



Ministry
of Justice

COVID-19 Specialist Advice Service Scheme (CSASS)

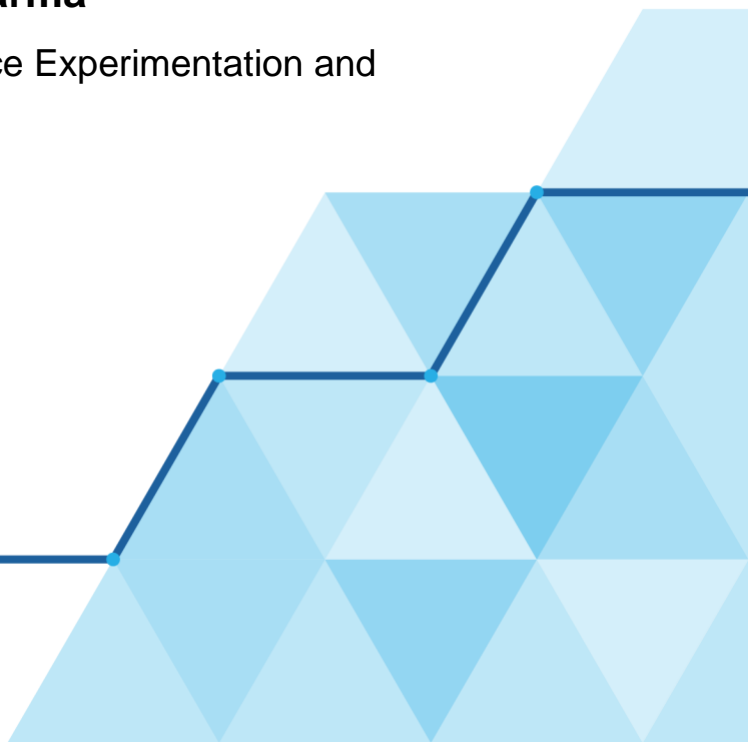
Final Report, June 2021

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Legal Support Research, Access to Justice Experimentation and
Evaluation Team

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Emma-May Heppell and Richa Sharma

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1. Executive Summary

In April 2020, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) allocated £5.4m in emergency relief to the not-for-profit specialist legal advice sector in England and Wales. These funds were intended to ensure the survival of advice providers and allow them to continue to serve clients who were experiencing legal issues. The funds were distributed through the primary grant holders, the Access to Justice Foundation (ATJF) and the Law Centres Network (LCN), to 72 front-line organisations as part of the Community Justice Fund (CJF). While the MoJ funded ATJF and LCN separately under the CSASS, the CJF application portal was used by all 72 grantees.

As part of the grant conditions, recipient organisations were required to report on how they used the funds, as well as track the level of provision they were able to deliver. This data forms the basis of this report.

The average size of the grants made was approximately £71,000. Wages formed the largest expenditure item on which 71% of funds were spent, indicating that the grant was primarily used by recipient organisations to remain operational. While many organisations may have been forced to radically alter the means through which they communicated with clients, a smaller proportion of funding (9%) was used to purchase new IT equipment or software.

In aggregate, over the funding period of April 2020 to March 2021, there was a higher level of activity by the funded organisations than in the corresponding period in the year prior. Disaggregating across different areas of civil law shows that most areas have seen an increase in support offered to clients, particularly in areas of social welfare. The largest changes in support provided were seen in Employment, Housing, Debt, and Immigration & Asylum, and were more pronounced in recent months towards the end of 2020/start of 2021. In addition to the number of issues providers dealt with, qualitative data indicated clients were presenting themselves with more complex and clustered issues.

Data on delivery methods has shown that in line with social distancing restrictions, organisations have used more remote delivery means than face-to-face ones. Organisations are also anticipating using a blended approach to delivery going forward which will be dictated by client need and nature of services offered.

In summary, the funds appear to have been used in a responsible fashion by grantees to ensure the continuity of services. Recognising the pressures on the services provided by the not-for-profit legal advice sector due to significant reduction in funding and the ongoing negative impacts of COVID-19, the MoJ has committed renewed seed investment into the Community Justice Fund (CJF) over the financial year 2021/22 through the Sector Sustainability Grant (SSG).

2. Introduction

There is a large body of existing evidence showing how legal issues can have a hugely detrimental impact upon an individual, affecting finances, emotional wellbeing, and physical health, among other things.¹ More widely, these issues have pervasive and costly social impacts. This literature also highlights that legal issues often do not simply disappear, but in fact grow in severity and lead to the accumulation of further problems: a phenomenon commonly known as clustering.

The not-for-profit legal advice sector is known to be an important avenue through which individuals can uphold their legal rights and avoid the worst ramifications of their issues. This is particularly true for individuals who cannot afford to pay for legal advice and fall outside the remit of legal aid funding.

The advent of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the resultant public health control measures, have had wide ranging economic and social impacts. It was feared that the not-for-profit legal advice sector would see a large surge in demand on the back of increasing unemployment rates, financial hardship, and increased close contact leading to family disputes.² At the same time, the inability to see clients face-to-face was expected to necessitate a change in delivery methods, to varying degrees.

Alongside this, the supply of support from not-for-profit advice sector organisations has been scarce for a long time due to funding cuts, especially in social welfare law (for example, housing, debt, welfare benefits and employment) where problems tend to cluster.³ The sector is the most frequent source of advice for these kinds of legal problems, and their availability has been and is being put under even further pressure by demand caused by COVID-19, which has further limited the funding available and made it increasingly difficult to reach excluded/ underserved communities. At the same time, people's demand for help with legal problems is rising and will continue to rise as the impact of responses to the emergency are felt.⁴

¹ (Franklyn, Budd, Verrill, & Willoughby, 2017), (Pleasance, et al., 2011), (Moorhead, Margaret, & Consultancy, 2006)

² It should be noted that CSASS funding did not cover cases of support family law.

³ (Legal Services Board, 2019)

⁴ (Legal Services Board, 2019)

To help not-for-profit organisations continue to provide services and to support vulnerable groups affected by the pandemic, £5.4m of funding was made available to providers of specialist legal advice across England and Wales. This funding comprised of £2.8m from HM Treasury, via the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS), and £2.6m from the Ministry of Justice (MoJ). This funding was made available through the Community Justice Fund (CJF): a joint initiative between Advice UK, Law Centres Network, Citizens Advice, and a group of independent funders that includes the Access to Justice Foundation, who host and administer the fund. The CJF established an unprecedented collaboration between funders of the advice sector, which prioritised user centred development and delivery with continued engagement of frontline service and umbrella bodies. The objectives of CJF are threefold: to sustain specialist legal advice services; increase access to justice through strategic innovation; and ensure widespread access to justice.

Funding through the CSASS grant helped leverage further funding for CJF, which has also been supported by the National Lottery Community Fund's COVID-19 crisis response funding. Overall, the CJF's first wave of funding from 11 May 2020 to 18 September 2020 received 263 applications from advice organisations, of which 179 were able to be funded to the value of £11.59m.

It was expected that the grant funding would enable recipients to:

1. Avert their closure and remain operational, providing specialist advice services throughout COVID-19;
2. Procure equipment and training to enable remote delivery of services, and adapt their operations accordingly; and,
3. Increase their capacity to meet the significant rising demand for advice services.

Between April 2020 – March 2021, the funding was issued by the MoJ to organisations through the Law Centres Network (LCN) who have distributed grants to individual Law Centres, and the Access to Justice Foundation (ATJF). The user centred application process, provided one portal for all applications from specialist providers, including Law Centres, Citizens Advice services and members of Advice UK. Thus, while the MoJ funded ATJF and LCN separately under the CSASS, the common CJF application portal was used by all 72 grantees.

In order to ensure that the money had been allocated and used appropriately, the grants were subject to pragmatic monitoring and evaluation. To not overburden organisations, a

relatively proportionate approach was taken while still capturing quality data. As such, conditions of funding meant secondary grantees (i.e. those who received funding through the ATJF or LCN) were required to provide data on how the grant funds were spent, how many issues they had helped support, and methods used to deliver services (e.g. face-to-face, online and so on) at four points throughout the funding period. This data, alongside interviews with a subsample of grantees, has been used to assess how funding has been used and whether it has addressed the three funding objectives.

This report builds on findings from the interim grant report⁵ developed in January 2021 and has been split into three sections:

- 1) The distribution of funding
- 2) Assessment of fund objectives
- 3) Feedback on the delivery of the grant

⁵ (Legal Support Research Team, 2021)

3. Distribution of Funding

3.1. Funded Organisations

3.1.1. Number of organisations that received funding

Key Points

- A total of 72 organisations received grants.
- This number represents a small proportion of the total number of organisations dispensing legal advice in England and Wales but represents a significant piece of investment.

A total of 72 organisations received funds distributed via the two primary grant holders. Using the central funding, the ATJF supported 37 organisations while the LCN supported 35 law centres. This latter value represents all but one of the Law Centres in England and Wales. A full list of the organisations funded, along with the value of the grant they received, is provided in Appendix table 2.

Collectively, the funded organisations represent a small proportion of the total number of not-for-profit specialist legal advice providers in England and Wales. However, the funds are likely to have been a hugely valuable injection to help the sector cater to the legal needs arising from the COVID-19 pandemic, the impact of which was maximised by contributing to the Community Justice Fund (CJF): pooled fund that was able to support 179 specialist advice organisations throughout England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland with £11.59m in grants.

An added bonus of the grant was that it helped leverage additional funds which were also directed towards legal advice providers. On the back of the COVID-19 grant administered by MoJ, the Community Justice Fund was able to secure an additional £5m from the National Lottery Community Fund's COVID-19 crisis response funding. Alongside this, the MoJ has committed to investing in the next wave of the Community Justice Fund over FY 2021/22, with wave two of the Fund also attracting independent funders investing in the advice sector for the first time.

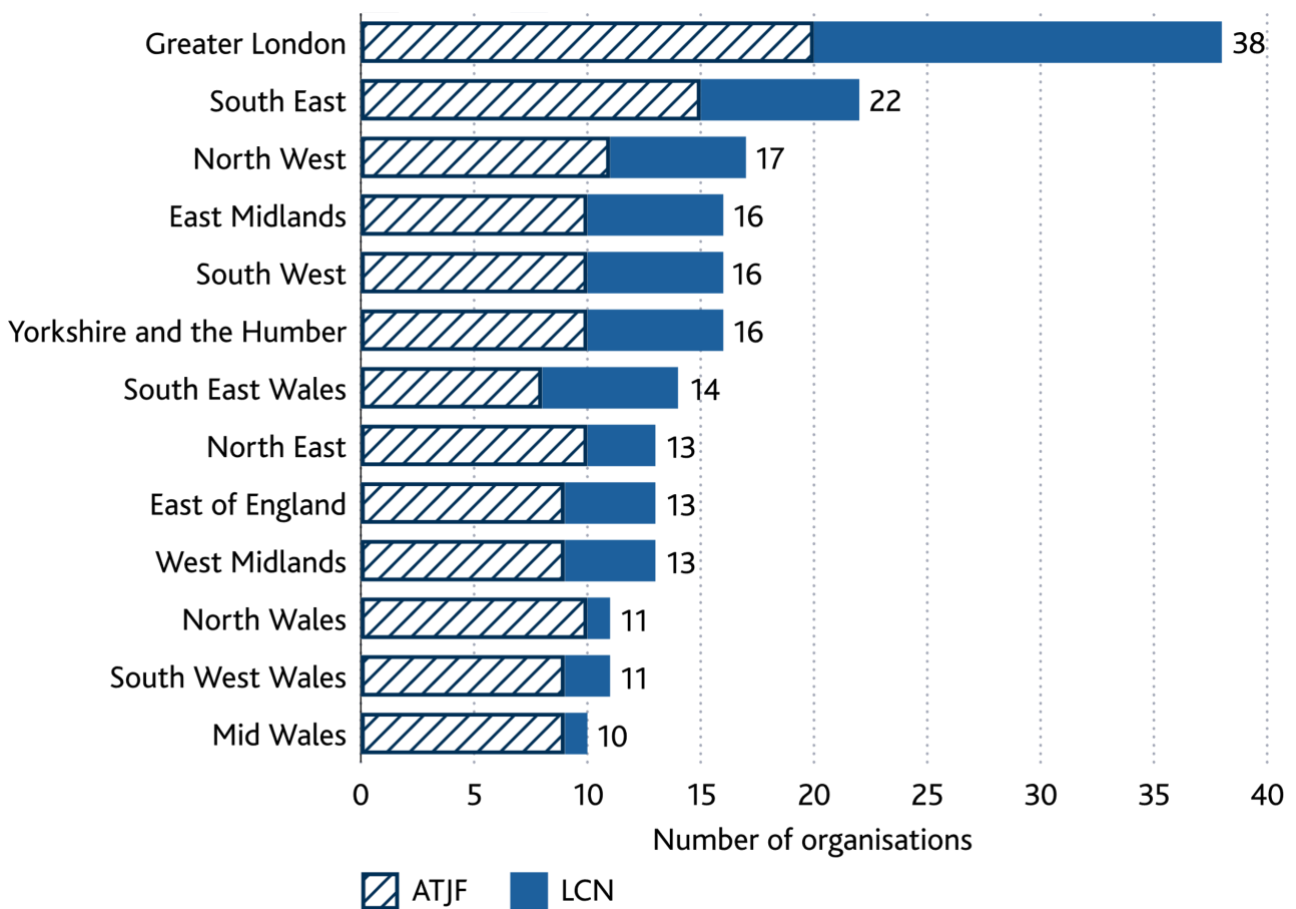
3.1.2. Location of organisations

Key Points

- There was a national spread of support, with organisations working in all regions of England and Wales.

The COVID-19 emergency grants were intended to provide a national fund that any specialist legal advice provider in England or Wales could bid into. Monitoring data collected information on the regions where organisations provided support.

Figure 1: Locations where support is provided*



* Grantees may be national charities and therefore provide support across the UK, including providing support in Scotland and Northern Ireland (although funding was used to provide support in England and Wales only).

Figure 1 shows a national spread of all regions in England and Wales that were supported via the fund. Around half (51%) of organisations operated out of and reported their head office to be in Greater London area. This was consistent across organisations funded by both the ATJF and LCN.

Understanding which areas in England and Wales had the highest need for specialist legal advice was hugely complicated as a result of the fragmented nature of the advice sector and challenges with capturing consistent client data. As a result, it was not possible to tell whether the distribution of funded services matched the overall patterns of need, as reporting could only allow for data gathering on the supply of services, that is, those areas of specifically funded specialist provision. However, the flexibility of the grants allowed organisations to be responsive to local demand (within the limitations of their specialist expertise), so while patterns of need cannot be identified, the data does evidence existing demand.

3.2. Grant Demand

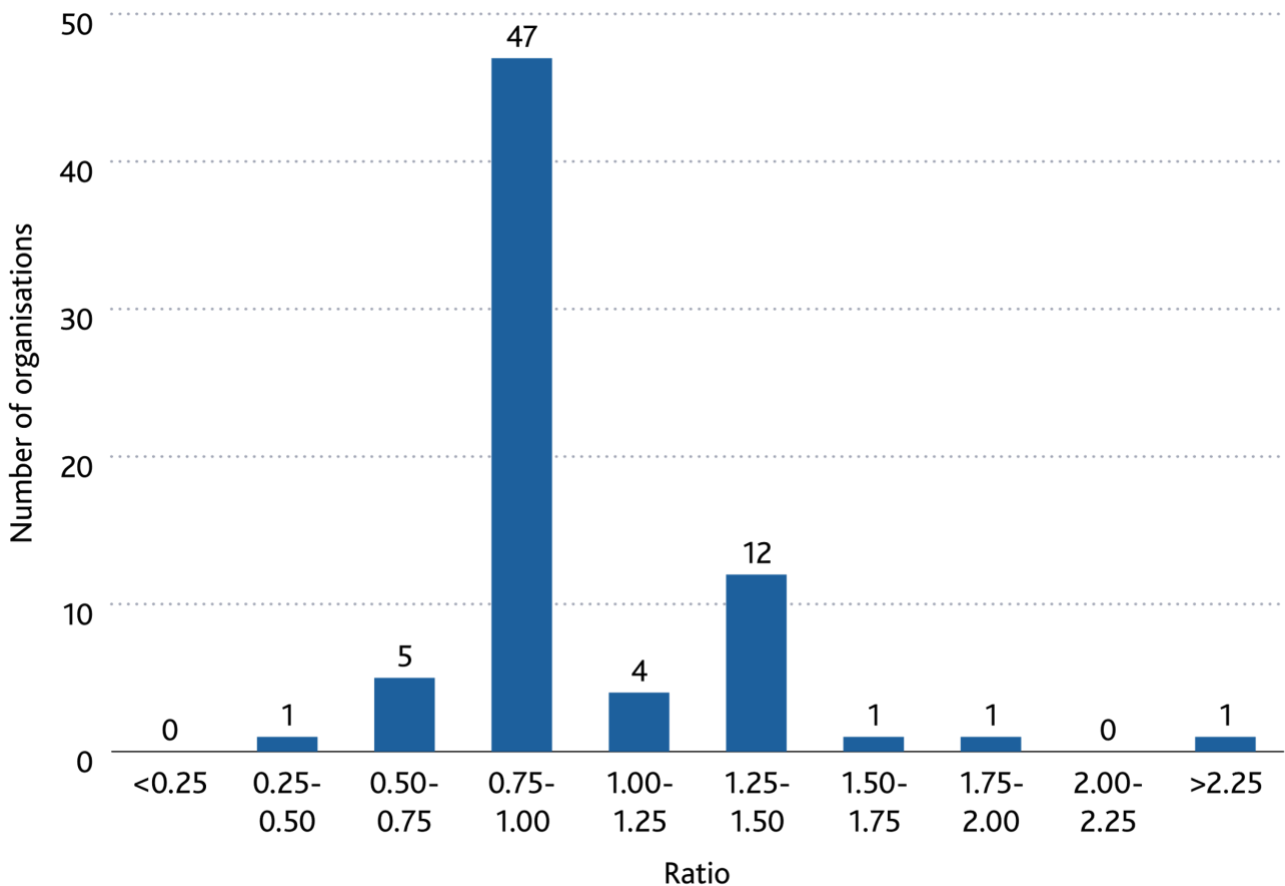
3.2.1. Average grant size

Key Points

- Most organisations received funding in line with their submitted bids.
- The median grant size was slightly over £71,000.

Organisations submitted applications for the funds they felt were needed. Given the need for urgency, the collective expertise and sector knowledge of independent funders and CJF Steering Group of sector stakeholders, enabled a fair and thorough assessment of eligibility, need for prioritisation and financial situation at speed. This data is presented in Figure 2.

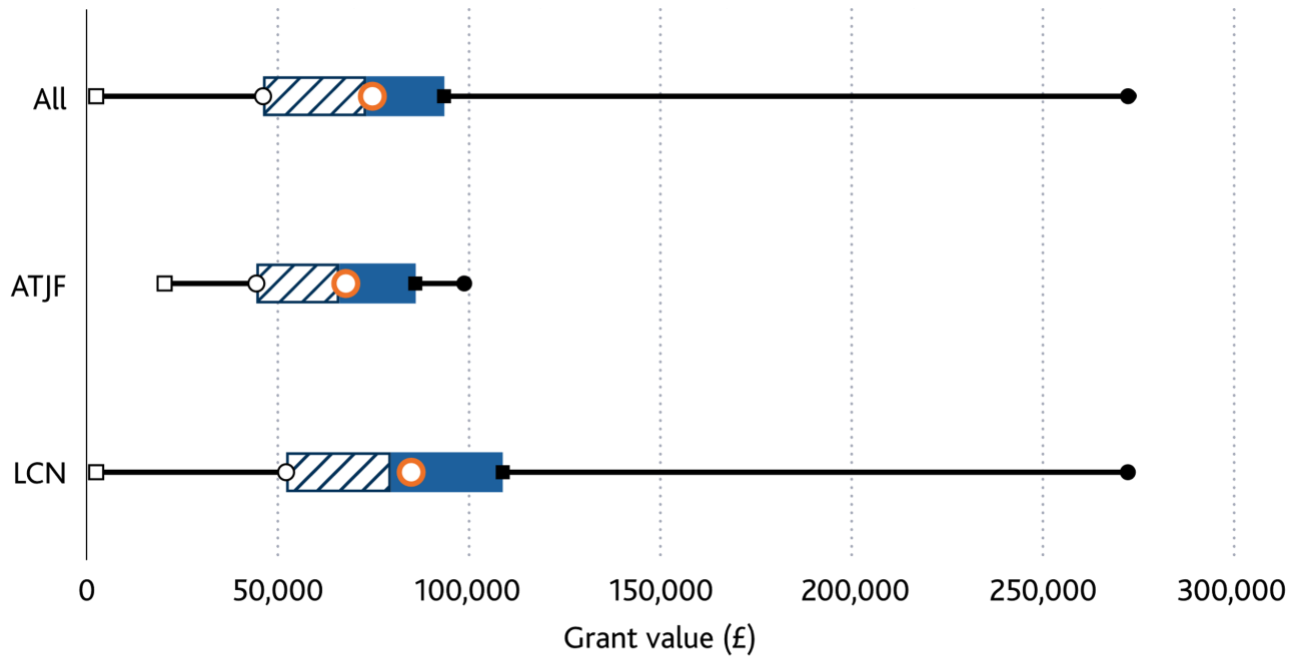
Figure 2: Ratio of applied to awarded funds



The majority received close to the amount requested, with 51 of the 72 organisations being awarded within $\pm 25\%$ of their request. One organisation received less than half the amount they requested, while another received over twice what they had requested. In the latter case, upon reviewing the submission the primary grant organisations, the ATJF identified that the organisation had only bid for funding for part of the eligible period, up until December 2020. By working together, the advice provider and the ATJF established what the likely costs were over the full eligible funding period (April 2020 to March 2021), and an adjusted grant amount was agreed.

Figure 3 displays the distribution of grant value across secondary grantees.

Figure 3: Distribution of grant values

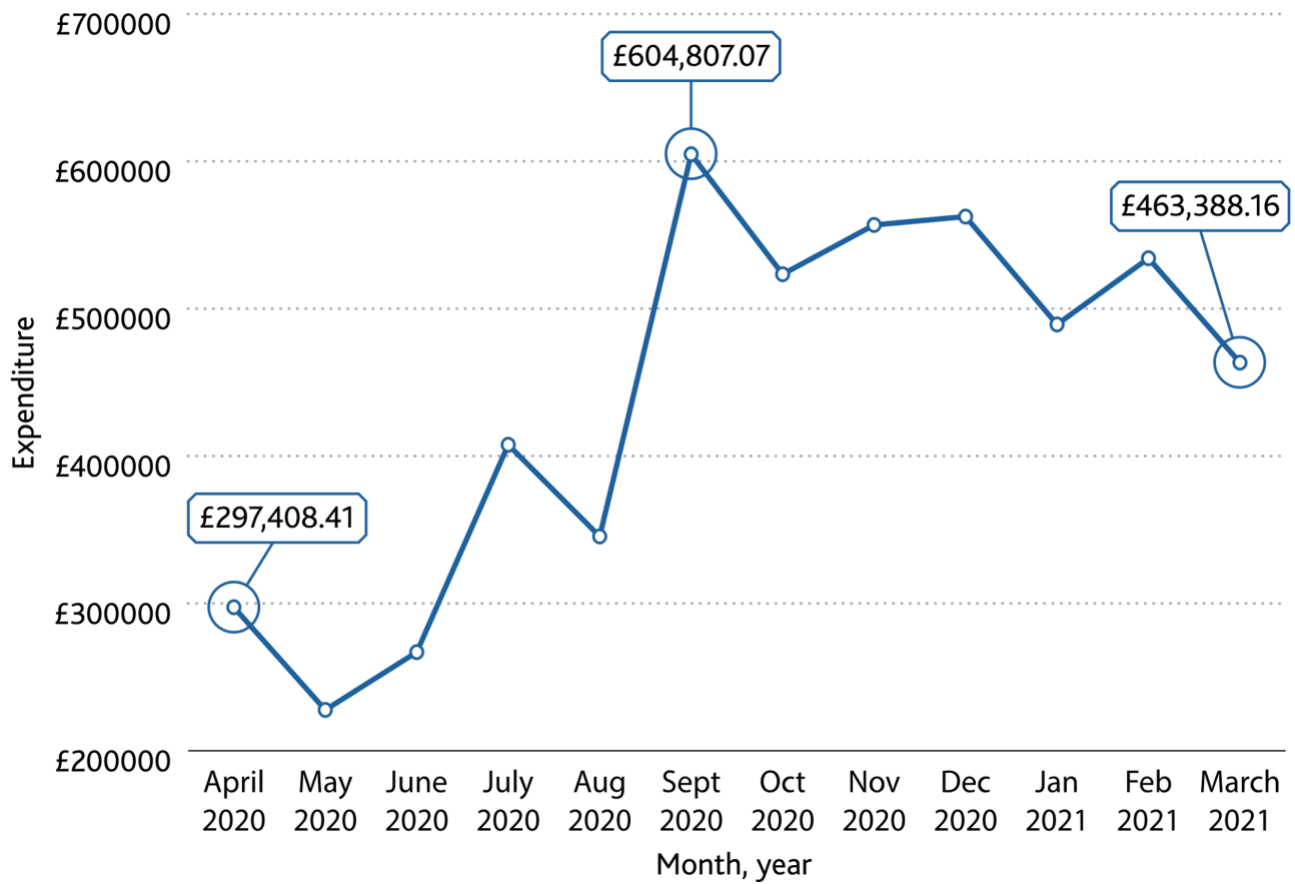


Key:	□ —	— ○	▨	○	■ —	— ●
	Min	25th percentile	Median	Mean	75th Percentile	Max
All grants	2,700	46,250	72,500	74,283	93,275	274,000
ATJF	20,000	44,628	66,360	67,928	85,881	100,000
LCN	2,700	52,500	79,650	84,677	108,850	274,000

The value of grants ranged by a factor of ten, with the lowest grant award for £2,700 and the largest £274,000. The median amount organisations received was £71,600. As shown in Figure 3, the grants made by the LCN had both a wider range and a larger average value than those made by the ATJF (with the median grants being £79,300 and £66,360 respectively). This can be attributed to the LCN receiving a greater amount of money per eligible organisation. Despite being smaller in size on average, ATJF grants were typically awarded to larger organisations than LCN grants, based on the number of clients seen.

Figure 4 shows how grantees allocated fund expenditure over time.

Figure 4: Spend over time



All funds had been disseminated by December 2020 and expenditure accounted for by the end of March 2021. As a result, a total of £5.3m had been passed to 72 front line organisations which excluded a nominal administration fee collected by the primary grant holders.

4. Objectives of Funding

This section of the report looks to assess whether funding met the three objectives outlined in the introduction.

4.1 Objective 1: Avert their closure and remain operational, providing specialist advice services throughout COVID-19

It was anticipated that the not-for-profit legal advice sector would see a large surge in demand as a result of increasing numbers of social welfare issues stemming from events caused by the pandemic. At the same time government safety measures necessitated that organisations change their delivery approaches to clients from face-to-face to other methods.

This section of the report provides a summary of the data over the funding period related to:

- How funds were spent
- Volume of support provided by organisations in specific areas of law
- Website traffic
- Commentary from interviews related to changes to delivery and clients

4.1.1. How funds have been spent

Key Points

- The majority of funds were spent on staff wages and payment of bills.
- To a lesser degree, organisations also reported expenditure on IT, office costs, and expansion.

Grantees reported monthly expenditure using templates provided at four intervals across the funding period. Table 1 displays the aggregate spend profile across all 72 organisations by funded activities.

Table 1: Expenditure of grant funding by category (April 2020 – March 2021)

Funded Activities	Total Spend (£)	% of total
Staff Costs (Existing and Hiring New Staff)	3,805,164	72.1%
Payment of bills (rent, utilities, suppliers etc)	580,054	11.0%
IT equipment and software (incl. working from home equipment)	487,040	9.2%
Office Costs	231,707	4.4%
Expansion of Services offered (geographic and subject)	143,131	2.7%
Other	32,380	0.6%
Total	5,279,476.44	100.0%

Around 70% of the money spent has been used to cover existing staff costs (see Table 1). Other significant spend categories includes payment of bills (11%), spend on IT and Software (9.2%), and on office costs (4.4%). A relatively small proportion of spend was used to expand services (2.7%). Reasons for this are explored in section 2.4.

As a result of how funds were disseminated, it has not been possible to draw meaningful conclusions around how expenditure was used over the funding period. Feedback from grantees noted that the flexibility of the grant allowed for reallocation of other funds across the organisation, maximising impact in the context of reduced legal aid income and limitations of project specific funding. See appendix 3 for a breakdown of expenditure over time.

4.1.2. Volume of support over the funding period

Key Points

- Over the funding period, there was an upward trend in the number of clients whom organisations provided support to.
- Data covering March 2021 showed the highest numbers of issues supported across the funding period.
- The sharpest month-on-month increase occurred from August to September 2020, covering the period where lockdown restrictions were relaxed.

A key metric monitoring data looked to capture was the level of activity that secondary grantees undertook. For this purpose, recipients were asked to report the number of clients that were supported for each of a wide selection of civil law issues. For example, if a person attended an advice session and received support on both debt and housing, they

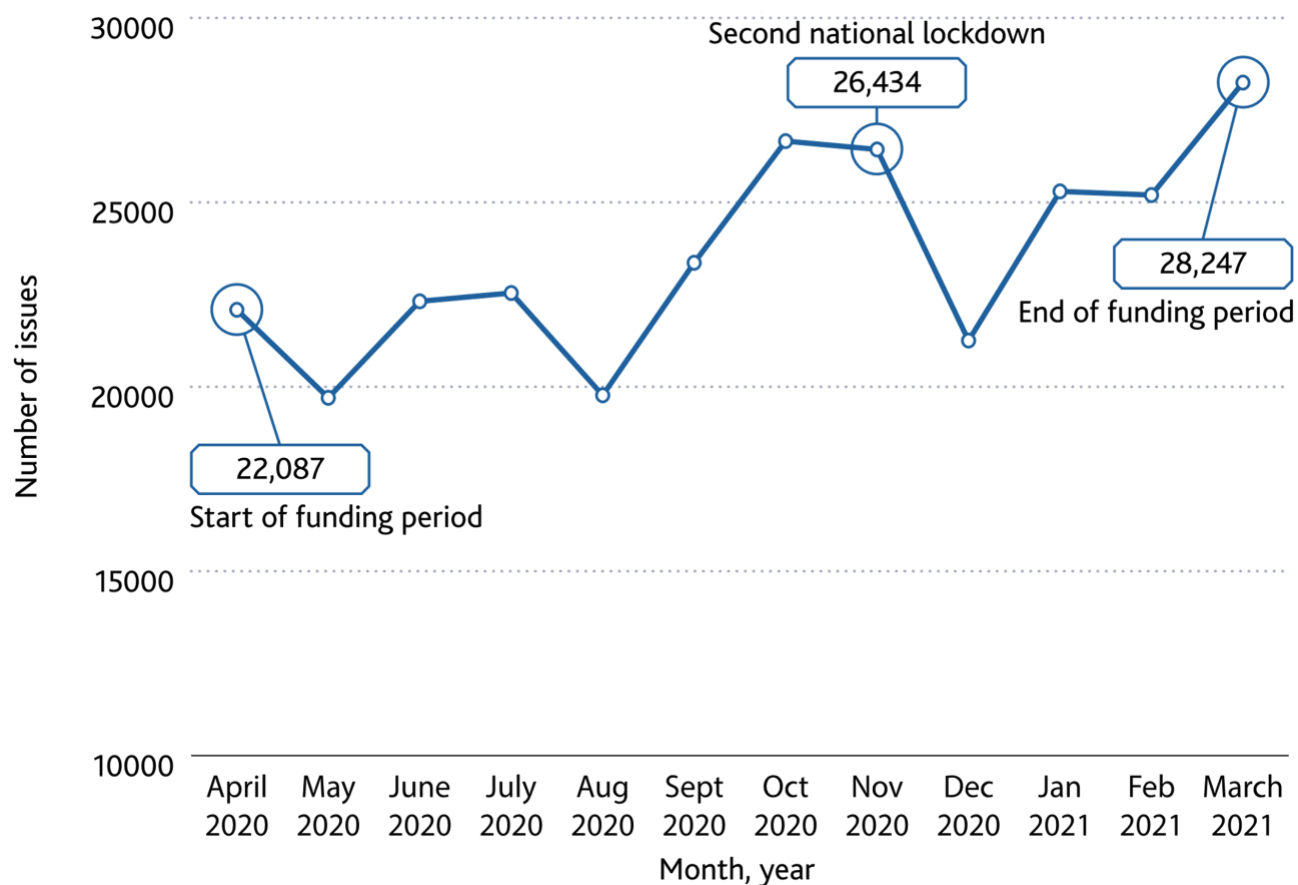
would be captured against each. This had the obvious advantage of simplifying how to classify someone who presented with multiple concurrent problems. Additionally, if COVID-19 had led to an increase in the average number of issues a person presents with, this would be captured. For similar reasoning as the above, the values reset between monthly capture period. This means that if the same individual reported in both June and July with the same issue, they would be measured in both months.

As a result of this approach, please note:

- A degree of caution should be applied when interpreting figures, as they cannot be summed across legal issue type or time to represent the number of individuals supported;
- Figures represent the work of an organisation as a whole and not specific activities funded directly through the grant. Often, specialist legal advice providers do not run distinct projects funded from distinct pots of money. Instead there is a high degree of mixing between funding streams and activities. With separation impossible, the most viable option was to collect data for the organisation, rather than look to disaggregate it; and
- As the aim of the first wave of funding was to provide grants to organisations at speed to ensure their survival and sustainability at a time of emergency, evaluation requests were made proportionately. Evaluation sought to capture data available rather than set up new systems that would have added to the pressures faced by the organisations. There is nevertheless a lot of diversity in the approach taken largely due to individual reporting practices. 'Client support' could have been interpreted as numbers of clients and/or numbers of issues.

Figure 5 shows the total number of issues supported over the funding period from April 2020 up until March 2021.

Figure 5: Total number of issues supported by secondary grantees



It is worth noting that the above excludes figures reported under ‘Other’ areas of law as these typically were outside of the scope of civil law. Over the course of the funding period, in aggregate, organisations reported providing support in other areas to 85,941 issues. While this value should be interpreted with caution, the value further highlights how organisations have seen increased activity.

Figure 5 shows an upward trend in the numbers of issues organisations supported. The data illustrates that after the initial lockdown announcement in March 2020,⁶ the amount of support declined. However, from August 2020, numbers of issues grew again. Excluding the decrease reported in December, likely due to the Christmas and New Year holiday period which may have affected both services being open and clients approaching organisations, issues continued to increase with the highest number of issue support reported in March 2021.

It should be noted that any increases are heavily reliant on the capacity of organisations to provide support and not demand from clients. Secondary grantees have reported having difficulty in rapidly increasing their capacity linked to several factors

⁶ (Institute for Government Analysis, 2021)

around staffing and remote advice (see sections 2.4 and 2.7) which could mean figures underestimate client demand. Each individual figure also represents several hours of casework and therefore any increase would likely have had a significant impact on frontline organisations. Many organisations do not have capacity to measure demand, and where this is possible, demand does not indicate the level of actual need.

The aggregate figures show that the largest month-on-month increase was between August 2020 – September 2020 where support increased by 18% (from 23,362 to 26,660 issues). When exploring this trend in interviews with a subsample of grantees, reasons given included:

- The uncertainty around how long government restrictions were going to be in place meant clients were waiting before approaching services;
- As courts were closed, clients did not receive correspondence which may have triggered them to approach organisations for support;
- Government measures such as the furlough scheme and the moratorium on evictions meant other events that trigger advice seeking behaviour were not taking place; and
- Restrictions were relaxed on the 14th August 2020 which meant services were able to increase the amount of in person advice. The backlog of cases which built up during 2020 is now increasing strain on services, while the delays in legal aid payments mean that the financial impact of the pandemic will continue to be felt in 2021 and possibly beyond.

One grantee commented:

“There has been a 35% drop in matters start and cases opened and that’s because the courts had been locked down. Our telephone support line has been very busy... but a lot of people needed to access the courts as they had issues that can only be resolved through the courts...It was around the springtime that people started engaging with this technology.”

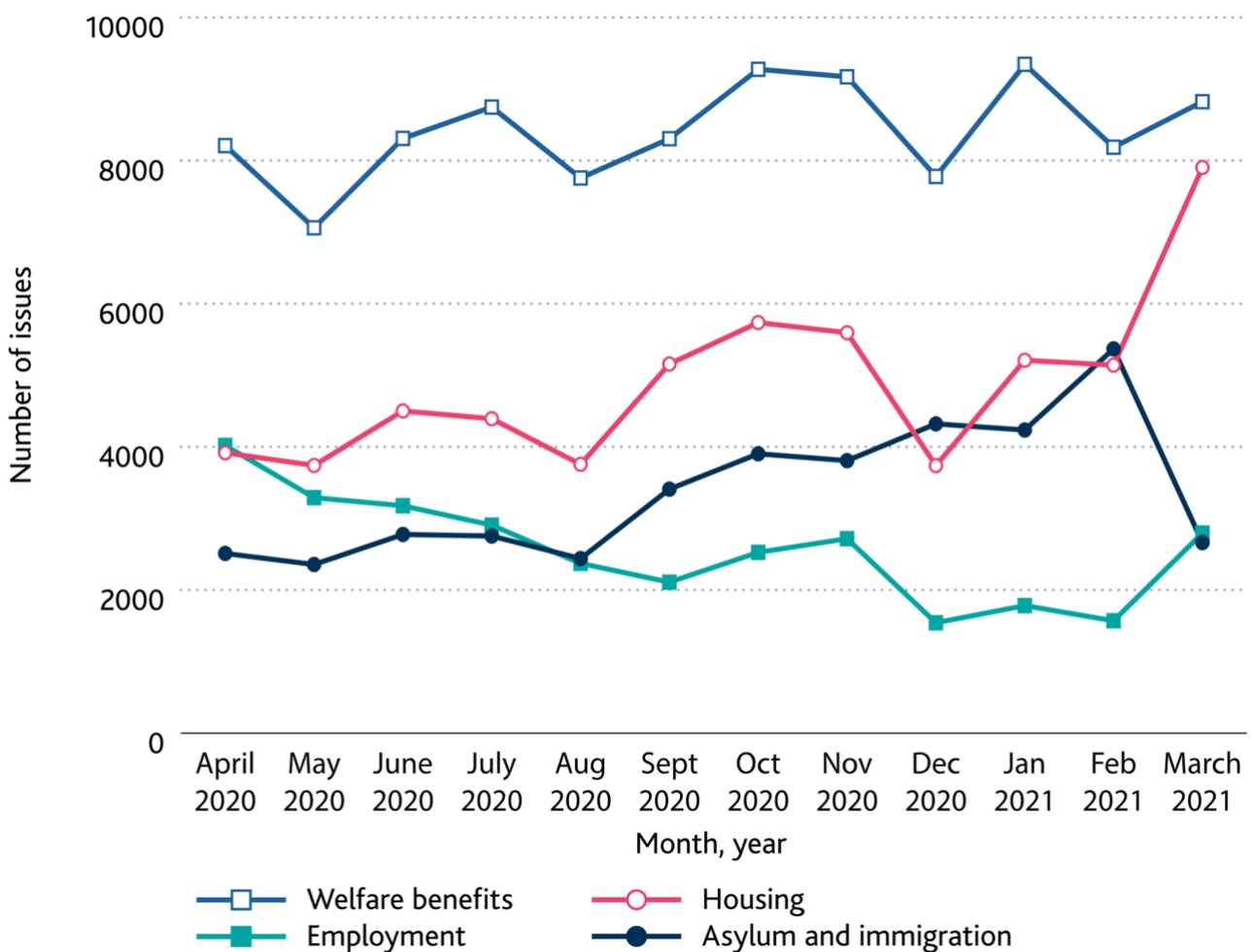
4.1.3. Support across areas of civil law

Key Points

- Almost all areas of civil law have seen an upward trend in support to clients, particularly in areas of social welfare (i.e. Welfare Benefits, Housing, Employment, and Debt).
- In aggregate, Housing support saw a one of the sharpest increases between February – March 2021.
- Additional distributional analysis to explore the data is advised as there is a high degree of diversity in figures reported by individual grantees.

Secondary grantees were asked to report the number of issues supported by their organisation across each month from a selection of areas of civil law (for full list see appendix 4). Figure 6 shows the top four areas in which organisations provided support over the funding period (from April 2020 – March 2021).

Figure 6: Areas of civil law - highest numbers of clients supported over the funding period to date (April 2020 - November 2020)



* Asylum & Immigration support have been combined as some secondary grantees were unable to split client support between the two areas of law. For a breakdown, see appendix 4.

Secondary grantees consistently provided the highest amount of support to clients facing Welfare Benefit issues. Following the Christmas and New Year holiday period, 9,435 clients were supported in January 2021 in this area marking the peak across all areas of law.

Housing advice steadily increased over the reporting period and saw a sharp rise in the final reporting month in March 2021. This was the one of the largest monthly changes with an increase of 2,762 issues supported (+54%). Similarly, employment support was relatively consistent over the funding period and increased to its peak in March 2021 with 1,225 issues higher than in February 2021 (+78%). However, **these increases were largely driven by one organisation that reported** an increase of 1,083 client employment support and 1,467 client housing support between February and March 2021, mainly driven by: 1) a national advice line service which delivered first tier advice to callers from the whole of England, and 2) receipt of additional COVID-19 funding to recruit extra advisers and support increasing numbers of clients. Section 1.5 provides more detail on causes behind the variations in number of cases supported by organisations during the funding period.

Table 2 presents figures provided by grantees against the additional areas of civil law not shown in Figure 6.⁷

Table 2: Areas of civil law - Numbers of issues supported over the funding period to date (April 2020 - November 2020)⁸

Month	Debt	Disability ¹	Community Care	Discrimination ²	Mental Health	Education	Public & Administrative Law
Apr-20	1,590	642	337	241	251	239	131
May-20	1,543	509	356	283	197	216	151
Jun-20	1,700	525	389	354	188	230	167
Jul-20	1,883	559	373	339	205	214	169
Aug-20	1,681	537	352	315	184	206	171
Sep-20	1,770	868	394	312	375	484	179
Oct-20	2,265	955	503	552	401	325	219
Nov-20	2,352	1,017	547	242	450	319	219
Dec-20	1,632	944	376	274	264	231	153
Jan-21	2,186	1,002	489	364	270	226	188

⁷ As mentioned previously, organisations provided data under 'other' which hasn't been captured within this analysis as these included support in relation to commercial, criminal and family law alongside others outside of the scope of civil law.

⁸ A full table of figures can be found in appendix 4.

Month	Debt	Disability ¹	Community Care	Discrimination ²	Mental Health	Education	Public & Administrative Law
Feb-21	2,357	953	567	315	271	240	229
Mar-21	3,001	979	713	543	306	298	225

¹ One grantee service is solely focused on the area of disability law however; data has been provided across the areas of law in the analysis.

² One grantee organisation has captured discrimination figures as part of their employment and disability data.

Grantees have provided data that shows increasing levels of support consistently across the funding period across all areas of civil law. This was particularly pronounced from September to November 2020 and February to March 2021. Debt advice was also a key area support was provided across grantees further demonstrating need in relation to social welfare support and advice.

Note: Individual grantee experiences were highly diverse and reporting in aggregate fails to reflect this. Further analysis would be needed to explore the distribution of the data in more depth.

4.1.4. Website visits

Key Points

- Website traffic remained consistent across the funding period, excluding a spike over the winter months between November 2020 and January 2021.
- Figures should be interpreted with caution as a result of the reduced sample and an element of seasonality.

Where possible, grantees were asked to provide information related to website traffic as it was likely to be indicative of concerns people may have had which led to advice seeking behaviour. A definition of a website visit was described as one visitor who arrived at the website and proceeded to browse.

Figure 7 shows monthly website traffic provided by grantees. **Please note that as not all organisations were able to provide data on website traffic, the figure is based on a subsample of data by 21 organisations.**

Figure 7: Monthly Website Traffic (21 organisations)

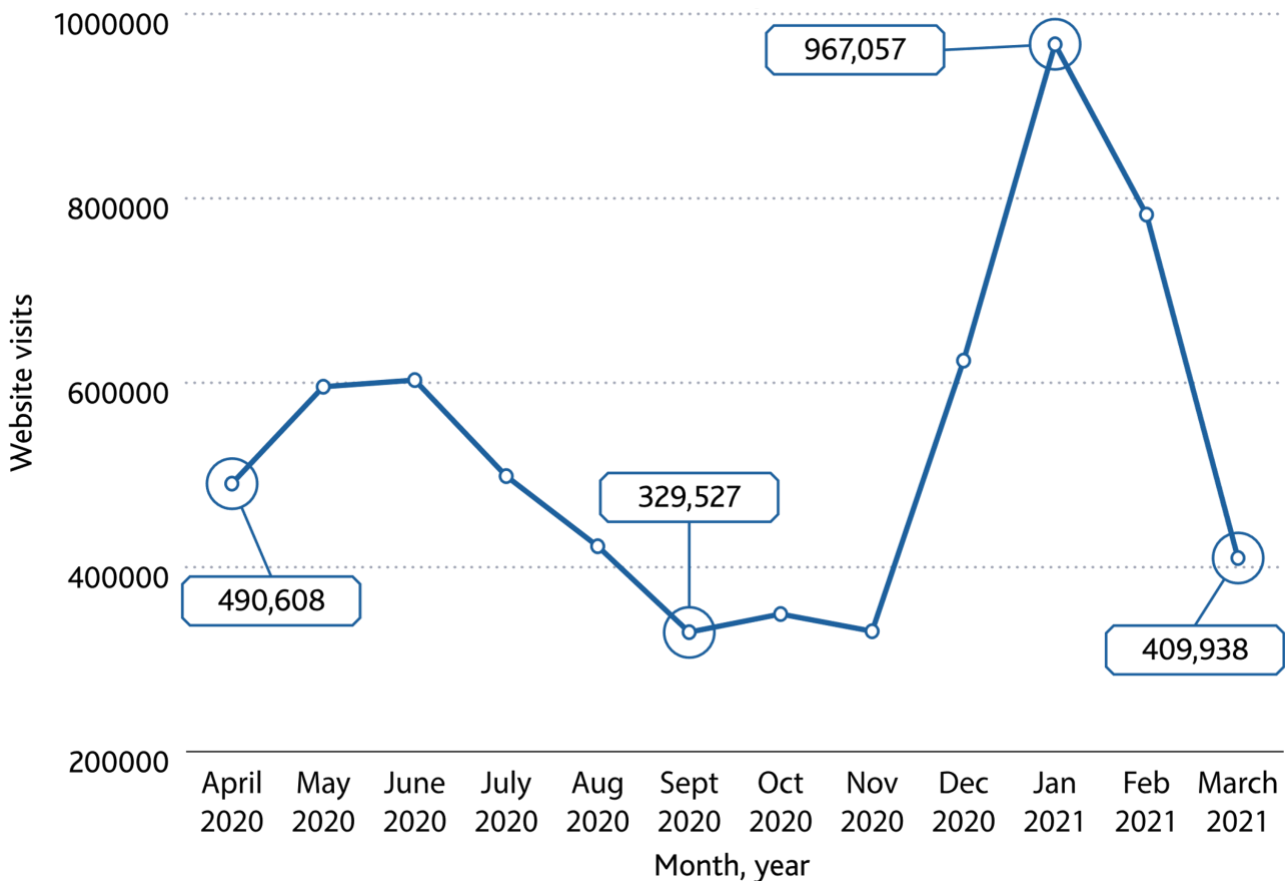


Figure 7 shows that website traffic was consistent and on a downward trajectory until November 2020 where there was a sharp rise. At its peak, in aggregate, grantees reported almost 1 million website visits in January 2021, which could be linked to factors such as the easing of the national lockdown, the winding down of Government support measures, and courts reopening. This then fell sharply and in March 2021 was at a similar level with data earlier in the funding period. The data also appears to show seasonality with a spike in demand following the Christmas and New Year period.

Website traffic data was highly changeable across the funding period. There could be several reasons for this linked to user behaviour or data quality issues. Alongside this, data was based on a smaller sample and therefore large changes in one organisation had a disproportionate impact on overall trends.

4.1.5. Changes as a result of the pandemic - Interview data

Key Points

- While the rapid shift to remote delivery created challenges related to accessing files and reaching clients, grantees were generally positive about how they had managed to maintain services.
- However, factors such as new clients, delivering services to vulnerable clients, and changes in demand for areas of law have put further pressure on frontline delivery

Changes to delivery

Prior to the first lockdown, organisations provided advice predominantly face-to-face. The advent of the pandemic meant grantees were required to move to remote delivery of services often overnight. Operationally, grantees reported using funding to procure new IT and set up systems so staff could work from home and provide client support remotely.⁹ The pace with which this equipment was procured and set up varied. Two grantees referenced that having systems prior to the pandemic that allowed remote access to files was pivotal. Where files were kept physically, grantees attended offices on a rostered basis throughout the funding period.

“The whole organisation within a week had to go from face-to-face delivery and on-site working to remote delivery which was a challenge... fortunately we were able to make sure everyone could work off site that needed to. From an advice perspective, we were able to make sure we could service all work with existing clients and make sure everyone could work independently at home.”

Once remote services were operational, informing clients how to access these services was a priority. This involved being flexible to the range of client groups and involved communication via updating website information, contacting known clients directly, adding signs on building doors where support was previously provided, redirecting reception phone lines, and extending service hours (via phone and in-person via appointments). For some, this was alongside maintaining an office presence where clients could drop-in.

⁹ More information on how funds were spent on tools for delivery across all grantees can be found in section 2.2. of this report.

“Because of the way we operate we’ve never closed the office...We had a rota so someone was here every day so if there was an emergency, a client could knock on our door.”

In the earlier stages of the pandemic, grantees highlighted that most clients accessed services through phone where face-to-face support was not possible. Section 2.2. highlights more details on delivery methods used by all grantees, however, interviews revealed that this was largely because of the ability to access devices and costs.

Among those that were not able to access devices, one grantee arranged for IT to be available in a centre so clients could attend via an appointment, however this had mixed levels of success due to no-shows. Other grantees referenced using services that remained open to reach individuals such as foodbanks.

“Principally we delivered services through phone as everyone had one. And then we were able to modify our access and allow some safe interview rooms...we provided a blend of both so where someone could travel and safely come in and the work required that, we did so.”

Other challenges faced by grantees were related to staff. There were difficulties associated with childcare and home broadband speeds. There were also concerns around sustaining communication across staff, maintaining morale and ad hoc teamwork, which was more difficult when not office based, particularly given the additional pressures. There were also difficulties with onboarding and supervising new staff remotely. One grantee worked around this by giving a new trainee the opportunity to work in the office every day with at least one member of staff to ensure supervision.

Despite some of the challenges, grantees were generally positive about the move to remote delivery. In some cases, grantees were encouraged by the swift shift to remote delivery, having previously delivered the bulk of services in person and referenced maintaining the approach where successful (see section 2.2 for more information).

“Most people didn’t have a smart phone, or they didn’t have the data to do it (engage with online tools) and it was often a cost issue. Some clients didn’t have credit to even make a phone call, usual problem where they fall out of contract and disappear for a while and then resurfacing when someone could afford to – affordability and digital confidence for that client group were the biggest drivers of who was using technology.”

Changes to demand

As reflected in the quantitative data, grantees reported experiencing higher demand particularly over the funding period. This increased activity was often driven by new clients who had experienced a change in employment or financial situation. Vulnerability was referenced as a key factor both in terms of approach to delivery and demands on services. This related to age as older clients were less likely to have access to technology/the internet as well as younger clients where there may have been an imbalance of power with bodies such as private landlords. Clients with language barriers and mental health problems also presented challenges for grantees when providing support remotely.

“new clients were younger and seemed more technically able and more literate...But no one can self-serve, they all need advice...There’s a power imbalance between a landlord and a tenant and they need support to know their rights.”

In terms of areas of law, grantees referenced seeing decreases in demand for housing support as a result of the moratorium on evictions which reduced the numbers of matter started. For some, this meant shifting support to other areas of housing such as illegal evictions or furloughing housing support staff. Debt advice also saw a reduction in demand which was attributed to government measures linked to the suspension of bailiff action. Grantees anticipated these issues would resurface as government support ends and may mean higher levels of arrears. Welfare Benefit support was given largely to new clients who had faced a change in financial situation which meant grantees supported fewer benefit appeals than prior.

Outside of social welfare issues, Asylum and Immigration support was also referenced by grantees who highlighted that these cases tended to be complex as they clustered around other issues including domestic violence and housing, particularly with clients with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF). This increased need is anticipated to be sustained going forward (see section 2.3 for more details).

“There are a significant number of private tenants with massive rent arrears who haven’t had a decent income in 18 months. We’re seeing rent arrears of £20k and mortgage arrears for £50k.”

4.2 Objective 2: Procure equipment and training to enable remote delivery of services, and adapt their operations accordingly

Following the advent of COVID-19, grantees shifted most services from in-person support to remote delivery at pace in order to remain operational. To explore this further, the next section of the report examines data in relation to:

- How funds were spent on equipment and training of new equipment
- The delivery methods used
- Methods to be sustained going forward

4.2.1. Expenditure data on training and equipment

Key Points

- Almost all (66 grantees) reported expenditure on IT.
- 70% of expenditure in relation to IT was used to procure new equipment.

As part of monitoring expenditure, grantees provided a monthly breakdown of spend across funded activities. Table 4 shows spend in relation to activities linked to IT equipment and training.

Table 3: Expenditure on IT

Funded Activities	Total Spend (£)	% of IT Expenditure
I.T./Communications equipment (i.e. laptops, smartphones, mobile phones, desk phones, monitors, printers)	311,025	69%
Upgrading or replacing I.T. and communications equipment	65,657	15%
Subscription based software for remote working	46,634	10%
Staff training of new equipment and software	23,580	5%
Database	3,000	1%
Total	449,896	100%

Almost all grantees (66) spent funding on IT. The majority of this expenditure went towards procuring new equipment such as laptops, smart phones, and monitors. Funding was also spent on upgrading or replacing existing IT subscriptions and training staff but to a lesser degree.

Insights from interviews revealed that grantees have also funded IT expenditure from other funders whose conditions were stricter. Therefore, this may be a smaller proportion of the money spent by organisations on digital products.

4.2.2. Delivery methods

Key Points

- Grantees have increasingly used different modes of delivery as the funding period progressed.
- Most delivery took place via telephone followed by online methods such as email.

Themes from interviews have revealed this was a large shift from before the advent of the pandemic where services were predominantly delivered in person

Secondary grantees were asked how they delivered advice to clients between April 2020 – March 2021. They provided estimated proportions across the following list of delivery methods:

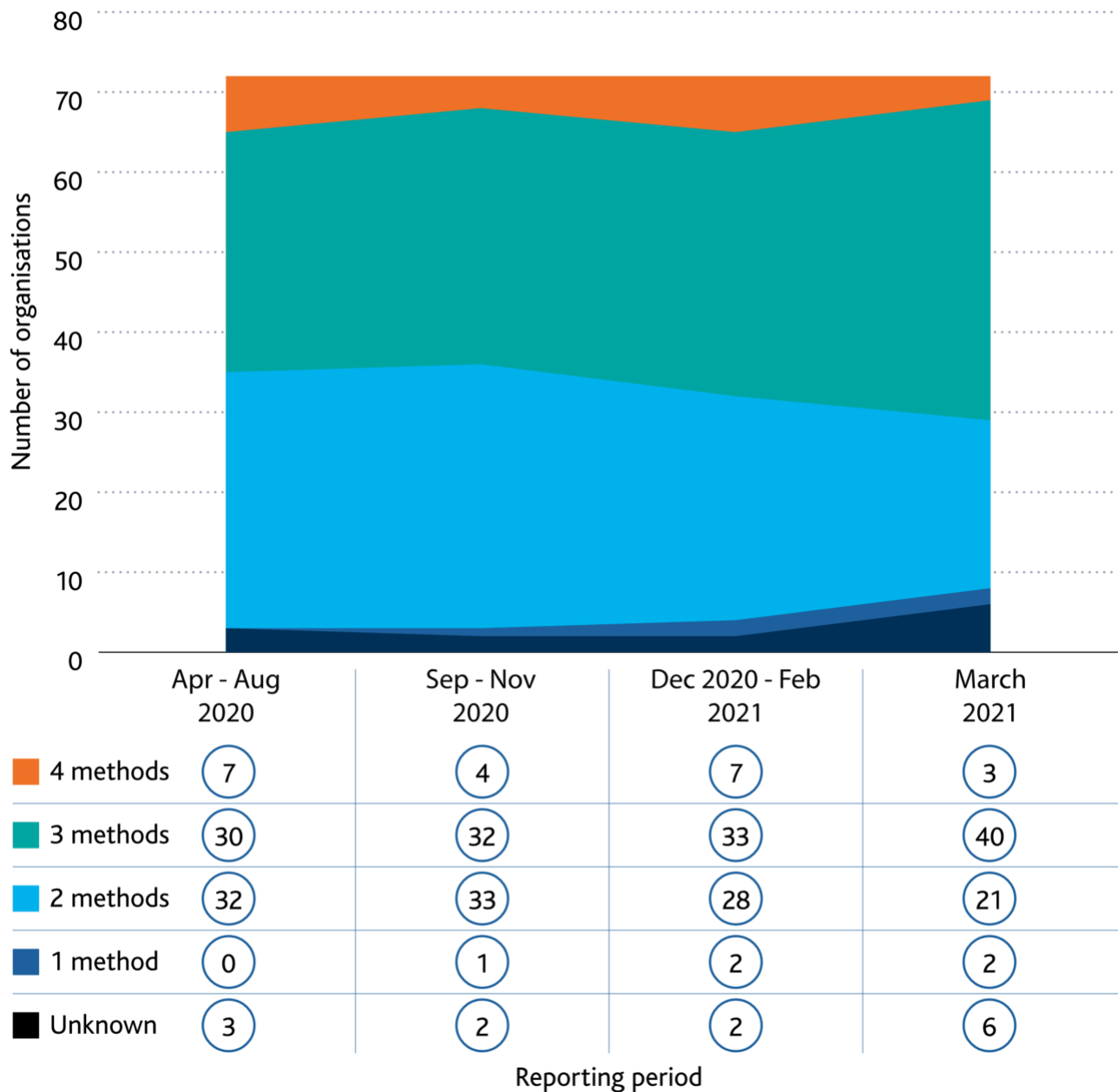
1. Online delivery via website form (e.g. 'Contact Us' page form), email, online chat function or online video conferencing (e.g. Skype, Zoom, FaceTime, or other Video Conferencing technology)

2. Telephone
3. Face-to-face in offices, client visits or other establishments (e.g. other third-sector establishments such as soup kitchens, shelters, and so on.)
4. Any other delivery methods

Please note that all data represents 'estimated proportions' and not case level. Moreover, as a result of the reporting cycle being dictated by internal deadlines at the MoJ, the data is based on estimates across different lengths of time. As such, analysis in this section covers proportions between April – August 2020, September – November 2020, December 2020 – February 2021 and March 2021. Therefore, any trends should be interpreted with a degree of caution.

Figure 8 shows the number of delivery methods used by grantees across each of the reporting periods from April 2020 to March 2021.

Figure 8: Number of delivery methods



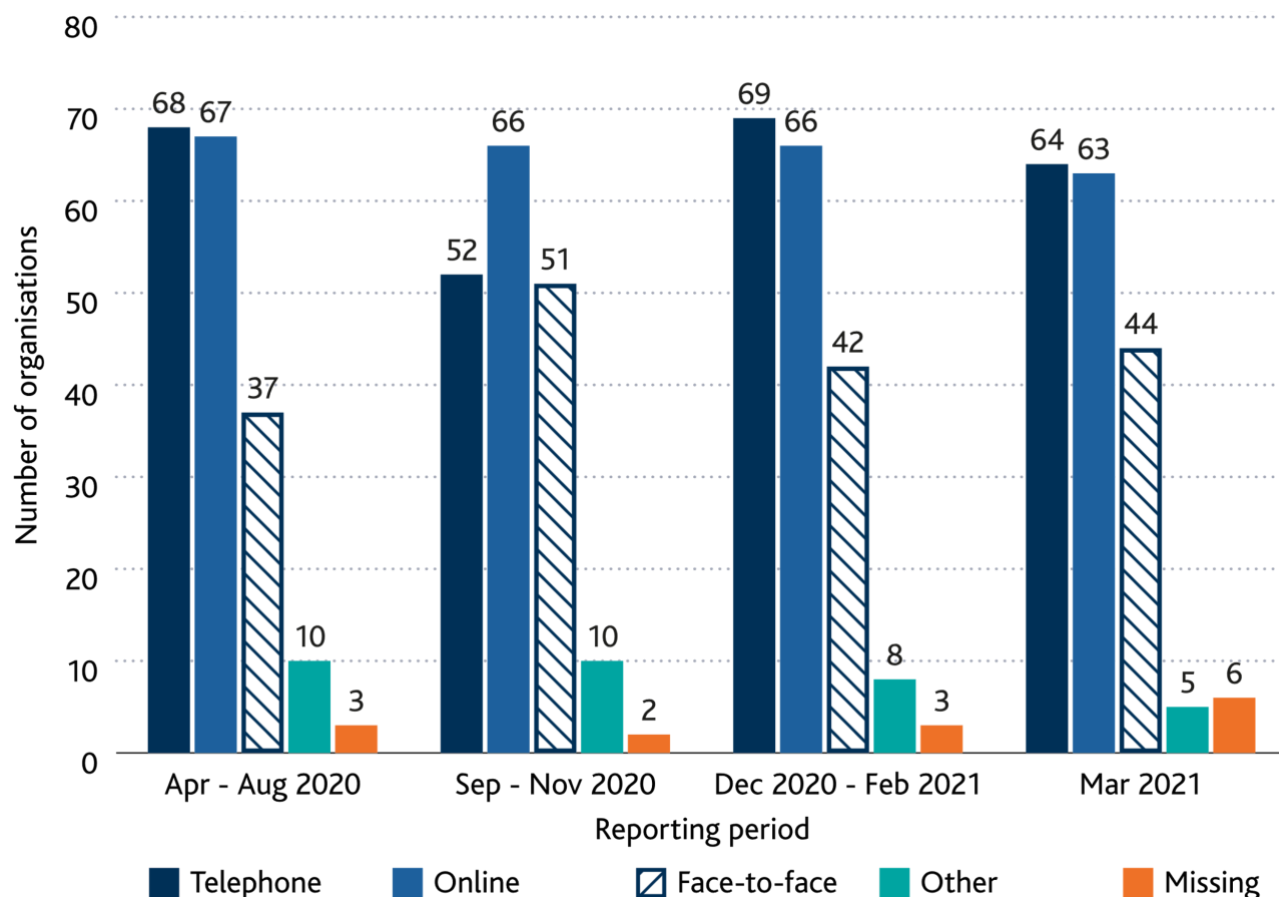
The data shows blended approaches were common and the use of more than two delivery methods became more frequent as the funding period progressed. Figure 8 shows just under a third (29%, 30) of grantees estimated using three delivery approaches at the start of the funding period and by March 2021, this had risen to 42% (40 grantees).

Interviews with grantees also referenced a need to maintain a flexible approach to delivering services which resulted in using a broader range of methods. The number of delivery methods used would have also been impacted by the national lockdowns introduced in March and November 2020 which resulted in fewer organisations providing face-to-face services. Facilitated by the Access to Justice Foundation, blended service

delivery will be examined further in a research study in autumn 2021 through the Ministry of Justice funded programme, Legal Support for Litigants in Person.

Figure 9 shows the prevalence of different delivery methods reported over time.

Figure 9: Frequency of various delivery methods used by organisations across funding period



Unsurprisingly, telephone delivery was used consistently by almost all grantees after the initial lockdown announcement (March 2020) and then again during the second lockdown (November 2021). Insights from interviews highlighted this was largely driven by accessibility of telephone devices over other technology such as laptops. Costs were also a factor as mobile data and broadband needed for video conferencing was not always available. This highlights the challenge of reaching digitally excluded groups and the need for multiple service delivery methods.

Online delivery, including chat functions and video conferencing, were also used consistently across the funding period. Grantees used email most frequently with between 58-86% (42-62) of grantees reporting this over the full reporting period. Online video conferencing (such as Skype, Zoom and FaceTime) was used by around half of

organisations between April – November 2020 and in March 2021 when restrictions were at their strictest.

Face-to-face support was used throughout the funding period, however, to a lesser degree. In-person support decreased initially when the first lockdown was in place. As restrictions were eased, face-to-face support increased but then reduced again when the second lockdown was implemented. In terms of location, 43%-68% (31-49) of grantees reported using their premises deliver support over the full reporting period.

A small number of organisations reported using 'Other' delivery methods which included social media, letter/post, and mobile messaging services such as WhatsApp. This further highlights findings from interviews that revealed the priority was to deliver services flexibly to meet clients needs. The approach was often linked to client characteristics where newer and younger clients were more inclined to use online methods of delivery whereas existing and mostly older clients were less able to do so.

There is negligible baseline data to compare this to pre-pandemic levels to evaluate the size of the change in approach to delivery. However, interviews revealed that remote delivery was used far less frequently or almost negligibly prior to the pandemic.

4.2.3. Changes to delivery to be sustained – Interview Data

Key Points

- Grantees planned to use a blended approach of remote and in-person delivery going forward.
- The approach used will be dictated by client need and capability.

In interviews, all grantees highlighted expecting a blended approach to delivery to be maintained beyond restrictions being relaxed. The decision on what mode of delivery would be dictated by client need and capability.

“We’re looking to see whether we’ll continue to do more advice remotely by phone and email. I think we will return to seeing a good number of people face to face as a lot of people prefer that and for some people and cases this is much easier...We need to figure out how we can be as accessible as possible. We developed the weekly drop-ins so we could be accessible. This was one of the most important things to do so people could access legal advice quickly.”

Examples of opportunities to continue to deliver services remotely included where clients faced challenges with travel as a result of mobility or financial circumstance. Interviewees also referenced how clients had become more familiar with online tools as a result of engaging with government support that had been moved to electronic systems such as Universal Credit applications. As a result, some clients were more able to use online support and grantees felt more encouraged to provide this going forward. Alongside this, changes to the Legal Aid Agency (LAA) system had meant digital files were now accepted and for one grantee this meant moving to a digital filing system which saved time. This could suggest that if processes used by the LAA or the Home Office return to previous requirements of in-person signatures, there could be delays in resolving related legal matters, and the approaches to blended delivery methods would look very different.

Examples given where grantees felt in-person support would continue to be used were related to vulnerability. As mentioned previously, this related to difficulties as a result of financial circumstance and accessible devices which were linked with age, living situation, and language barriers.¹⁰ Grantees also referenced the effects of difficulties with communication in support sessions related to difficulties recognising distress or supporting clients with hearing impairments. There were also challenges related to uploading and sending documentation that could be useable in court.

¹⁰ However, one grantee is now working with a Local Authority to provide technology to families to support in this area.

4.3 Objective 3: Increase their capacity to meet the significant rising demand for advice services

The third objective of funding was to enable grantees to increase capacity as it was anticipated that the pandemic would likely cause a rise in demand for services. This section of the report covers the following data points:

- Expenditure to increase capacity in terms of staff, location, and tools for delivery
- Volume of support provided by organisations in specific areas of law compared to pre-COVID-19 levels
- Website traffic compared with levels pre-COVID-19
- Commentary from interviews related to changes to delivery and clients

4.3.1. Funding spent on expansion of services – staff, equipment and geographic location

Key Points

- Just under a third (31 grantees) reported expenditure on expansion of services.
- 70% of expenditure in relation to IT was used to procure new equipment.

As part of monitoring expenditure, grantees provided a monthly breakdown of spend across funded activities. Table 5 shows a breakdown and proportions that were spent in relation to activities that were linked to expansion.

Table 4: Expenditure on Expansion

Funded Activities	Total Spend (£)	% of Expansion total
Expansion of services offered, incl. collaborating with other organisations	116,150	55%
Hiring staff to increase capacity	69,108	33%
Extension of geographic reach of services	26,981	13%
Total	212,239	100%

Just under a third (31) of organisations reported spend in relation to expanding the number of staff, services and/or location. Slightly over half of this expenditure (55%) was in relation to expanding services which included collaborating with other organisations. A third of funds were used to increase staff capacity and around a tenth (13%) were used to extend the geographic reach. Further commentary from interviews in relation to expansion is summarised in section 2.7.

4.3.2. Issues supported pre/during pandemic

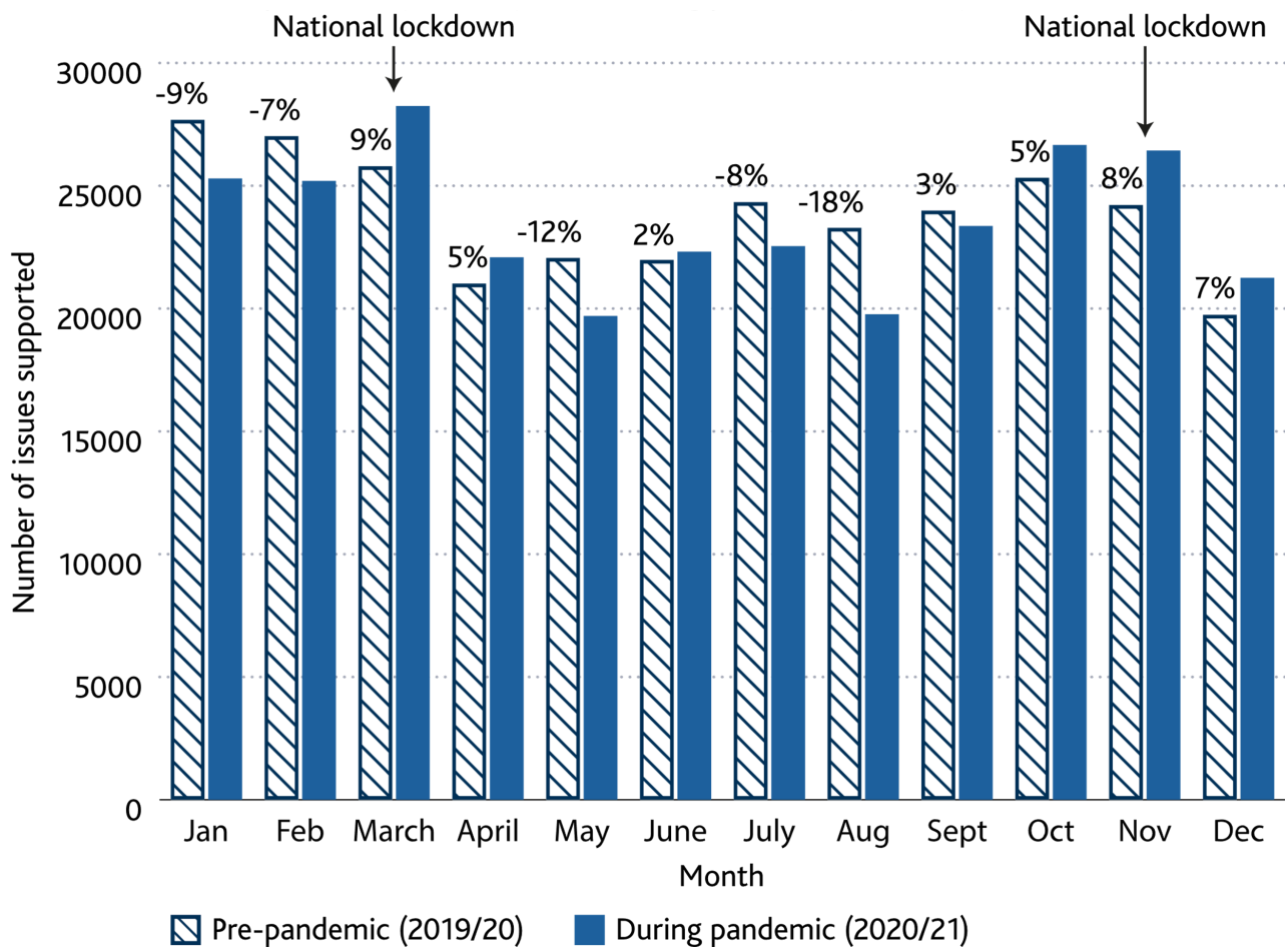
Key Points

- There was a mixed trend of increasing and decreasing support when comparing support provided during the funding period with pre-pandemic levels.
- March saw an increase of 9% in clients supported whereas August saw a decrease of 18%.
- The data was highly diverse suggesting further distributional analysis should take place to explore trends in more detail.

Grantees were asked to provide monthly activity data from a selection of civil law issues in the year prior to the advent of COVID-19. This data was gathered to understand how activity levels had changed over time and assess the impact of the pandemic on demand for support services.

Figure 10 displays a comparison of this data across months from 2019 – 2021.

Figure 10: No. of issues supported – Comparison with pre-COVID-19 data



*** One grantee has reported that as a result in a change of case management system in March 2020, figures are based on estimates for that month only.

In aggregate, there was a mixed trend of increasing and decreasing support when comparing data pre-COVID-19 with activity over the funding period. The biggest difference was seen in August where grantees reported a decrease of 3,517 (18%). While approximately half of this was driven by one organisation that reported a decrease of 1,345 issues, almost a third (22) of grantees reported a decrease of between 1,338 and 50 issues in August. As highlighted in section 1.2, this may be as a result of government policies which were in place and delayed events that triggered advice seeking behaviour. Alongside this, organisations have had to reduce capacity and therefore their ability to deliver services as a result of decreasing office capacity to enable social distancing and a degree of staff absences as a result of sickness and caring responsibilities.

The largest increase in support was in March where grantees reported 2,537 additional issues. Again, there is a large range when looking at individual data where one organisation reported an increase of 1,038 issues and another reported a decrease of 857 issues. The median change was an increase of 24 issues. While smaller than what was reflected in aggregate, this would be significant for many organisations as an individual case represents several hours of case work, particularly when complex.

When looking at the areas of law where the largest changes in support provided were reported, the **highest increases** were reported in relation to:

- **Asylum & Immigration** where, on average, organisations reported an increase of 18% across months during the funding period when compared to pre-COVID-19 data. This aligned with themes from interviews highlighted in section 1.5.
- **Employment** where there was an average increase of 17% across months. Large increases were reported between April – November but decreases reported between December – March which may be as a result of the government furlough scheme.

The **largest decreases** in support provided were in the areas of:

- **Debt** where, on average, supported decreased by 41% across the year. The biggest decrease was reported in August where 79% fewer support sessions were reported. Interviews linked this to the suspension on bailiff action.
- **Welfare Benefits** where there was an average decrease of 17% across months. The largest decrease was in May and interviews reported this may have been linked to fewer benefit appeal cases over the funding period.

Again, there is a high degree of diversity in the data therefore further analysis to measure dispersion and correlation across variables should be used to explore trends in detail.

4.3.3. Website traffic pre/during pandemic

Key Points

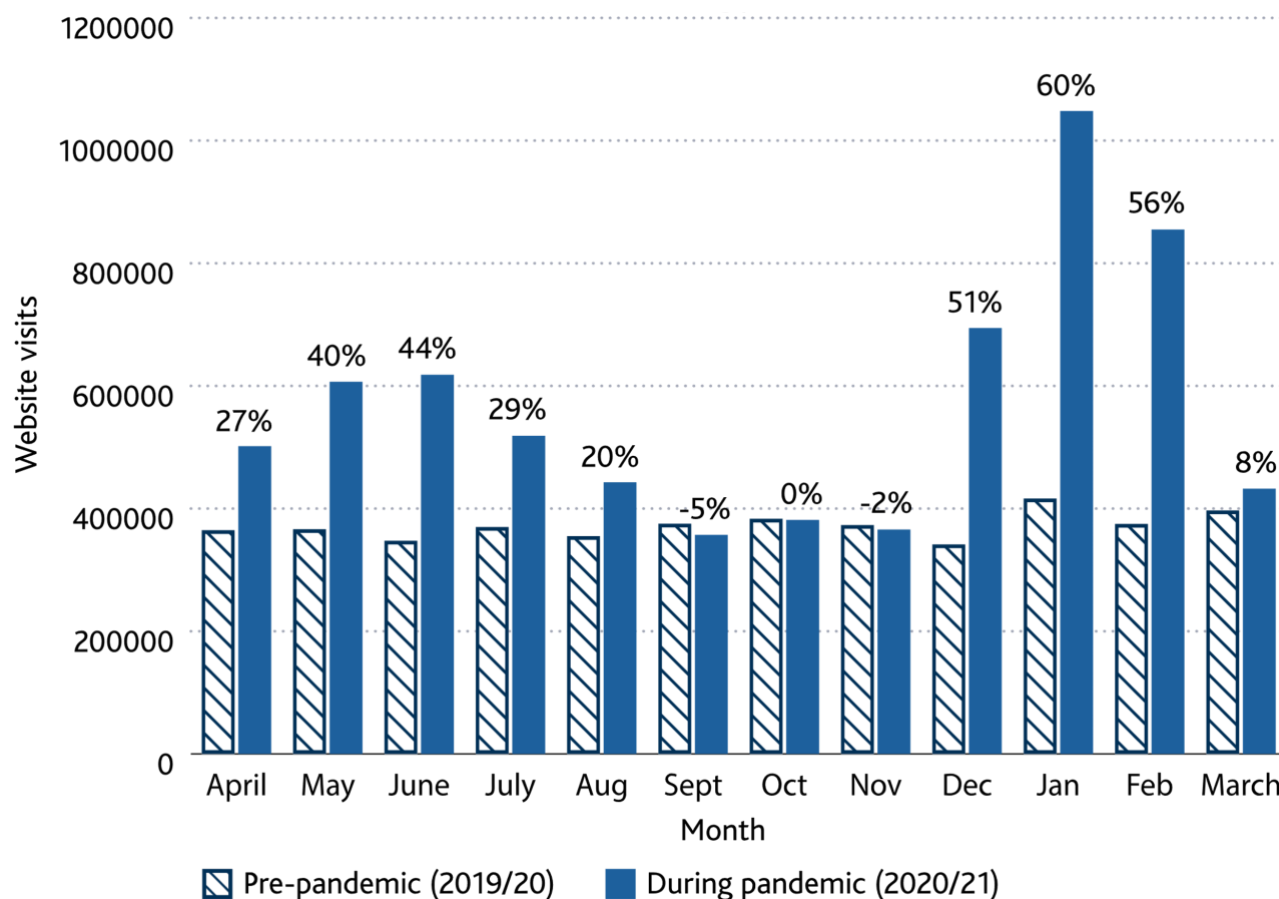
- Website traffic was higher in all but 3 months over the funding period when compared to pre-pandemic levels.
- Data over the winter period saw particularly high levels of website traffic when compared to pre-pandemic levels.
- Figures should be interpreted with caution as a result of the reduced sample and an element of seasonality.

As referenced earlier, website traffic is likely to be indicative of concerns people may have which have led to seeking information on issues and/or searching for contact details for organisations that can provide support.

Figure 11 compares website traffic during the funding period with pre-COVID-19 levels.

Please note, data is from a subsample of 16 grantees who were able to provide this data consistently from 2019 – 2020.

Figure 11: Website traffic pre/during pandemic (16 organisations)



The data shows increased traffic to websites across most months. While some of the largest differences are as a result of one or two organisations, most organisations reported increased traffic. These differences were particularly large over the winter months which may be attributed to seasonality, particularly in January following the Christmas and New Year holiday period, where there was a 60% increase. Open text box responses revealed this spike could also be linked to the additional school closure announcements that raised concerns for families.

Again, there was a high degree of diversity in individual data which could be indicative of the quality of the data, particularly where data is historical.

4.3.4. Increasing capacity - Interview data

Key Points

- Short-term funding was a barrier to increasing capacity particularly in terms of numbers of staff.
- Where capacity was increased, it was often because this had begun ahead of the pandemic period or where there was a client need.

In interviews, grantees were asked to comment on successes and challenges in terms of increasing capacity through staffing, tools for delivery or location of services. Overall, increasing capacity was challenging. The uncertainty around the length of the pandemic, changing government measures, and the lack of secure and long-term funding made it difficult for organisations to plan ahead. This was exacerbated by the conditions of the fund which meant all expenditure had to be accounted for by the end of March 2021. As many organisations received grants in September 2020, this left a 9-month period to allocate the funds. This meant that the priority was to maintain the delivery of services.

“Our concern was just to have a service functioning and remain financially solvent. The way our business model works is where 40% grant funded and 60% generated income (legal aid). Because the courts were closed, our generated income dipped in the lockdown and that was major concern and that’s the concern over the next two financial years.”

In terms of increasing capacity in each of the ways identified, the following themes emerged:

- **Staff:** this related to securing longer-term funding to guarantee salaries. Interviewees anticipated needing additional resource going forward because of the continued increase in demand yet were not able to guarantee salaries particularly given the reduced revenue from legal aid work. This further exacerbated issues around recruitment and retention of staff such as low salaries in comparison to the private sector, job security and high workloads. Remote supervision of new staff was also challenging and there were concerns linked to losing existing experienced staff again related to funding. The furlough scheme and reducing salaries across an organisation had been used by a grantee as a result.
- **Tools for delivery:** As referenced in sections 1.5 and 2.2, the use of technology and online delivery was not always deemed appropriate, therefore grantees felt expanding services via digital means was not always worthwhile. Alongside this, additional resource to run a two-tiered system of both face-to-face advice and remote support, was not always manageable where staff already had a full caseload of cases.
- **Location:** Finding locations to expand services was referenced as a challenge. Previously, expansion took place in existing spaces such as libraries and churches

but given their closure, this was not possible. Where geographic expansion had taken place, in one instance, this had been planned ahead of the first lockdown. However, there were challenges with raising the profile of the new service because of the lockdown. Another example of geographic expansion was one which took place due to increasing numbers of enquiries from clients outside the borough.

“We decided to expand before the lockdown. It has made it much more difficult because of the pandemic. The idea was going to be that we would set up an office and see how that developed but because we don’t have that strong presence, it has made it more difficult.”

- **Areas of Law:** Expansion into supporting other areas of law was led by client need in most instances. The drop in Housing Possession Court Duty Schemes as a result of moratorium on evictions had meant funding and demand dipped. One grantee instead provided support in homelessness cases, illegal evictions, and advice related to a Local Authority’s homelessness duties.

“We were fairly open and fluid in how to respond. As new things arose, we looked at how we could manage it and work with new organisations, more grassroots organisations. And that’s where we get a lot of our clients from the mutual aid groups and the organisations that were working with people.”

5. Feedback on the Delivery of the Grant

The next section provides a high-level summary of findings based on grantees' views at the end of the funding period on what worked well and what could have been improved.

5.1. What worked well?

Key Points

- Grantees expressed satisfaction with the application process, timely receipt, and delivery method of the funding.
- The funding and its flexible nature enabled organisations to remain operational, financially stable, limit furloughs, and deliver quality service during COVID-19.
- The 'light-touch' approach to reporting with accessible reporting formats, reminder emails, and support from grant managers was appreciated by organisations.

Overall, organisations expressed gratitude for the timely, “vital”, and “invaluable” nature of this funding. They appreciated the ability to use the fund flexibly, as it allowed organisations to incur the costs of varied issues that arose due to COVID-19. Grantees highlighted that the funding helped their organisations limit or avoid the furlough of specialist staff, as also bring back furloughed staff. This enabled organisations to continue delivering specialist legal advice.

During interviews, while grantees had mixed views on the delivery of the fund, captured in the next section, the feedback was largely positive. Grantees felt that early cash flow and flexible aims of funding demonstrated trust in the organisations' ability to deliver quality services in the right manner. This led organisations to continue providing specialist services and implement early intervention measures, particularly in cases of potential homelessness, destitution, and unemployment during COVID-19. Having the primary grantee (ATJF or LCN) as the intermediary was also deemed to be helpful as it provided a significant amount of support across operations, delivery, and data.

In terms of data gathering, grantees appreciated the short reporting formats and open communication channels with grant managers at a time of significant pressure. This enabled grantees to focus on operations rather than having to produce volumes of detailed data for reporting, which would have been too resource intensive.

“The Community Justice Grant (CJF) has been a vital funding source for our charity. This timely grant enabled our community housing advice service to continue our provision of housing and homelessness advice. In an ever-changing landscape within the housing sector and wider community, the grant has also provided the financial security needed to adapt and grow our service. We have established effective remote working with clients, while expanding our community outreach, building networks with community members and organisations supporting those most isolated and in need. Prior to receiving the CJF grant, trustees were considering furlough, so the effect has been truly transformational on our charity and those we support.”

“The funding we received from CJF was game-changing for us; it gave us the security we needed through significant COVID disruption, and we're much stronger as a result. It enabled the charity as a whole to focus on its core work - top quality legal services - rather than worrying about budget or potentially downsizing as an organisation. This was particularly important given our clients were even more vulnerable as a result of COVID, and the issue itself (EU citizens' rights in the UK) was becoming increasingly complex, as it continues to be.”

“The reporting format was accessible and easy to follow. It was very welcome that reporting requirements were minimised. The fund was delivered very professionally and efficiently. The application process was reasonable and proportionate, and enabled a swift turnaround. This was essential to address the funding uncertainties caused by the COVID crisis. We are very grateful for this response.”

“The funding from the Justice Fund has been central to sustaining our specialist Housing advice and the financial stability of our organisation and has helped us to re-establish our Immigration Service and to bring staff back from furlough to meet demand for advice and representation in both advice areas.”

“We were able to bring the Housing Advisor back from furlough with another coming back at the end of September. The funding has also helped support our overheads and running costs. We have lost significant Housing Legal Aid income due to the suspension of repossession and eviction and proceedings and without the ATJF support our Housing Advice Service would have ceased.”

“We are grateful to receive this funding lifeline as our income has ceased due to the courts not operating. We are able to continue to provide free advice services as a result.”

“Thank you for your support. The figures show that we have maintained our full service.”

“The grant has been absolutely fundamental to us being able to deliver an expanded legal advice service during the COVID-19 crisis. We are extremely grateful for this support, which has enabled us to help more working parents in a 12-month period than ever before...”

5.2. What could have been improved?

Key Points

- There was mixed feedback on the speed of fund delivery, with few grantees commenting that they had to make short term cuts due to the gap between the announcement of funding and its receipt.
- Additional data gathered could have included case-studies and broader categorisations of services to better reflect experiences of the pandemic and the grant for grantees.

Few grantees had critical views around the delivery of the fund. While some organisations said money came quickly and at the right time, others noted that the delay between March 2020 and receipt of funds was too long. This delay prompted issues such as deferring rental payments and cutting salaries in order to ‘keep the lights on’.

Grantees also highlighted issues with data gathering around the number of reports and formats. Few grantees found filling the number of monitoring reports required at short notice cumbersome, particularly at a time when they were operating on limited capacity. However, it is not clear whether this was directly related to the CSASS grant or a result of the different reporting requirements from various grants that organisations would have accessed. A grantee mentioned the need for more proactive communication when there are changes in expected timelines at short notice. A grantee suggested that aligning the reporting dates with financial quarters would also make reporting easier for them.

“A lot of monitoring and update requests. E.g. case studies, data for the CJF case for support, in addition to five 'quarterly' reports including the pilot report, and one final report that is coming up. This has been a resource-intensive grant to manage, we can count eight monitoring/content requests over a nine-month grant period. Our team would also have benefited from longer notice for some of these requests which, require input from different staff members. Or alternatively, fewer requests that cover more questions at the same time or longer time periods.”

As highlighted in the previous section, most grantees were content with the reporting format, however few had challenges where they were unfamiliar with grant reporting processes. In particular, the term ‘issues’ was difficult to interpret for one organisation, suggesting that it may have been better to refer to this as ‘engagement’. A grantee recommended having the option for more qualitative reporting with better categorisation

that would allow organisations to demonstrate their varied services and ongoing engagement. Another grantee similarly noted the desire to use case studies in the reporting which would give the narrative behind some of the numbers and may be better at demonstrating the value of funding.

“It is difficult to design a data gathering model that can reflect the very different services delivered by the grantees. I am concerned that it may appear that our service has not been supporting many clients because of the way that we have traditionally reported our workload. It is difficult to identify common meaningful measures that can compare the throughput of clients for a frontline advice agency with the type of work undertaken by an agency like us. This only means that care is needed when quoting composite figures about the work that was supported by the Fund.”

Finally, grantees also highlighted issues unrelated to reporting. One grantee said they would not have been able to provide any additional data as they did not possess the infrastructure to do so. Grantees highlighted the need for significant additional funding and resource in order to develop such infrastructure.

6. Conclusion

Overall, the data shows that grant funding has helped the 72 not-for-profit advice providers remain operational over the course of the pandemic, thus fulfilling the primary aim of the financial support. Fundamentally, this report demonstrates how grants have enabled recipients to pay staff wages considering significant reductions in funding as well as procure the necessary equipment to deliver services remotely. This was at a time where the volume of needs in relation to legal advice has grown as a result of increasing levels of financial and employment instability and changes to family dynamics.

While there was a lot of diversity in terms of how funds were used and the level and nature of demand on individual services, there were a number of key successes. Operationally, the flexibility of the grant meant recipients were able to deliver services in a way that best met client needs across the range of specialisms, locations, and sizes of grantees. A key success was the role that ATJF and LCN played in delivering the grant and providing timely and flexible support. On the frontline, the funding enabled recipients to hire and keep experienced staff in order to provide specialist services in an unstable period. Grantees used funds to implement early intervention measures and delivery tools which meant that clients, who were often vulnerable, received support and advice throughout the pandemic. In most cases, new services and approach to delivery will be sustained to some degree dictated by client need and nature of services provided.

Nonetheless, there were several challenges for organisations. Rising levels of legal need, particularly in the areas of social welfare, a broader client base and higher volumes of complex and clustered issues, were all referenced as difficulties by grantees. Besides these, increasing capacity in terms of staff, services, and tools for remote delivery was challenging in the absence of certainty around longer-term funding. This was exacerbated as the pandemic period continued where events that trigger advice seeking behaviour - such as increased court capacity and the winding down of government measures in housing and employment - began to rise. These challenges have occurred at a time when the advice sector had been weakened prior to the pandemic. As a result, grantees are anticipating further instability going forward.

Recognising that the not-for-profit legal advice sector continues to feel and deal with further pressure on services and the ongoing negative impacts of COVID-19, the MoJ has

further invested £2m into wave 2 of the Community Justice Fund through the Sector Sustainability Grant (SSG). This funding, delivered over the financial year 2021/22, has been designed to prevent the closure of specialist advice services and lay the foundations for longer-term renewal and sustainability of the not-for-profit legal advice sector. Again, the MoJ aims to benefit from the improved access to insight and data to inform its policy interventions.

7. References

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8. Appendix

8.1 Appendix 1: Methodology

All funds received by the 72 secondary grantees was subject to monitoring and evaluation. Given the pressures organisations were under as a result of the pandemic, a key principle of the evaluation work was to generate insight whilst minimising additional burdens on grantees and any user of the support services. Therefore, principally, data gathered by grantees aimed to determine whether the grant funding met the objectives outlined in the introduction. Where available, grantees were also asked to provide retrospective data, allowing for a comparison to be made between the present activities and those before the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In addition to collecting information directly relevant to demonstrating the value of the grant, the MoJ used this as an opportunity to generate greater insight into the not-for-profit specialist advice sector.

Data was gathered via standardised templates, developed by MoJ analysts, at four points¹¹ across the funding period. Using excel workbooks, an online survey and interviews with a subsample of seven grantees, grantees provided:

- Information of organisations who have been supported
- Award amounts
- Expenditure data across each month of funding
- The number of cases supported by the organisations during the grant period, within specific areas of law
- The number of cases supported by the organisations prior to the grant period, within specific areas of law
- The delivery methods used to provide clients legal support throughout the funding period
- Website traffic data during the funding period and in the year prior
- Learnings on how the intervention was delivered

¹¹ September and November 2020 and February and March 2021.

Table 5: Reporting Schedule

Deadline	Data Provided	Period covered
15 September 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Actual spend by secondary recipients - Online surveys with performance data (covering current quarter and historical data) - Forecasts of further secondary grants to be awarded in the remainder of the grant period 	April – end of August 2020 (plus the relevant historical data)
December 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Actual spend by secondary recipients - Online surveys with performance data 	September - November 2020
January 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Interim report of findings 	April 2019 – November 2020
March 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Actual spend by secondary recipients - Online surveys with performance data 	December 2020 – February 2021
May 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Actual spend by secondary recipients - Online surveys with performance data - Details of any unspent funds (if relevant) - Details of any funding clawed-back (if relevant) 	March – end of April 2021
May - June 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Interviews with 7 secondary grantees 	
June 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Final report 	April 2019 – April 2021

8.2 Appendix 2: Secondary Grantees and Grant Value

Table 6: Organisations supported by grant funding

	Organisation Name*	Primary grant holder	Grant value
1	Anti-Trafficking and Labour Exploitation Unit	ATJF	£100,000
2	Asylum Aid	ATJF	£94,500
3	Asylum Justice	ATJF	£73,000
4	Asylum Support Appeals Project	ATJF	£55,000
5	Barking and Dagenham Citizens Advice Bureau	ATJF	£35,000
6	Barnet Citizens Advice Bureau	ATJF	£54,000
7	Brighton Housing Trust	ATJF	£97,000
8	Cardinal Hume Centre	ATJF	£71,200
9	Centre for Women's Justice	ATJF	£30,000
10	Child Poverty Action Group	ATJF	£83,000
11	Churches Housing Aid Society	ATJF	£43,513
12	Citizens Advice Denbighshire	ATJF	£40,000
13	Citizens Advice Gateshead	ATJF	£65,000
14	Community Advice and Law Service Ltd	ATJF	£90,000
15	Community Law Service (Northampton And County)	ATJF	£100,000
16	Coram Children's Legal Centre Limited	ATJF	£88,523
17	Disability Advice Service Lambeth	ATJF	£24,542
18	Disability Law Service	ATJF	£100,000
19	Free Representation Unit	ATJF	£75,000
20	Fusion Housing Kirklees Ltd	ATJF	£67,719
21	Greater Manchester Immigration Aid Unit	ATJF	£95,000
22	Greenwich Housing Rights	ATJF	£98,200
23	Hastings Advice and Representation Centre	ATJF	£85,000
24	Here for Good	ATJF	£45,000
25	Just for Kids Law Limited	ATJF	£50,000
26	Legal Advice Centre (University House)	ATJF	£50,000
27	New Forest Disability Information Service	ATJF	£20,000
28	Northamptonshire Rights and Equality Council	ATJF	£52,364
29	Oasis Cardiff	ATJF	£25,000
30	Oxford Community Work Agency Limited	ATJF	£27,435
31	Release Legal Emergency and Drugs Service Limited	ATJF	£70,620
32	Riverside Advice Ltd	ATJF	£75,420
33	Southampton Advice & Representation Centre (SARC)	ATJF	£27,865
34	Tamil Welfare Association (Newham) UK	ATJF	£34,000
35	Welsh Housing Aid (Shelter Cymru)	ATJF	£83,881
36	Working Families	ATJF	£65,000
37	Youth Legal and Resource Centre	ATJF	£54,000
38	Bristol Law Centre	LCN	£153,500
39	Cambridge House Law Centre	LCN	£3,400
40	Camden Community Law Centre	LCN	£75,000

	Organisation Name*	Primary grant holder	Grant value
41	Central England Law Centre	LCN	£15,000
42	Citizens Advice Bradford & Airdale and Bradford Law Centre	LCN	£2,700
43	Cumbria Law Centre	LCN	£80,000
44	Derby Help and Advice	LCN	£60,000
45	Derbyshire Law Centre	LCN	£111,800
46	Ealing Law Centre	LCN	£4,000
47	Equality and Employment Law Centre	LCN	£80,000
48	Gloucester Law Centre	LCN	£93,700
49	Greater Manchester Law Centre	LCN	£140,000
50	Hackney Community Law Centre	LCN	£140,000
51	Hammersmith and Fulham Law Centre	LCN	£13,800
52	Haringey Law Centre	LCN	£32,500
53	Harrow Law Centre	LCN	£155,000
54	Hillingdon Law Centre	LCN	£64,300
55	Isle of Wight Law Centre	LCN	£61,900
56	Islington Law Centre	LCN	£61,000
57	Kirklees Citizens Advice and Law Centre	LCN	£10,000
58	Luton Law Centre	LCN	£75,000
59	Merseyside Law Centre	LCN	£120,000
60	North East Law Centre	LCN	£85,000
61	North Kensington Law Centre	LCN	£85,000
62	Nottingham Law Centre	LCN	£164,500
63	Paddington Law Centre	LCN	£72,000
64	Plumstead Law Centre	LCN	£36,600
65	Public Interest Law Centre	LCN	£50,000
66	South Wales Law Centre (speakeasy)	LCN	£92,000
67	South West London Law Centres	LCN	£274,000
68	Southwark Law Centre	LCN	£201,000
69	Suffolk Law Centre	LCN	£88,000
70	Tower Hamlets Law Centre	LCN	£100,000
71	Vauxhall Community Law and Information Centre	LCN	£60,000
72	Wiltshire Law Centre	LCN	£79,300

8.3 Appendix 3: Expenditure breakdown over time

Table 7: Expenditure in relation to funded activities over time

Month	Staff Costs (Existing and Hiring New Staff)	Payment of bills (rent, utilities, suppliers etc)	IT equipment and software (incl. working from home equipment)	Office Costs	Expansion of Services offered (geographic and subject)	Other	Total
Apr-20	223,712.83	35,320.43	23,579.74	9,645.41	5,150.00	-	297,408.41
May-20	170,242.12	32,614.67	16,089.59	3,608.29	5,150.00	-	227,704.67
Jun-20	200,459.25	24,819.34	29,162.65	6,349.19	6,150.00	-	266,940.43
Jul-20	284,037.30	57,132.82	40,211.92	16,512.65	7,950.00	1,800.00	407,644.69
Aug-20	261,258.67	35,591.37	17,451.22	18,528.60	10,831.00	1,800.00	345,460.86
Sep-20	428,313.96	78,024.34	40,761.42	29,974.35	24,333.00	3,400.00	604,807.07
Oct-20	379,145.03	50,864.03	56,630.05	21,806.54	12,413.00	2,500.00	523,358.65
Nov-20	405,903.59	53,045.37	52,877.94	12,507.12	29,953.00	2,500.00	556,787.02
Dec-20	417,602.49	60,580.72	41,153.31	21,633.46	11,399.69	10,117.00	562,486.67
Jan-21	378,360.05	46,852.29	28,272.96	22,198.20	8,524.45	5,083.67	489,291.62
Feb-21	366,099.94	49,752.00	85,471.10	17,352.58	12,355.58	3,167.00	534,198.20
Mar-21	290,029.05	55,457.03	55,377.78	51,591.00	8,920.90	2,012.40	463,388.16
Total	3,805,164.27	580,054.41	487,039.68	231,707.39	143,130.62	32,380.07	5,279,476.44

8.4 Appendix 4: Support across Areas of Civil Law

Table 8: Client support across areas of civil law – April 2019 – March 2021

Month	Asylum ¹	Community Care	Debt	Disability ²	Discrimination ³	Education	Employment	Housing	Immigration ⁴	Mental Health	Public and Administrative Law	Welfare Benefits	Other ⁵	Total
Apr-19	962	314	2,519	819	260	124	1,375	4,150	1,274	292	79	8,849	1,037	22,054
May-19	959	340	2,622	871	250	125	1,438	4,213	1,410	293	88	9,452	1,125	23,186
Jun-19	978	285	2,802	853	306	142	1,438	4,367	1,332	334	89	9,054	1,076	23,056
Jul-19	1,018	354	3,181	907	471	129	1,509	4,876	1,401	303	106	10,078	1,145	25,478
Aug-19	974	368	3,015	864	354	129	1,509	4,446	1,467	308	112	9,740	1,088	24,374
Sep-19	1,006	346	2,892	827	351	175	1,778	4,683	1,460	302	123	10,047	1,196	25,186
Oct-19	1,204	362	2,843	885	396	138	1,897	4,836	1,602	314	252	10,597	1,387	26,713
Nov-19	1,170	318	2,764	824	369	146	1,807	4,692	1,504	325	232	10,065	1,239	25,455
Dec-19	974	257	2,022	728	305	111	1,567	3,941	1,290	286	223	8,042	921	20,667
Jan-20	1,275	401	3,145	861	443	163	2,411	5,904	1,766	296	270	10,750	1,266	28,951
Feb-20	1,242	350	3,184	787	403	162	2,476	5,657	1,760	328	251	10,421	1,240	28,261
Mar-20	1,047	277	2,285	784	328	139	3,338	4,891	1,469	314	192	10,731	964	26,759
Apr-20	829	337	1,590	642	241	239	4,019	3,917	1,682	251	131	8,209	1,209	23,296
May-20	824	356	1,543	509	283	216	3,290	3,740	1,532	197	151	7,060	1,363	21,064
Jun-20	1,008	389	1,700	525	354	230	3,177	4,502	1,768	188	167	8,309	1,524	23,841
Jul-20	912	373	1,883	559	339	214	2,906	4,393	1,842	205	169	8,747	1,370	23,912

Month	Asylum ¹	Community Care	Debt	Disability ²	Discrimination ³	Education	Employment	Housing	Immigration ⁴	Mental Health	Public and Administrative Law	Welfare Benefits	Other ⁵	Total
Aug-20	759	352	1,681	537	315	206	2,372	3,756	1,680	184	171	7,756	1,158	20,927
Sep-20	1,289	394	1,770	868	312	484	2,109	5,157	2,120	375	179	8,305	22,060	45,422
Oct-20	1,280	503	2,265	955	552	325	2,526	5,736	2,623	401	219	9,275	23,427	50,087
Nov-20	1,316	547	2,352	1,017	242	319	2,717	5,594	2,491	450	219	9,170	21,211	47,645
Dec-20	682	376	1,632	944	274	231	1,542	3,738	3,639	264	153	7,778	3,025	24,278
Jan-21	801	489	2,186	1,002	364	226	1,782	5,210	3,434	270	188	9,345	2,717	28,014
Feb-21	644	567	2,357	953	315	240	1,570	5,141	4,725	271	229	8,186	2,828	28,026
Mar-21	1,200	713	3,001	979	543	298	2,795	7,903	1,462	306	225	8,822	3,085	31,332
Total	24,353	9,368	57,234	19,500	8,370	4,911	53,348	115,443	46,733	7,057	4,218	218,788	98,661	667,984

¹ Some organisations report Asylum & Immigration support together.

² A secondary grantee service is solely focused on the area of disability law, however data has been provided across the areas of law in the analysis.

³ A secondary grantee organisation has captured discrimination figures as part of their employment and disability data.

⁴ Some organisations report Asylum & Immigration support together.

⁵ Includes several different areas of law such as family, criminal, consumer, personal injury, civil litigation, general legal advice, health, mediation, and data protection, among others.