



Ministry
of Justice



Legal Aid
Agency



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Legal Aid Statistics quarterly, England and Wales

January to March 2020

1. Main points

Overall Crown Court expenditure decreased this quarter; down by 14% compared with the same period of the previous year.



This has been driven by falling receipts in the Crown Courts with overall criminal legal aid workload falling 3% over the same period.

Representation orders granted decreased 6% in magistrates' courts and decreased 1% in Crown Courts.



The volume of completed work in magistrates' courts decreased by 10% and corresponding expenditure fell 9% over the same period.

Prison Law workload increased 2% this quarter, driven by a 12% increase in parole board hearings.



Parole board hearings make up almost 70% of prison law expenditure with an equivalent 7% increase in overall expenditure this quarter.

Mediation Information and Assessment Meeting volumes were 13% higher than in the same quarter of 2019.



Mediation starts were 1% higher and outcomes were 16% higher.

983 applications for Exceptional Case Funding were received in the last quarter.



This is a 17% increase from the same quarter last year.

Applications for civil representation supported by evidence of domestic violence or child abuse decreased by 23%.



The proportion of these granted is around 80%.

This edition comprises the first release of official statistics for the three-month period from January to March 2020 and the latest statement of all figures for previous periods. The most recent release should always be used for any previous period due to frequent revisions of data throughout the tables. Revisions to this data are expected, and are made as a result of updates to our central systems as claims progress.

The data in this year-end bulletin also includes figures on central funds, providers of legal aid, inquests and the diversity of clients receiving legal aid. In addition, section 9 presents provisional figures for April 2020 based on management information. For technical detail, please refer to the [User guide](#) to legal aid statistics.

2. Statistician's Comment

Criminal legal aid expenditure has fallen in recent years following a decrease in cases coming through the criminal justice system. Figures published today show a further decrease in Crown Court expenditure compared to the same quarter last year, with litigator spend decreasing at a faster rate than advocate schemes.

This publication shows that overall civil legal aid expenditure continues to be relatively stable, following a sharp decrease in 2014-15. At a scheme level, although total family civil representation continues to gradually increase, the subset of domestic violence or child abuse showed a decrease for the second quarter in succession. Mediation assessments and Exceptional Case Funding continue to show an upward trend, the latter driven by an increase in immigration applications.

Section 9 presents provisional figures for April 2020 based on management information. COVID-19 has led to a considerable downturn in legal aid activity since the January to March 2020 quarter. Criminal legal aid has been particularly affected, with police station workload and court representation down by more than 40%. Mediation assessment and legal help starts also decreased by around a third in April 2020 compared to average monthly figures from the previous quarter.

3. Things you need to know

These symbols are used throughout this release to navigate to other documents of interest:



Data visualisation:
Click for tool allowing user-defined charts and tables.



User Guide:
Click for document giving definitions and explanations.



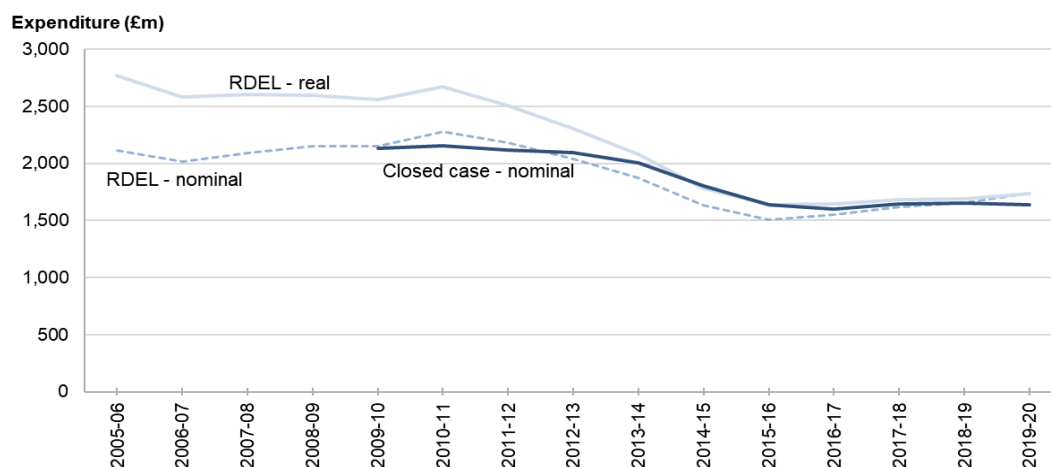
Tables:
Click for access to tables of figures.

To understand trends in legal aid as a whole, it is best to begin by looking at annual expenditure figures and then look at trends in both workload and expenditure for each category of legal aid. Summarising activity across the legal aid system meaningfully within a single number is difficult because of the diversity of services included. Expenditure on legal aid is measured differently for different purposes. The three most often-used measures, shown in Figure 1, are:

- **Closed-case expenditure is the measure used for expenditure figures throughout these legal aid statistics.** It represents the total value of payments made to legal aid providers in relation to pieces of work that are completed in the period. This basis is comparable to volumes of completed work to which it relates, and to the same fine level of detail. This does not include income received or expenditure in relation to debt write-offs.
- **RDEL (Resource Departmental Expenditure Limits) nominal** is the main budgeting measure used by government to control current spending, both to set budgets for future years and report on how much has been spent. It represents the value of work carried out in the period better than the closed-case measure but cannot be broken down to such a fine level of detail. This measure does incorporate income and expenditure in relation to debt. 'Nominal' here means not adjusted for inflation.
- **RDEL real** is the RDEL measure adjusted for inflation to make the value of spending in previous years directly comparable with the specified year.

These measures show a large reduction in legal aid expenditure from around 2010-2011, mostly due to changes to the scope of civil legal aid introduced by the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders (LASPO) Act from 2013-2014, reductions in criminal legal aid workloads and reductions in the fees payable to legal aid providers.

Figure 1: Overall annual legal aid expenditure, by closed-case and RDEL nominal and real terms measures (£m), 2005-2006 to 2019-2020



4. Criminal legal aid



Tables 1.1 and 4.1

Overall Crown Court expenditure decreased this quarter; down by 14% in January to March 2020 compared with the same period of the previous year.

This has been driven by falling receipts in both the magistrates' courts and Crown Courts, with criminal legal aid workload falling 3% over the same period.

Criminal legal aid can be categorised into Crime Lower and Crime Higher. Crime Lower includes police station advice, magistrates' court and prison law. Crime Higher covers work in the Crown and Higher Courts.

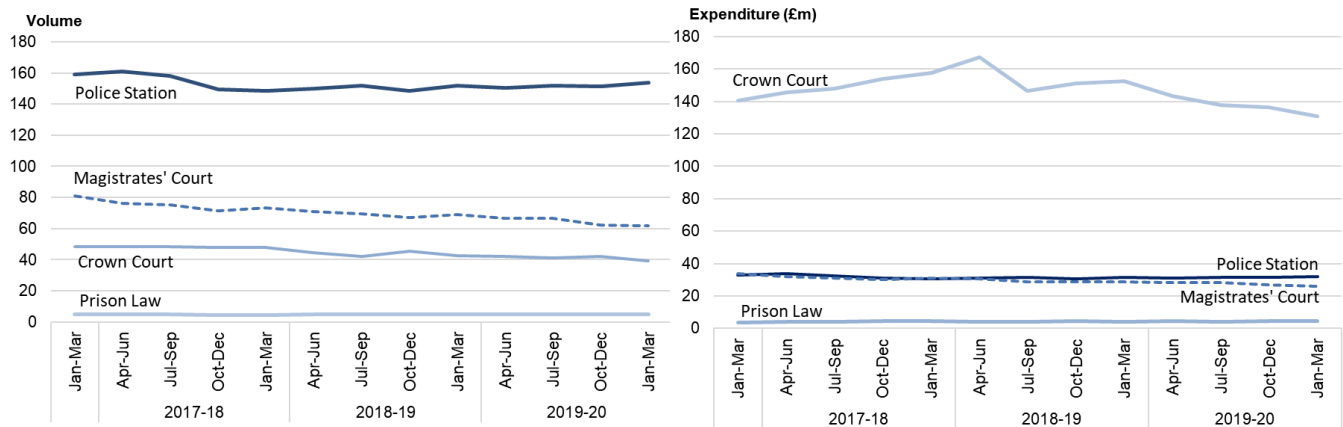
Figure 2: Crime overview, closed case volumes and expenditure for January to March 2020, and comparison with January to March 2019

		Category	Workload	Expenditure
Crime Workload 260,000(3%↘)	Crime Lower 221,000(2%↘) £63m(3%↘)	Police Station Advice	154,000(1%↗)	£32m(1%↗)
		Magistrates' courts	62,000(10%↘)	£26m(9%↘)
		Advice & assistance on appeals	250(15%↘)	£0.5m(19%↘)
		Prison Law	5,000(2%↗)	£5m(7%↗)
		Civil work associated with crime	50(13%↗)	£0.05m(25%↘)
Expenditure £194m(11%↘)	Crown Court 39,000(9%↘) £131m(14%↘)	Solicitor fee scheme	19,000(8%↘)	£79m(17%↘)
		Advocate fee scheme	20,000(9%↘)	£52m(5%↘)
		High Cost crime cases*	0(100%↘)	£0m(100%↘)

*Note that there were no completed claims in high cost crime although payments for ongoing cases did continue through this period.

Although Crown Court work comprises a relatively small portion of criminal legal aid in terms of volume, it accounts for around two-thirds of all criminal legal aid expenditure. Conversely, advice relating to the police station makes up the largest portion of workload, but a much smaller proportion of expenditure.

Figure 3: Workload and expenditure in criminal legal aid, January to March 2017 to January to March 2020





Note: Advice and assistance on appeals and civil work associated with crime are excluded from these figures.

Police station advice   *Tables 2.1 and 2.2*

This category made up two thirds of the Crime Lower workload between January and March 2020 but around half of the expenditure. The workload in this period has increased by 1% compared to the previous year, with expenditure also increasing by 1% (£0.4m). This continues the flattening of the downward trend seen over the last three years. This trend can also be seen in the overall figures from the arrest statistics for England and Wales¹, which have seen a similar decline historically.

The majority of the police station advice workload (87% between January and March 2020) consists of suspects receiving legal help with a solicitor in attendance at the police station, with the rest mainly consisting of legal advice over the telephone.

Applications and grants for representation in the criminal courts   *Tables 3.1 and 3.2*

While figures should be interpreted with caution as they may be revised in subsequent quarters as cases move into the Crown Court, the number of orders granted for legally-aided representation in the **magistrates' court** decreased by 6% this quarter when compared to the same quarter of the previous year. This continues the downward trend of the last 3 years, which has been largely driven by Summary Only cases. The overall number of receipts in the magistrates' court² including those not involving legal aid was 1% up compared to the same quarter of the previous year. The proportion of these applications that are granted remains stable at around 95%.

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/police-powers-and-procedures-england-and-wales>

² www.gov.uk/government/collections/criminal-court-statistics, Table M1

Orders granted for legally-aided representation in the **Crown Court** decreased by 1% this quarter compared to last year, although Crown Court receipts saw a 3% increase³. Within the legal aid figure, orders relating to either-way offences increased by 1%, while those relating to indictable offences increased by 5%. The overall fall is due to a 11% and 7% fall in committals for sentence and appeals respectively. The proportion of Crown Court applications granted remains stable at almost 100%.



*Tables
2.1 and 2.2*

Magistrates' court completed work

Legally-aided representation in the magistrates' courts comprised over one-quarter of the workload and two-fifths of expenditure in Crime Lower between January and March 2020. These proportions are down from previous periods where almost a third of workload and half of expenditure was in this area. This is because completed work in the magistrates' courts decreased by 10% this quarter when compared to the same period of the previous year. Magistrates' court expenditure also decreased by 9% (£2.6m) this quarter, with most work in this area on a fixed fee basis.



*Tables
4.1 - 4.4*

Crown Court completed work

Volumes of cases completed in the Crown Court have declined over recent years, though more gradually than new orders due to the stock of cases awaiting trial.

Completed work volumes within the **litigator (solicitor) fee scheme** decreased by 8% in January to March 2020 compared to the same period of the previous year and in the **advocate fee scheme**, completed claims decreased by 4% compared to the same period last year.

In the litigator fee scheme, expenditure decreased by 17% in January to March 2020 compared to the same period of the previous year. In the advocate fee scheme, the value of payments decreased by 5% compared to the same period of the previous year.

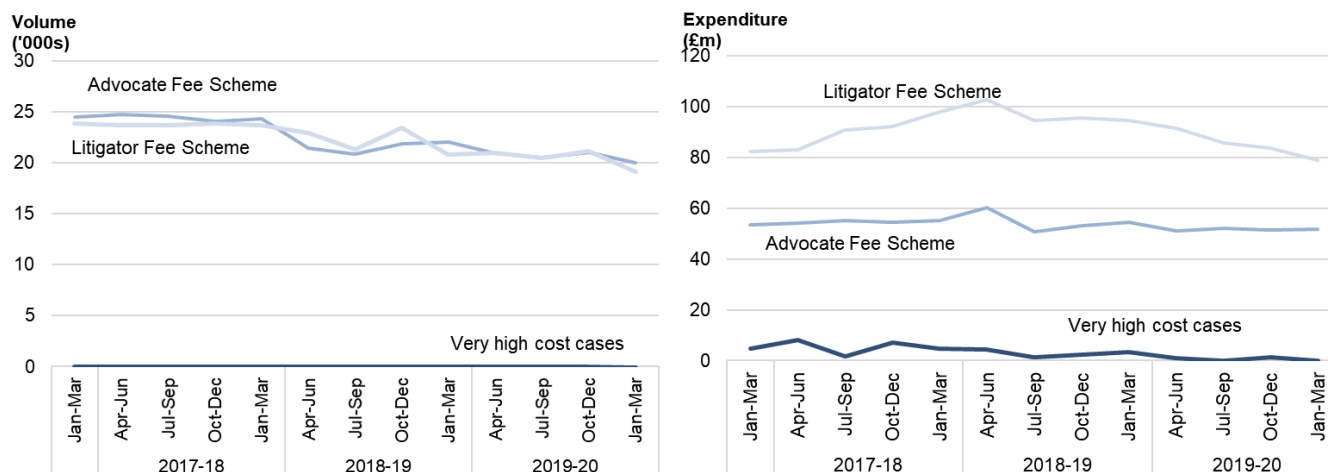
Figures for expenditure on work completed in the Crown Court should be interpreted with caution as they may be revised in subsequent quarters as claims are assessed further on appeal and further payments added to the value of some completed claims.

The **Very High-Cost Case (VHCC)** scheme covers those Crown Court cases which, if the case were to proceed to trial, would likely last more than 60 days. These cases can span several years and, while they may involve small numbers of defendants, the associated expenditure is high in comparison.

There were no defendants represented in the VHCC contracts that concluded in the January to March 2020 quarter and only 5 in the full financial year. Expenditure on this work over the duration of the contracts (i.e. on the closed-case basis) was £2m for the full year. While VHCC comprises a tiny proportion of overall legal aid workload in the Crown Court, the VHCC scheme represents less than 1% of the cost, down from over 15% ten years ago.

³ www.gov.uk/government/collections/criminal-court-statistics, Table C1

Figure 4: Workload and expenditure in the Crown Court, January to March 2017 to January to March 2020



Discretionary and legacy claims

This is legal aid in the Crown Court covering discretionary and legacy claims related to graduated fee schemes. These claims include:

- discretionary claims for costs under a Representation Order, for example litigators' claims for confiscation proceedings under the Proceeds of Crime Act, advocates' claims for committals for sentence and appeals to the Crown Court, and breaches of Crown Court orders;
- proceedings predating the various fixed fee schemes (legacy cases) or falling outside the scope of the formal schemes.

The figures in Table 4.1 show a reduction in expenditure where cases have moved out of discretionary claims into the main graduated fee schemes. For the last few years these have only seen a small reduction with most of the remaining £9.7m of expenditure in 2019-2020 relating to confiscation proceedings.

The Higher Courts: Court of Appeal and Supreme Court

Legal aid for the higher courts is expenditure paid for claims heard in the Court of Appeal, Senior Courts Costs Office and Supreme Court, and is administered by those courts and paid by the legal aid fund. The grant of legal aid is determined by the courts by an Interest of Justice test only as there are no means tests for these areas.

Prison Law Tables 2.1 and 2.2

Workload this quarter increased by 2% compared with the same period in the previous year, driven by advocacy at parole board hearings which increased by 12% compared to last year (see Figure 5a). A 7% increase in expenditure (see Figure 5b) was largely due to the increase in parole board hearings, which make up around two thirds of overall prison law expenditure.

Two categories were introduced from April 2019: the first covering 'advocacy assistance at sentence reviews'. There were no completed claims within the period. The second covers 'advocacy assistance

at Parole Board reconsideration hearings' and had two claims in the latest period costing less than £5,000.

Prison law work comprises a small portion of the volume (2%) and expenditure (2%) of total criminal legal aid work in January to March 2020.

Figure 5a: Prison Law completed workload, 2011-2012 to 2019-2020

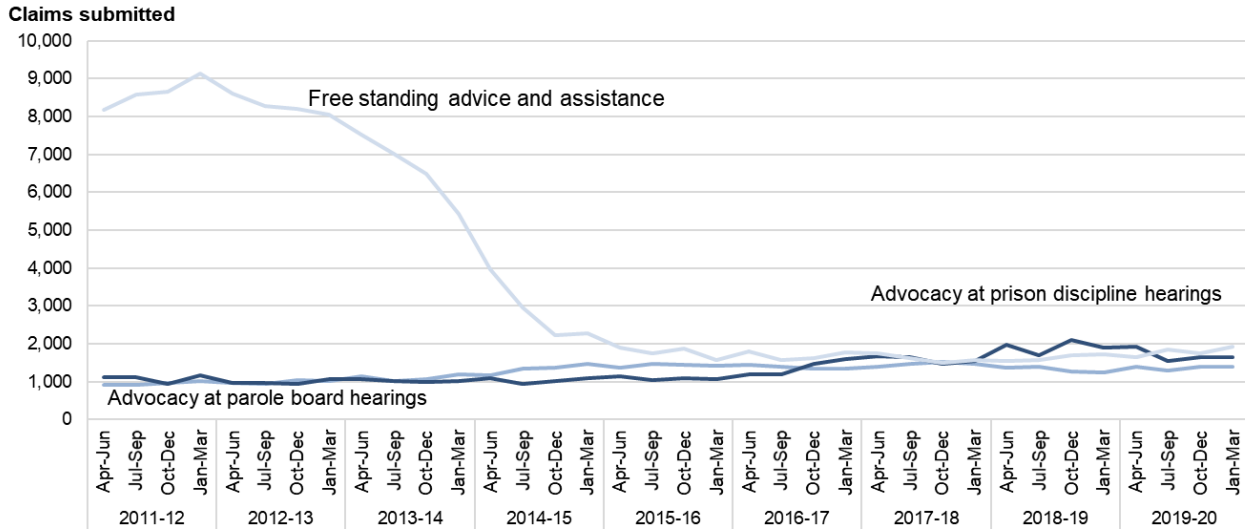
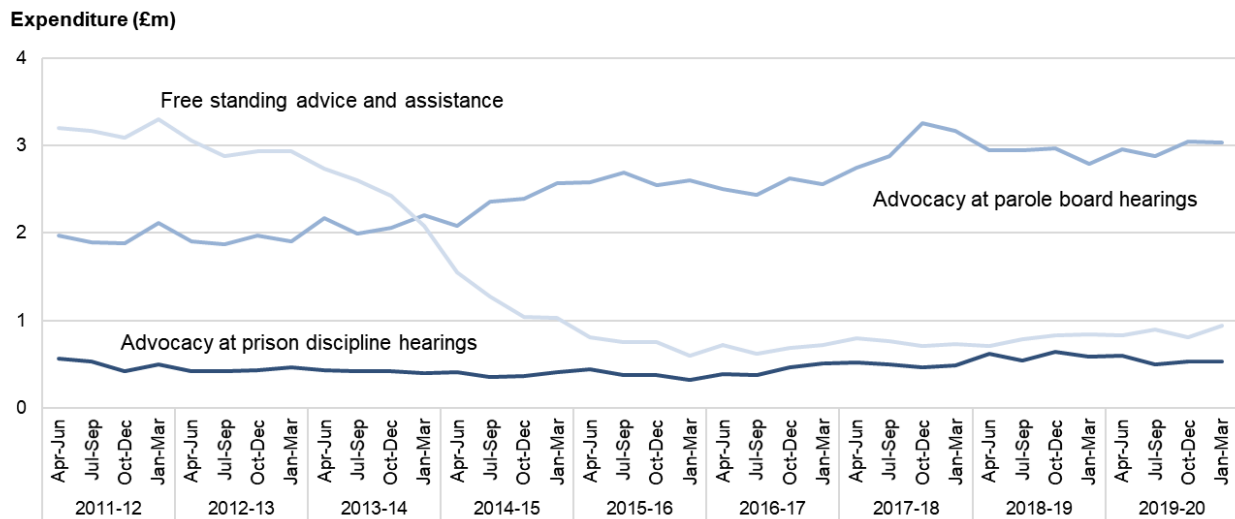


Figure 5b: Prison Law completed expenditure, 2011-2012 to 2019-2020



*New categories not shown: 'advocacy assistance at sentence reviews' and 'advocacy assistance at Parole Board reconsideration hearings'

5. Central Funds



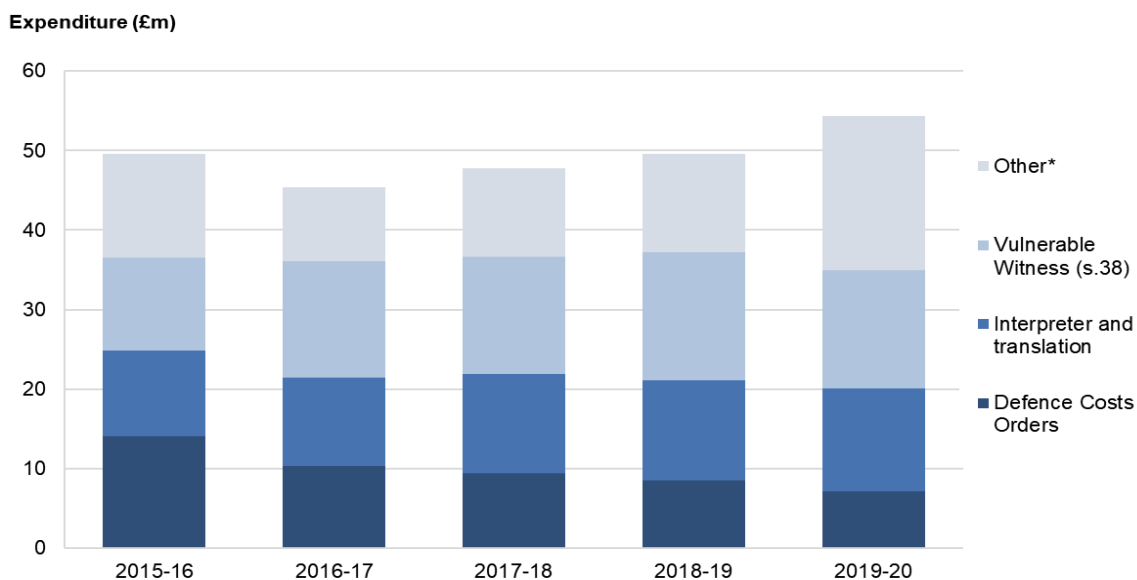
Table 10.1

In 2019-2020 the total expenditure for Central Funds was £54m. This is 9% higher than the previous year.

This area includes arrangements to meet costs in a variety of scenarios that are not covered by the main criminal legal aid schemes. Some aspects of these are administered by the Legal Aid Agency (LAA) and others by Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service.

In 2019-2020 the total expenditure for Central Funds was £54m (Figure 6). This is 9% higher than the previous year and largely driven by a small group of private prosecution claims paid during the financial year.

Figure 6: Central Funds expenditure, 2015-2016 to 2019-2020



*Other includes intermediaries, private prosecutions and costs of attending magistrates' court for witnesses, experts and defendants

A large category of expenditure (£7.2m in 2019-2020) relates to the reimbursement of defendants who have been acquitted after privately funding their defence lawyers. The process for assessing and authorising reimbursement of costs from central funds in this scenario is normally triggered when a judge grants a **Defence Cost Order** (DCO) for legal aid at magistrates', Crown or higher courts.

Another sizeable area of Central Funds expenditure (£14.9m in 2019-2020) covers the costs of lawyers required where a defendant is unrepresented but where the court decides that the defendant must not themselves be allowed to cross-examine a **vulnerable witness**, with cases involving domestic violence being typical. This situation is covered by the terms of section 38 of the Youth Justice and Criminal Evidence Act 1999.

The costs of **interpreters and translators** in court comprise another area of Central Funds expenditure (£12.9m in 2019-2020). The remainder of Central Funds expenditure goes to meet the costs of court **intermediaries** (£5.8m in 2019-2020) and successful **private prosecutions** (£12.3m in 2019-2020) and towards meeting some of the reasonable **costs of attending magistrates' court** for witnesses, experts and defendants (£1.4m in 2019-2020).

6. Civil legal aid



Tables 1.2
and 8.1

983 applications for Exceptional Case Funding were received in January to March 2020.

This is 17% up on the same period of 2019; 73% of determined applications were granted.

Figure 7: Civil overview, closed case volumes and expenditure for January to March 2020, and comparison with January to March 2019

		Category	Workload	Expenditure
Civil	Family 29,000 (7% ↘) £145m (1% ↘)	Family Public	20,000 (11% ↘)	£125m (0% --)
		Family Private	9,000 (2% ↗)	£20m (9% ↘)
Workload 66,000 (3% ↘)		Mediation and MIAMs*	5,000 (14% ↗)	£2m (13% ↗)
Expenditure £183m (1% ↘)	Non-Family 32,000 (2% ↘) £37m (3% ↘)	Immigration	11,000 (6% ↗)	£11m (1% ↘)
		Mental Health	10,000 (4% ↗)	£10m (0% --)
		Housing**	8,000 (14% ↘)	£6m (11% ↘)
		Other Non-Family	3,000 (14% ↘)	£9m (0% --)

*Not included in Family total

**Table does not include Housing Possession Court Duty Scheme

Inquests

Inquest data is available quarterly in our detailed civil data file. Legal help is available for advice and assistance in the run-up to an inquest involving a member of the individual's family – this can cover preparatory work associated with the inquest, such as submissions to the coroner setting out questions the family wishes the coroner to raise. Legal aid for representation at an inquest is only available through Exceptional Case Funding (ECF). Figure 8 shows that inquests have been increasing in both legal help and civil representation since 2013. There has been a 52% increase in legally aided inquests compared to the same period the previous year, with a 79% increase in associated costs. This is in line with an increase in ECF grants for inquests in recent years.

Figure 8: Inquests, closed case volumes and costs met by the LAA for 2013-2014 to 2019-2020

Financial Year	Legal Help		Civil Representation	
	Volume	Value (£'000)	Volume	Value (£'000)
2013-14	88	301	3	43
2014-15	90	453	27	206
2015-16 (r)	99	386	56	499
2016-17 (r)	111	736	78	784
2017-18 (r)	138	772	76	714
2018-19 (r)	146	954	113	1,064
2019-20 (p)	222	1,823	171	1,786

(r) Revised from previous published figures.

(p) Data in the most recent period is provisional and is likely to change in the next release.



Legal help and controlled legal representation

In the last quarter, there was an 12% decrease in legal help new matter starts compared to the same period of 2019. The volume of completed claims decreased by 2% and expenditure increased by 1% in January to March 2020 compared to the same period in 2019 (Figures 9a and 9b). The implementation of the LASPO Act in April 2013 resulted in large reductions in legal help workload, with the overall trend falling to less than one-third of pre-LASPO levels.

Figure 9a: Completed workload in legal help and controlled legal representation, 2011-2012 to 2019-2020

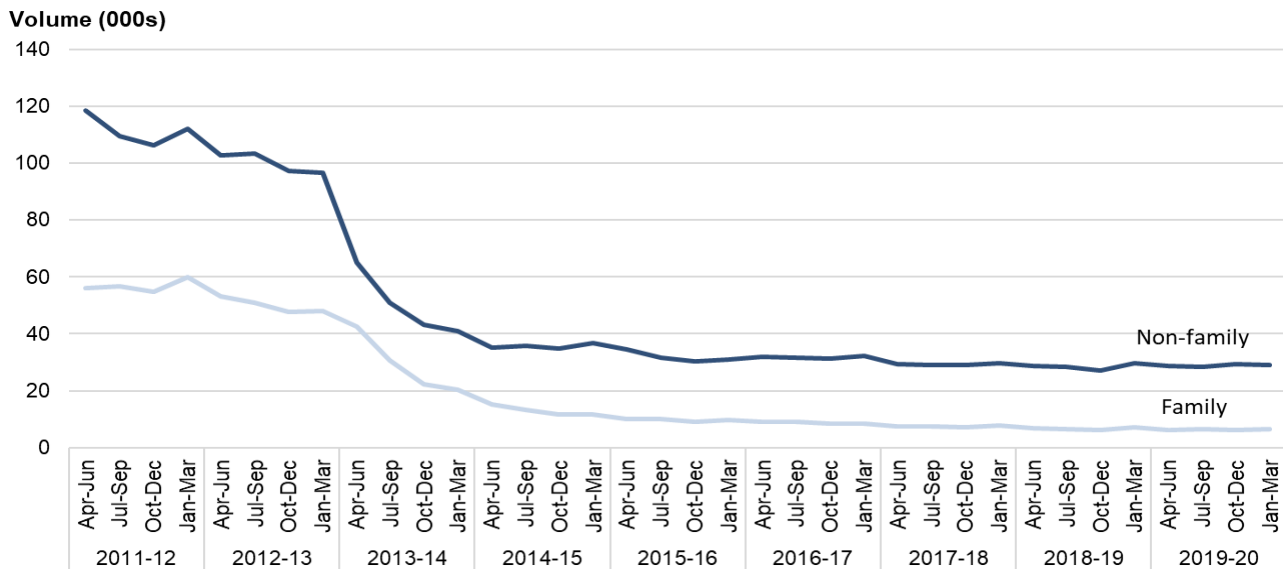
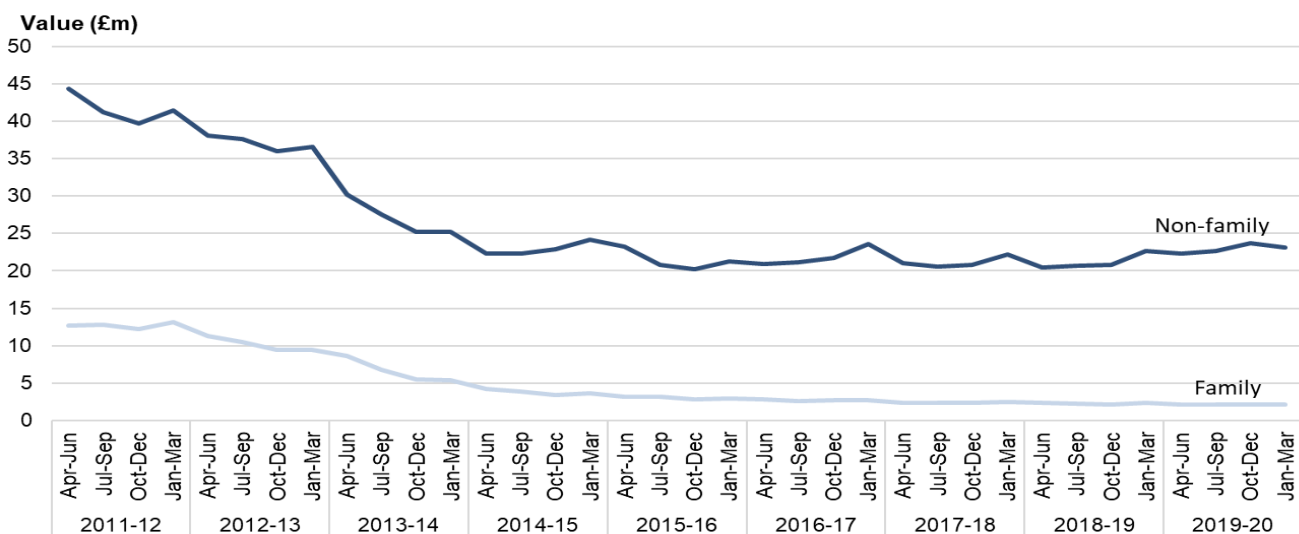


Figure 9b: Completed workload expenditure in legal help and controlled legal representation, 2011-2012 to 2019-2020

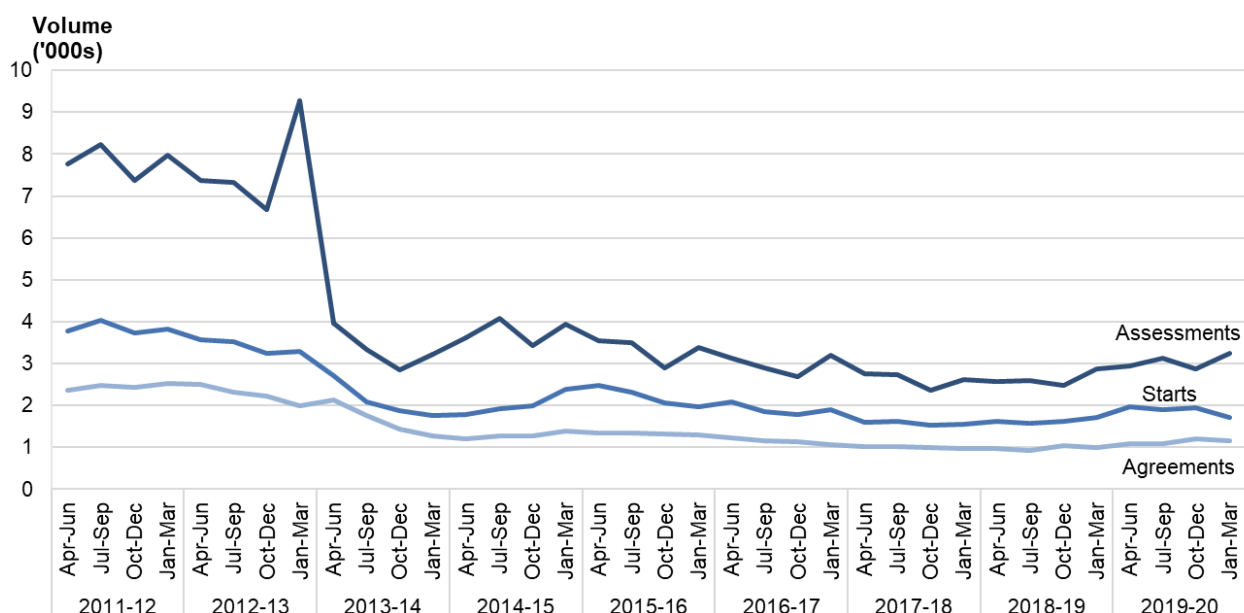


Family legal help

In January to March 2020 family legal help starts decreased by 21% compared to the same quarter last year. Completed claims also decreased by 6% and expenditure decreased by 7%. There was a steep decline immediately following the implementation of LASPO Act in April 2013, with a more gradual decline over the last 2 to 3 years.

In family mediation, Mediation Information and Assessment Meetings (MIAMs) increased by 13% in the last quarter compared to the previous year and currently stand at just over a third of pre-LASPO levels (Figure 10). Starts increased by 1% although outcomes increased by 16%, and are now sitting at around half of pre-LASPO levels.

Figure 10: Family mediation assessments, starts and agreements, 2011-2012 to 2019-2020



Non-family legal help and controlled legal representation

Legal help and controlled legal representation make up over 95% of both immigration and mental health cases. Controlled legal representation relates to representation at tribunal and is often longer and more costly than legal help but, as with legal help, the decision on whether to grant legal aid is delegated to providers.

The LASPO Act 2013 made changes to the scope of legal aid for immigration law, but some areas remained in scope. Workload that remains in the immigration category consists largely of asylum-related work. Having fallen by 40% over the 5 years to 2013-2014, new matter starts in immigration increased by 1% in January to March 2020 compared to the same quarter of the previous year. Completed claims in immigration increased by 7% in the last quarter compared to the previous year and expenditure increased by 4%.

Within mental health, most funding is spent on providing assistance to sectioned clients appealing the terms of their detention before a mental health tribunal. Mental health new matter starts decreased by 3% when comparing the latest quarter to the previous year. Completed claims increased by 5% and expenditure increased by 2% over the same period.

Around 75% of housing work volume is made up of legal help. The volume of legally-aided housing work halved between July to September 2012 and July to September 2013. The trend then fluctuated for around 18 months but since 2014 it has been falling. In January to March 2020 there was a 27%

decrease in housing work starts compared to the same quarter the previous year. There were also decreases in completed claims (16%) and decreases in expenditure (12%).

Civil representation *Tables 6.1 - 6.10*  

The total number of civil representation certificates granted in the last quarter increased by 9% compared to the same period of the previous year. The number of certificates completed decreased by 8% (Figure 11a), and the associated expenditure decreased by 2% (Figure 11b) over the same period. Civil representation workloads fell following the implementation of the LASPO Act in April 2013 but by a smaller proportion than legal help and controlled legal representation.

Figure 11a: Completed workload in civil representation, 2011-2012 to 2019-2020

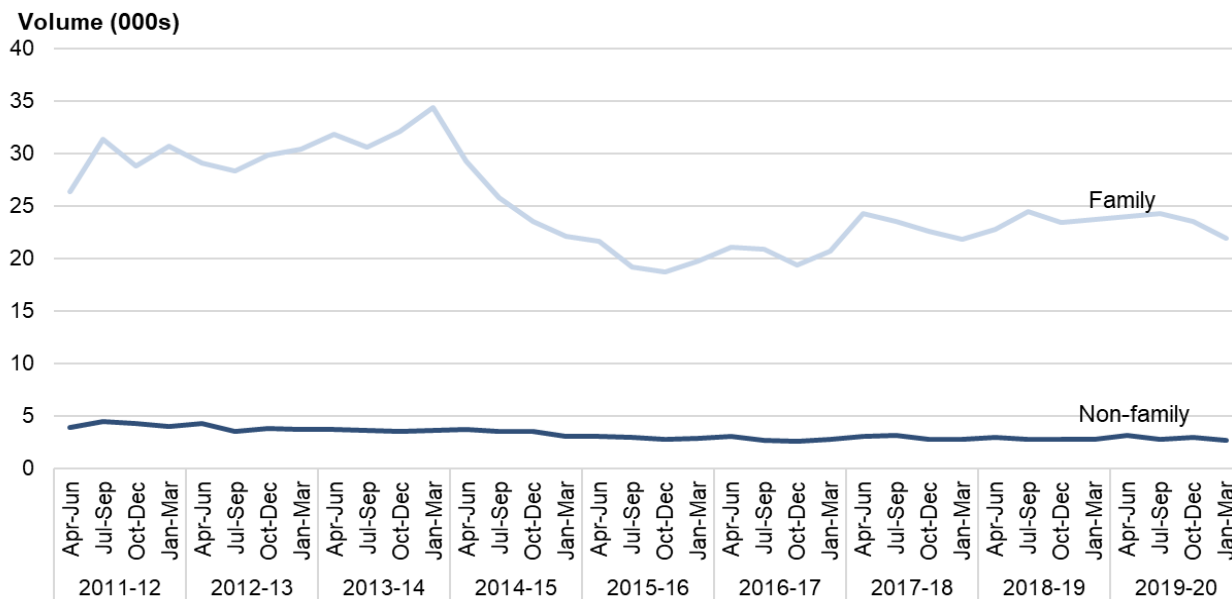
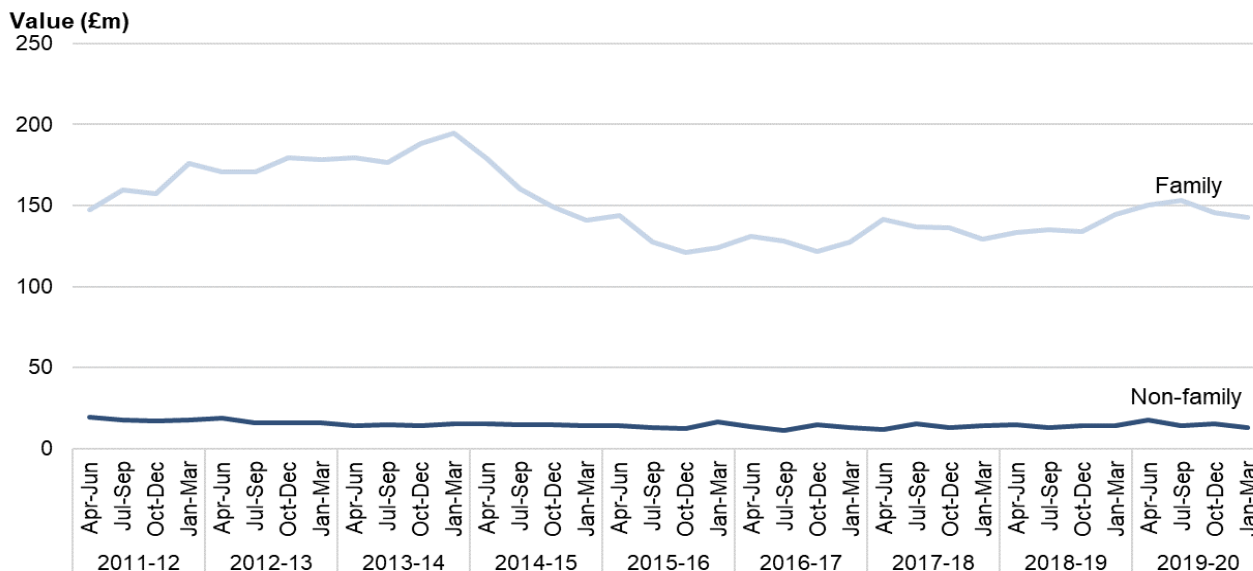


Figure 11b: Completed workload expenditure in civil representation, 2011-2012 to 2019-2020

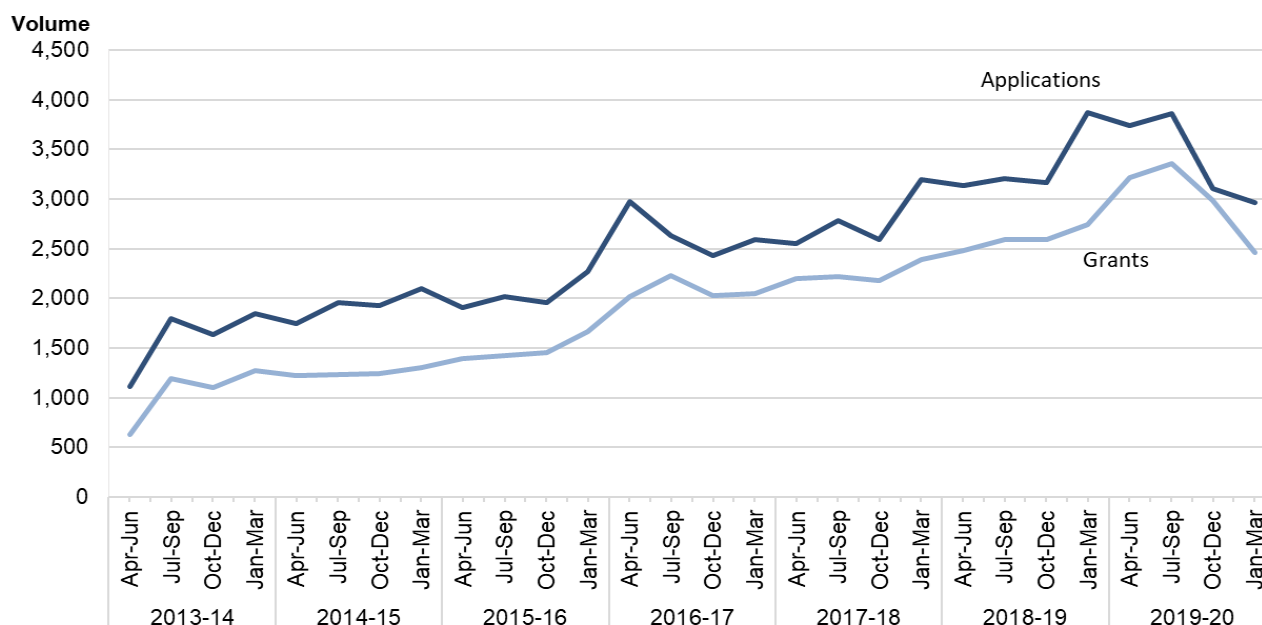


Family civil representation

Certificates granted for family work increased by 9% in January to March 2020 compared to the previous year. Certificates completed decreased by 7% compared to the same quarter the previous year. The associated expenditure has decreased by 1% compared to the same quarter the previous year.

In January to March 2020, applications for civil representation supported by evidence of domestic violence or child abuse decreased by 23% compared to the same period of the previous year. The total number of these granted decreased by 10% over the same period (Figure 12). The proportion of applications granted remained steady at around 70% from the inception of this type of application until the end of 2015, before increasing to around 80%. The provisional figure for the latest quarter is 83%.

Figure 12: Applications received and certificates granted via the domestic violence and child abuse gateway, 2013-2014 to 2019-2020



Judicial reviews

Of all civil representation applications granted, around 3,000 a year relate to judicial review; 735 in the last quarter. The number granted in January to March 2020 increased by 5% compared with the same quarter in 2019. Just over half of judicial reviews were for public law and just under a fifth were for immigration cases.

Exceptional Case Funding (ECF)

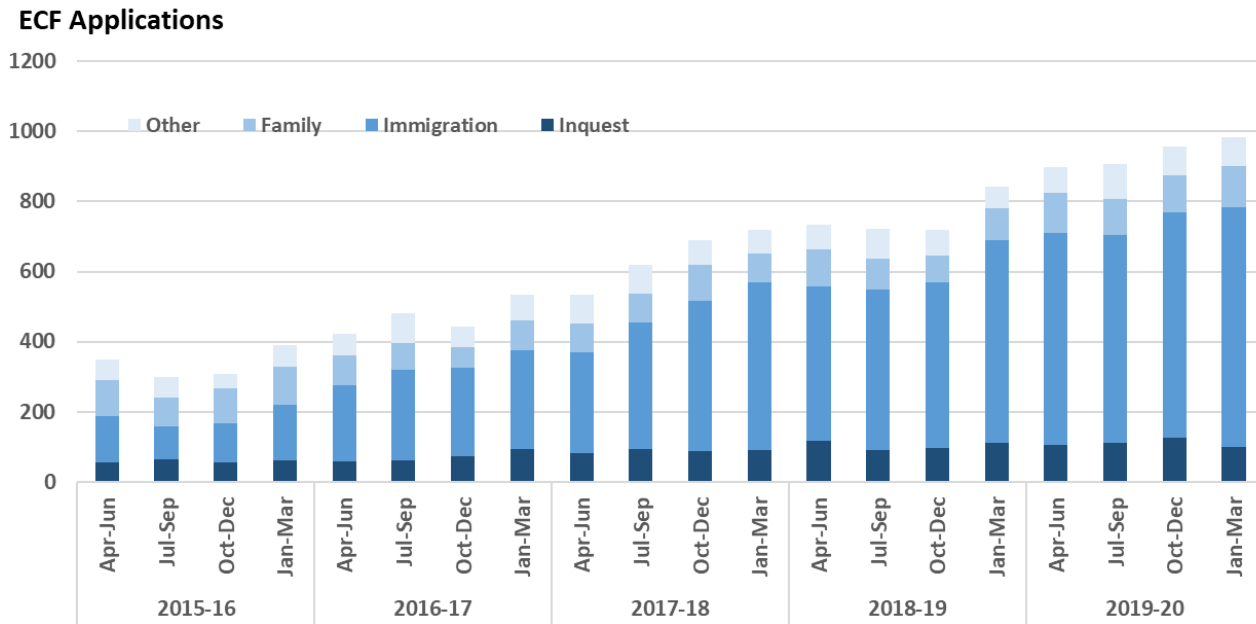


Tables
8.1 and 8.2

There were 983 applications for ECF received from January to March 2020. This is a 17% increase from the same quarter last year. 914 (93%) of these were new applications.

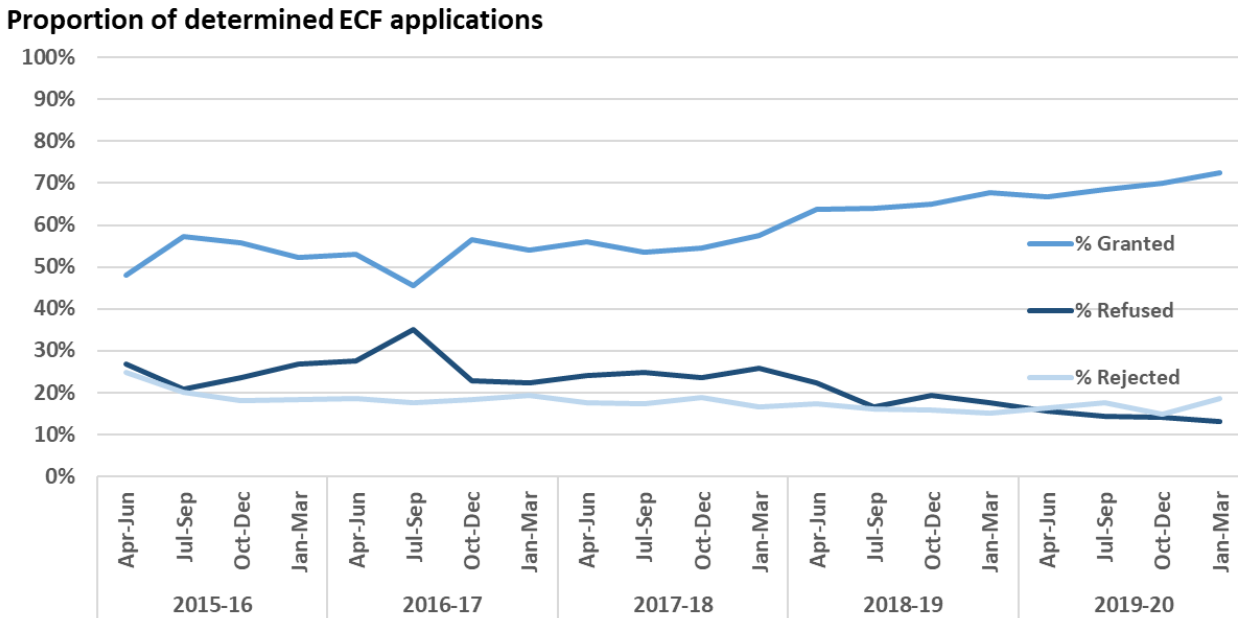
Of the 983 ECF applications received between January and March 2020, 97% (956) had been determined by the LAA as of 6 June 2020. 73% (699) of these were granted, 12% (121) were refused and 13% (123) rejected (see Figure 14).

Figure 13: Volume of ECF applications received, 2015-2016 to 2019-2020



Among the ECF applications received between January and March 2020, immigration (69%), inquest (10%), and family (12%) remained the most requested categories of law. The increase in ECF applications over the last two years is driven by an increase in immigration applications.

Figure 14: Volume of ECF determinations by outcome, 2015-2016 to 2019-2020



7. Client Diversity



Tables
11.1 – 11.5

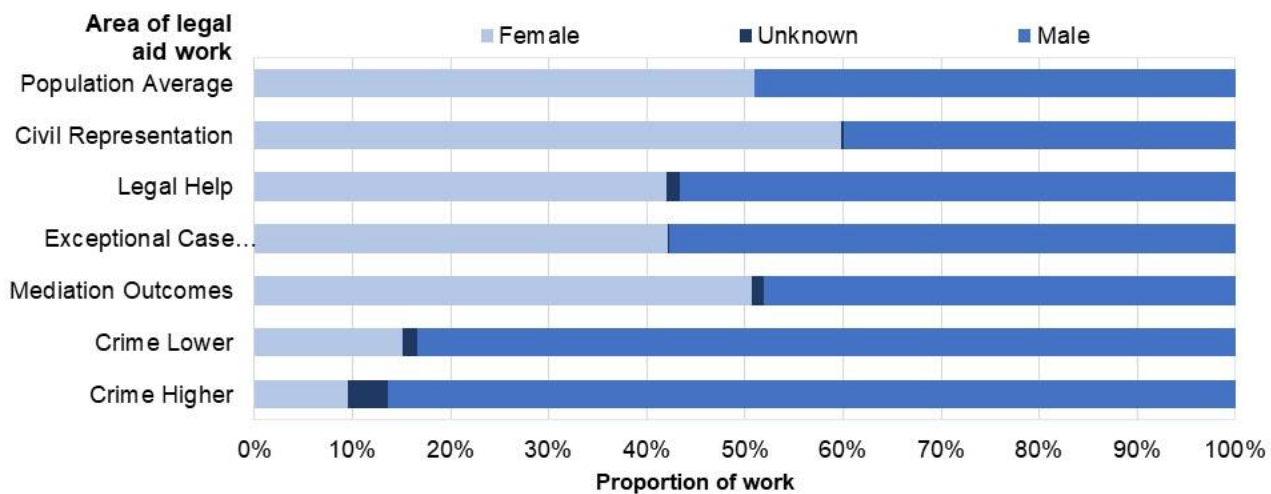
In general, the proportions of legal aid work by sex, disability status, ethnicity and age band of the client in 2019-2020 are consistent with 2018-2019.

A diversity data file is published alongside this year-end bulletin. This breaks down legal aid work by the sex, disability status, ethnicity and age band of the client and, for criminal legal aid, the applicant. In this chapter, this data is compared with the national breakdown from the 2011 census data from the Office for National Statistics⁴. More detail on disclosure control, methodology and data quality can be found in the User Guide⁵ to legal aid statistics. In general, the diversity of legal aid clients compared to 2018-2019 is unchanged. This stability in proportions over time can be seen in Table 11.1.

Sex

The profile of criminal legal aid clients in 2019-2020 differs from the population average with a much greater proportion of males (Figure 15). This reflects the picture across the criminal justice system as a whole⁶ and is consistent over time. However, the proportion of females varies with the type of work being claimed for. In 2019-2020, 16% of magistrates' court representation work and 15% of police station advice involved females, whereas only 4% of prison law work was for females.

Figure 15: Proportion of legal aid clients by sex, 2019-2020



The profile of civil legal aid clients in 2019-2020 broadly matches the general population, with some variation by scheme. There is a greater proportion of female clients in civil representation (60%), and a slightly smaller proportion in legal help (42%) and ECF (42%). The proportion of female legal help clients has fallen by 12 percentage points since 2012-2013, driven mainly by immigration where the proportion of females has decreased from one third to one quarter. Overall, the proportions of male and female civil representation clients are level over the last few years. Within this, the proportion of males in the domestic violence category has fallen from 18% in 2010-2011 to 6% in 2019-2020.

⁴ Unrounded estimates by age/sex for household estimates on census day, 27/3/2011 www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/

⁵ User guide to legal aid statistics in England and Wales: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/a-guide-to-legal-aid-statistics-in-england-and-wales>

⁶ MOJ, Criminal Justice statistics quarterly: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ministry-of-justice/series/criminal-justice-statistics

Disability

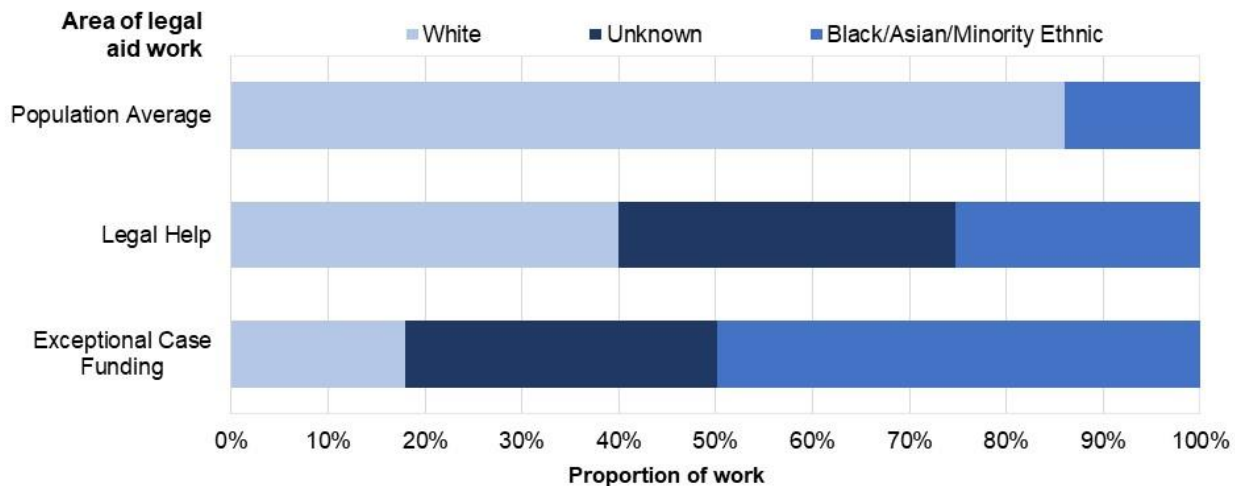
It is difficult to draw firm conclusions for most categories of legal aid on this characteristic because of the relatively high proportion of unknowns. Crime Higher has the lowest proportion of unknowns, although no detail about the type of disability is recorded (as with Crime Lower). A higher proportion of legally aided Crown Court defendants have a disability (28%) than the population average (18%).

Figures show that a higher proportion of legal help clients have disabilities (31%) than the general population (18%), although this difference is likely to be larger due to the high proportion of unknowns. This may be partly because mental health controlled legal representation work is included within legal help. In 2019-2020, two thirds of the legal help closed case mental health work claims had the client recorded as having a mental health condition.

Ethnicity

It is difficult to draw firm conclusions from some the ethnicity data because of the high proportion for which ethnicity is unknown in most areas. Nevertheless, the proportion of legal help and ECF clients reporting as Black/Asian/Minority Ethnic (BAME) is much larger than in the general population. This may reflect the fact that controlled legal representation (CLR) for immigration is included within legal help and the majority of ECF grants are for immigration work.

Figure 16: Proportion of legal help and ECF clients by broad ethnic category, 2019-2020



Age

Generally, the age profile of legal aid clients is much less evenly spread than the population average, with a higher proportion of working age clients and a smaller proportion over 55s. A much greater proportion of criminal legal aid clients are from young adult age groups (aged 18-24 and 25-34) than in the general population.

Civil representation has the greatest relative proportion of clients under the age of 18, who make up over one third of certificates completed in 2019-2020. Within this, other public law children act proceedings and special children act proceedings both had high proportions of clients under 18; 66% and 48% respectively in 2019-2020. Civil representation also has the smallest proportion of clients aged 45 and above; 13% compared to 23% for legal help. The overall age profile of clients in 2019-2020 is similar to previous years, although there has been a steady increase in the proportion of those under 18 in civil representation, up from 16% in 2008-2009 to 37% in 2019-2020.

8. Legal aid providers



Tables
9.1 – 9.4

Over the last 5 years there has been a fall in the number of provider offices completing legal aid work.

Over the past year, both civil work (down 2%) and criminal work (down 6%) provider numbers have fallen.

Legal aid services in England and Wales are delivered through solicitor firms, Not-for-profit organisations, telephone operators and barristers, most of whom are contracted by the LAA to do legal aid work. This chapter presents the number of providers who have completed work and received associated payments from the LAA in any given quarter or financial year.

A provider may consist of a large firm with several offices around the country or a single office location at which one or more individuals are based. For more information on data sources, quality and usage please see the [User guide](#) to legal aid statistics.

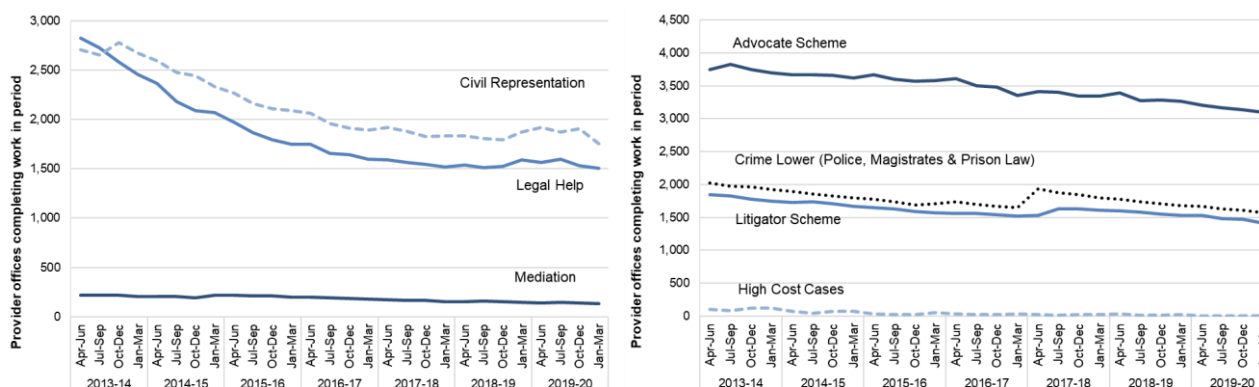
The timing with which a completed piece of work and the total payment, or expenditure, associated with it are reported are based on the point at which the main final payment for that piece of work was authorised by the LAA, not the timing of cash transactions. Figures for a given period may include the value of work conducted in earlier periods and the expenditure represents the total legal aid fee payments for each item of completed work.

These figures are not equivalent to providers' profits, earnings or take-home pay. Figures are based on the provider office location and not the location of the client. A provider may serve clients from other geographic areas as well as that in which the office is located. As this data reflects only the location of the provider office it cannot be used as a reliable indicator of the distribution of the clients or benefits of legal aid, or to infer a precise picture of coverage of legal aid services.

Volume of providers

Across civil legal aid as a whole, the number of provider offices completing work has fallen by almost a quarter over the last 5 years, and decreased by 2% in the last year. There has been a more gradual downward trend for criminal work, with a 14% fall in the number of provider offices over the last 5 years, and a 6% decrease over the last year.

Figure 17: Number of provider offices completing legal aid work, 2013-2014 to 2019-2020



9. Early assessment of the impact of COVID-19 on legal aid activity up to end of April 2020

The majority of information in this National Statistics release covers activity up to the end of March 2020. To address growing public interest, and provide timely information available on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on legal aid, management information up to the end of April 2020 has been analysed.

This section presents headline activity figures for criminal and civil legal aid. No information has been included on expenditure as these figures are subject to greater revision. The methodology is the same as that included in the main National Statistics release. However, quality assurance of the underlying management information has not been undertaken to the same level of checks needed to meet National Statistics standards. Figures should therefore be treated as preliminary and indicative.

This analysis should be treated as provisional information providing a high-level estimate of legal aid volumes up in April 2020. In most cases, April 2020 figures have been compared to average monthly figures from between January and March 2020. It is worth noting that some areas had begun to see a decrease in activity in March 2020 following the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Criminal legal aid

Police station attendance

- Provisional figures show that there has been a 41% decrease in police station attendance in April 2020 (26,200) compared to the monthly average between January and March 2020 (44,400 per month)

Applications received for representation in Crown Courts

- Provisional figures show that there has been a 45% decrease in applications received for representation in the Crown Courts in April 2020 (4,100) compared to the monthly average between January and March 2020 (7,500 per month)

Applications received for representation in magistrates' courts

- Provisional figures show that there has been a 42% decrease in applications received for representation in the magistrates' courts in April 2020 (10,200) compared to the monthly average between January and March 2020 (17,500 per month)

Civil legal aid

Legal help

- Provisional figures show that there was 34% decrease in legal help new matter starts in April 2020 (6,700) compared to the monthly average between January and March 2020 (10,200 per month)⁷

⁷ This MI does not include telephone operating service activity. January to March 2020 averages are therefore not directly comparable with figures in Table 5.1 of the accompanying tables.

Housing Possession Court Duty Scheme

- There were no Housing Possession Court Duty Scheme (HPCDS) starts in April 2020 compared to an average monthly figure of 2,300 per month between January and March 2020. Provisional figures show there was a 94% decrease in the number of HPCDS cases closed in April 2020 (150) compared to the monthly average between January and March 2020 (2,600 per month).

Family mediation assessments

- Provisional figures show that there has been a 34% decrease in family mediation starts in April 2020 (380) compared to the monthly average between January and March 2020 (580 per month). Over the same period, assessments decreased by 41% and outcomes by 36%.

Civil representation applications

- Provisional figures show that civil representation applications have decreased by 16% in April 2020 (8,700) compared to the monthly average between January and March 2020 (10,300). Family applications decreased by 13%, whilst the larger decrease in non-family applications (34%) was driven mainly by a fall in housing applications.

Future publications

Further information up to the end of June 2020, including some monthly breakdowns, are planned to be published in the next quarterly National Statistics release on 24 September 2020. We will consider what additional information can be included in this publication.

10. Further information

This publication presents quarterly data trends and the figures published annually, including those on the diversity of clients, the providers of legal aid, appealing legal aid decisions, Central Funds and legal aid in the higher courts.

Accompanying files



- **Tables:** A set of tables, which give further detail and full time-series for each area.
- **More detailed data** and **Civil detail data:** Detailed files to enable independent analysis, provided in .ods (OpenDocument Spreadsheet) format.

Web tools



- [‘Data visualisation tool’](#) A web-based tool allowing the user to view and customize charts and tables based on the published statistics.

Help and Documentation



- **Index of data in Legal aid statistics:** An index to the more detailed data published in the .ods files, lists of available data from Legal Aid systems and guidance on how to work with the more detailed data using pivot tables.
- [‘User Guide to legal aid statistics’](#): This provides comprehensive information about data sources and quality as well as key legislative changes.

National Statistics status



National Statistics status means that official statistics meet the highest standards of trustworthiness, quality and public value. All official statistics should comply with all aspects of the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.

They are awarded National Statistics status following an assessment by the Authority’s regulatory arm. The Authority considers whether the statistics meet the highest standards of Code compliance, including the value they add to public decisions and debate.

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