well as the court, that you are now acting in person.

Application to Fix Date for Possession

You can use this option to submit an application to the court for a date to be fixed for possession where the defendant has failed to comply with the terms of the N28A (Order for Possession (Rented Premises) Postponed).

You must take note that the supporting evidence required by CPR PD55 Section IV 10.7 must be filed directly with the court and cannot be attached to your online application. Read the Civil Procedure Rules Practice Direction for precise details of what evidence is required to be submitted on the MoJ website (www.justice.gov.uk/civil/procrules_fin/menus/rules.htm). Look for 'Practice Direction 55', under 'Possession Claim Online' in the Rules and Practice Directions section.

Issue a Warrant of Possession

You can use this option to submit a request to the court to issue a Warrant of Possession. As part of your request you may give additional contact details of the person who will be dealing with the warrant or possession appointment on your behalf (if appropriate), together with any other information that you feel may assist the bailiff in their duties of executing the warrant. For example, is there any information known about the occupants that may cause the bailiff to request assistance from police, Social Services, the RSPCA etc. Please be aware that you are required to pay a fee for this procedure. The fee for each request will be displayed before payment details are requested. You can find a list of current court fees in HMCS leaflet EX50 'Civil and Family Court Fees - High Court and County Court' on the HMCS website (www.hmcourts-service.gov.uk/HMCSCourtFinder/FormFinder.do).

Confirm a Repossession

You can use this option to confirm your attendance at the appointment fixed for possession to the bailiff. As part of your confirmation, you may give contact details of who will be in attendance at the appointment, together with any other information that you feel may assist the bailiff in their duties at the possession appointment. For example, is there any information known about the occupants that may cause the bailiff to request assistance from, police, Social Services, the RSPCA etc.

Request a Suspension of Eviction

You can use this option to submit an application to suspend a forthcoming eviction appointment. If the eviction is imminent - ie within five days - you cannot do this online and must apply directly to the court. If you intend that your application will rely on a separate witness statement or documentation you will not be able to submit your application online, and must apply directly to the court. Please be aware that you are required to pay a fee. The fee for each application will be displayed before payment details are requested. Some people who are in receipt of benefits may be

eligible for exemption from paying the court fee. If you believe you may be eligible please read fee exemption guidance leaflet EX160A 'Court fees do you have to pay them?' on the HMCS website (www.hmcourts-service.gov.uk/HMCSCourtFinder/FormFinder.do).

If, having read the leaflet, you believe you are eligible, you can make an application online but will need to complete the fee exemption application in the presence of an authorised officer of the Citizens Advice Bureau. You can find a list of current court fees in HMCS leaflet EX50 'Civil and Family Court Fees - High Court and County Court' the HMCS website (www.hmcourts-service.gov.uk/HMCSCourtFinder/FormFinder.do).

Leave to issue a Warrant of Restitution

You can use this option to submit an application to the court for leave to issue a Warrant of Restitution. Warrants of Restitution are only applicable in the circumstances when the bailiff has successfully executed a possession warrant and the previous occupant has regained possession of the property. If you intend that your application will rely on a separate witness statement or documentation you will not be able to submit your application online. Please be aware that a fee may be payable. The fee for each form will be displayed before payment details are requested. You can find a list of current court fees in HMCS leaflet EX50 'Civil and Family Court Fees - High Court and County Court' on the HMCS website (www.hmcourts-service.gov.uk/HMCSCourtFinder/FormFinder.do).

Re-issue Possession Warrants

You can use this option to request the re-issue of a Possession Warrant. Possession Warrants can only be re-issued in certain circumstances - eg if a previous warrant has been suspended by the court and the defendant has breached the terms of the suspension. As part of your request you must give details of the reasons for requesting re-issue. You may also give contact details of the person who will be dealing with the warrant or possession appointment on your behalf (if appropriate), together with any other information that you feel may assist the bailiff in their duties of executing the warrant. For example, is there any information known about the occupants that may cause the bailiff to request assistance from, police, Social Services, the RSPCA etc.