



Legal Aid  
Agency

Providing access to justice through working with others  
to achieve excellence in the delivery of legal aid

# Director of Legal Aid Casework

## Annual Report 2024 to 2025

4 December 2025



HC 1541



**Legal Aid Agency**

# **Director of Legal Aid Casework**

## **Annual Report 2024 to 2025**

For the period 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025

Presented to Parliament pursuant to section 7(4) of the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012.

Ordered by the House of Commons to be printed on 4 December 2025.

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## Foreword

I am pleased to present the Annual Report of the Director of Legal Aid Casework for the financial year from 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025.

My role as Director of Legal Aid Casework was created under the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012 (the LASPO Act 2012). As Director I am ultimately responsible for the determinations on individual legal aid applications in England and Wales, ensuring the independence of decision-making from government.

I have held this role since 8 July 2019, which is when I took over the roles of both Director of Legal Aid Casework and Chief Executive of the Legal Aid Agency (LAA).

This report summarises the work carried out on my behalf as Director. It includes decisions made and the processes followed, including the mechanisms that exist for holding me as the Director to account and scrutinising the LAA's work.

This report covers a period before a criminal attack on the LAA's digital systems. Changes to processes were implemented as a result of that attack in order to maintain access to justice and payments to

providers, the detail of which will be set out in the next report.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "J Harbottle". The signature is written in black ink on a white background.

Jane Harbottle

Director of Legal Aid Casework

# Introduction

1. The Director of Legal Aid Casework (the Director) is designated by the Lord Chancellor under section 4 of the LASPO Act 2012. The role of the Director is to make determinations on the provision of legal aid across England and Wales in individual cases.
2. The Director acts independently of the Lord Chancellor and other ministers. The LAA has clear internal processes and structures in place to ensure that this independence is maintained. These are set out in more detail in this report.
3. In practice, many of the functions exercised by the Director are delegated to LAA staff under sections 5(3) and (4) of the LASPO Act 2012. The LAA came into existence on 1 April 2013 and is an Executive Agency of the Ministry of Justice (MOJ).
4. The LAA Board supports the Director in ensuring that comprehensive practices are in place to maintain the independence of the decision-making process for granting legal aid.



5. The roles of the Director and the Chief Executive of the LAA may be held by the same person. However, different accountability and reporting arrangements exist for the two roles. Both roles have been held by Jane Harbottle since 8 July 2019.
6. This report explains how the Director has carried out the functions specifically entrusted to the Director under the LASPO Act 2012 over the last financial year. The LAA has separately published its Annual Report and Accounts that covers the wider remit of the organisation.

## The role of the Director

7. The Director is responsible for making determinations on individual applications for civil and criminal legal aid as set out in Part 1 of the LASPO Act 2012. This includes decisions on applications for Exceptional Case Funding (ECF) under section 10 of the LASPO Act 2012.
8. Under the LASPO Act 2012, the Lord Chancellor can issue directions and guidance to the Director about how to carry out their functions, but the Lord Chancellor must not issue such guidance in relation to individual legal aid applications. The Director must comply with any directions given and have regard to any guidance issued as well as act in accordance with the LASPO Act 2012 and associated regulatory framework.
9. This year the Lord Chancellor updated the Lord Chancellor's Guidance to reflect the introduction of Domestic Abuse Protection Orders (DAPO) and Domestic Abuse Protection Notices (DAPN), which are described in more detail below.

## The Legislative Scheme

10. Section 1(2) of the LASPO Act 2012 defines civil and criminal legal aid in terms of subsequent provisions of Part 1 of the Act. Civil legal aid is generally sought pursuant either to section 9 or section 10. Applications under section 9 are for what are often termed 'in scope' services, that is those described in Part 1 of Schedule 1 to the Act. Section 10 describes what is usually referred to as Exceptional Case Funding (ECF).
11. To obtain ECF an application must meet an additional test. Usually this is that the failure to provide legal aid would be a breach, or where there is a risk of a breach, of:
12. the individual's Convention rights (within the meaning of the Human Rights Act 1998); or
13. any rights of the individual to the provision of legal services relating to assimilated law (EU) rights.
14. An alternative test, called the wider public interest test, applies only to applications for advocacy for family members of the deceased at inquests.
15. Criminal proceedings are defined by section 14 of the LASPO Act 2012. By virtue of

section 14(h), regulations can prescribe as criminal, for legal aid purposes, proceedings that would otherwise be considered civil proceedings under domestic law.

16. Section 8(3) of the LASPO Act 2012 provides that any services that must be provided under criminal legal aid cannot be provided under civil legal aid.
17. Schedule 3 to the LASPO Act 2012 provides for the possibility of applications from non-individuals (legal persons), for both civil and criminal legal aid, subject to similar tests as apply to ECF.

## **Regulatory and legislative framework changes**

18. The legislative framework has undergone changes in 2024 to 2025:
  - I. The pilot for DAPNs and DAPOs under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 commenced on 27 November 2024 in Greater Manchester, the London boroughs of Bromley, Croydon and Sutton and the British Transport Police. It was extended in March 2025 to Redcar and Cleveland, Hartlepool, Middlesbrough and Stockton-on-Tees.

II. At the same time, provisions came into force to:

- (a) bring services relating to DAPO proceedings into the scope of civil legal aid (other than services covered by criminal legal aid);<sup>1</sup>
- (b) include advocacy for DAPO proceedings in the Crown Court and the magistrates' court within the services covered by civil legal aid;<sup>2</sup>
- (c) prescribe as criminal, for legal aid purposes, matters relating to DAPOs arising in existing criminal proceedings;<sup>3</sup> and
- (d) prescribe DAPNs as allowable evidence of domestic abuse for the purposes of applications for services described in paragraph 12 of Part 1 of Schedule 1 to the LASPO Act 2012 (divorce, finance and private law children proceedings).<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Paragraph 11(1A) Part 1 Schedule 1 of the LASPO Act 2012.

<sup>2</sup> Paragraphs 6 and 7 Part 3 Schedule 1 of the LASPO Act 2012.

<sup>3</sup> Regulation 9(ue) and (uf) of the Criminal Legal Aid (General) Regulations 2013.

<sup>4</sup> Paragraph 6A Schedule 1 to the Civil Legal Aid (Procedure) Regulations 2012.

III. With effect from 22 May 2025, further refinements have been made to these provisions of the LASPO Act 2012 and the Criminal Legal Aid (General) Regulations 2013. At the same time, general amendments were made throughout the civil legal aid legislation to replace references to ‘domestic violence’ with ‘domestic abuse’.<sup>5</sup>

IV. Where a defendant is alleged to have breached the terms of a DAPO, this can be dealt with either as a criminal offence or as a civil contempt of court. In either case, the defence would be covered by criminal legal aid under pre-existing legislative provisions.<sup>6</sup>

19. With effect from 20 November 2024, amendments were made to the Civil Legal Aid (Financial Resources and Payment for Services) Regulations 2013, the Criminal Legal Aid (Financial Resources) Regulations 2013 (‘the Financial Regulations’) and the Criminal Legal Aid (Contribution Orders) Regulations 2013 (‘the Contribution Orders

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<sup>5</sup> The Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012 (Legal Aid: Domestic Abuse) (Miscellaneous Amendments) Order 2025.

<sup>6</sup> Section 14(a) or section 14(h) of the LASPO Act 2012 and regulation 9(v) of the Criminal Legal Aid (General) Regulations 2013.

Regulations') as part of the implementation of the Means Test Review.<sup>7</sup>

I. On the civil side, in the calculation of both income and capital;

(a) The list of payments that the Director is required to disregard was extended to include payments under infected blood support/compensation schemes;<sup>8</sup> for historical child abuse;<sup>9</sup> under a Modern Slave Victim Care Contract or equivalent;<sup>10</sup> and of compensation for miscarriage of justice.<sup>11</sup>

(b) A further specific discretionary disregard was introduced for payments of compensation made under the Victims of Overseas Terrorism Compensation Scheme 2012,<sup>12</sup> alongside a residual general discretion to disregard

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<sup>7</sup> Government response to Legal Aid Means Test Review  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/legal-aid-means-test-review>

<sup>8</sup> Regulations 24(1)(t) and 40(1)(f) of the Civil Legal Aid (Financial Resources and Payment for Services) Regulations 2013.

<sup>9</sup> Regulations 24(1)(y) and 40(1)(k)

<sup>10</sup> Regulations 24(1)(z) and 40(1)(l).

<sup>11</sup> Regulations 24(1)(z1) and 40(1)(m).

<sup>12</sup> Regulations 24(3A)(c) and 40(2A)(d).

payments. For all discretionary provisions the Director may disregard a payment in respect of personal harm or for a specified purpose but not including any identifiable component of income replacement; or may disregard a payment where there is a connection between the loss or harm suffered and the legal aid application being made.<sup>13</sup>

- (c) Specifically in relation to the assessment of disposable capital, any payment of arrears under a social security enactment or of child maintenance received within the two years before the legal aid application must be disregarded;<sup>14</sup> such payments made more than two years before the application are subject to the discretionary disregard provisions.<sup>15</sup>
- (d) Provision was also introduced to confirm that, where an individual is temporarily absent from their main residence because of domestic abuse or the risk of such abuse, they can still benefit from the main residence exemption.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Regulations 24(3B) to (3E) and 40(2B) to (3E).

<sup>14</sup> Regulation 40(1)(n).

<sup>15</sup> Regulation 40(2A)(c).

<sup>16</sup> Regulation 39.



II. Within the criminal legal aid regulations, similar amendments<sup>17</sup> were made, although:

- (a) No disregard was introduced in relation to infected blood compensation/support schemes;
- (b) No disregard was introduced for arrears of payments of benefits or maintenance.
- (c) Within the Financial Regulations, no provision was introduced relating to temporary absence from the main residence arising from domestic abuse. There is no disregard for the main residence within the Contribution Orders Regulations.

III. General amendments were made to the civil regulations to reflect the coming into force of the 2024 Standard Civil Contract between the Lord Chancellor and legal aid providers on 1 September 2024.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Financial Regulations: regulation 11(3)(p) and (q), 11(4) to (6); regulation 13(1) (g) and (h), 13(1A) to (1C); regulation 20(2)(n) and (o); 20(2A) to (2C); regulation 33(2)(n) and (o); 33(2A) to (2C). Contribution Orders Regulations: regulation 10(2)(n) and (o); 10(2A) to (2C); regulation 28(3) to (3E).

<sup>18</sup> The Civil Legal Aid (Standard Civil Contract - Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2024.

## Decision-making process and structure

20. Determinations on individual applications and the functions of the Director are in practice delegated to LAA staff.<sup>19</sup> Specifically, individual case determinations are made by Case Management managed by Alistair Adan, Deputy Director and totalling around 900 staff. Case Management is divided into two groups, Civil and Crime.
21. Civil Case Management includes the Exceptional and Complex Cases Team (ECCT), Legal Merits, Family High-Cost Cases, Means, Civil Finance, Records Management and Central Business Support teams as well as dedicated Contact Centre Teams.
22. Crime Case Management includes the National Criminal Applications Team, Crime Billing Team, Criminal Finance Team, a

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<sup>19</sup> For some forms of service, individual determinations are delegated to legal aid providers. Civil: Legal Help, Help at Court, Family Help (Lower), Family Mediation and Controlled Legal Representation. Crime: Advice and Assistance, including Advocacy Assistance, under sections 13 and 15 of the LASPO Act 2012.

Contact Centre Team, and the Criminal Cases Unit.

23. All work has been underpinned by the LAA Strategy which sets out four guiding principles for the LAA: being user-centred; getting things right first time, taking a simplified and sustainable approach; and becoming a responsive, diverse, learning organisation. All of these enable the LAA to provide faster, better outcomes that work for legal aid clients, providers, taxpayers and LAA staff.
24. The LAA continues to work closely with stakeholders via the Process Efficiency Teams (PET) for Crime and Civil as well as the Civil and Crime Contracts Consultative Groups. The PETs are focussed on operational and process areas, while the Civil and Crime Contracts Consultative Groups focus on contracts and policy. Increased engagement with legal aid providers (providers) through these groups has enabled the LAA to make positive improvements to processes. The PETs are made up of internal subject matter experts, representative bodies and providers and each meets bi-monthly to identify operational issues and business improvements. In particular, the LAA has worked in close partnership with providers via this forum to

address issues around decision-making, for example by conducting reviews into cost limitations and community care cases. The LAA has also provided training to providers by creating guidance for providers new to working with the LAA. Additionally, through the PETs we have expanded the 'Help us Say Yes' campaign to include one on one clinics, casework and system tutorials as well as hosting webinars and question and answer events.

25. The LAA successfully rolled out the new service for processing criminal legal aid applications: Apply for Criminal Legal Aid. As of 6 August 2024, the service receives all criminal legal aid applications. Work continues with LAA Digital to iterate and improve the service, including adding search functionality and showing outcome decisions on the provider dashboard.
26. The LAA continues to invest in the Apply for Civil Legal Aid service. There are 205 providers now using the service with over 38,105 applications successfully submitted so far. Further capabilities are being developed to enable public law applications through the new service, as well as onboarding more firms.

27. The LAA has continued to work closely with providers and policy colleagues in the MOJ to implement legal aid policy reform. This has included progress on implementing changes following the Criminal Legal Aid Independent Review (CLAIR). The Criminal Legal Aid Advisory Board (CLAAB) published its first annual report on 14 November 2024. On the same date the MOJ responded to the Crime Lower consultation, which concluded in early 2024, announcing an increase of £24 million per annum for police stations and youth courts. A statutory instrument was laid on 14 November 2024 and came into force on 6 December 2024 to bring these changes into effect. A further announcement was made on 19 December 2024 of an additional £92 million per annum investment for Criminal Legal Aid Solicitors.
28. The ECCT deals with the more costly and complex civil cases funded by the LAA. This includes immigration cases, except for those funded via controlled work (which is defined in Regulation 21 Civil Legal Aid (Procedure) Regulations and is the way in which decision making for legal help and representation in the First Tier Tribunal is delegated to providers). Many applications received by the Director and referred to the ECCT continue to have a high profile.

29. Exceptional Case Funding (ECF) falls under the ECCT. The ECF scheme covers all civil applications outside the scope of ordinary civil legal aid funding described in the LASPO Act 2012. ECF can cover all forms of service.
30. ECF applications must be considered on an individual basis, considering the facts and the statutory requirements for funding and having regard to the guidance on ECF and case law. Applications can be, and sometimes are, made directly by legal aid applicants.
31. To ensure that legal aid legislation and guidance issued by the Lord Chancellor are applied in a consistent manner, advice and training have continued to be provided to all LAA caseworkers, tailored according to the particular role of each casework team.
32. Legal advice to the Director, and litigation on behalf of the Director, is provided by lawyers from the Government Legal Department.
33. Decisions on individual applications are delegated to caseworkers with the opportunity for escalation as necessary. Ultimately, the decision to grant or refuse an application remains that of the Director.

## Appeals and reviews

34. All determinations made by the Director are subject to a right of internal review where requested. Furthermore, unless the application is for ECF, or the Director determines that the case is not within the scope of the LASPO Act 2012, there is a further right of appeal to an Independent Funding Adjudicator (IFA). IFAs can be a solicitor or barrister or Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Legal Executives from private practice. IFAs are members of the Funding and Costs Appeals Review Panel (FCARP). Panel members are not employees of the LAA and act independently.
35. The decision of the IFA on certain issues is binding on the Director. These are:
- any assessment of the prospects of success of a case,
  - whether a matter has overwhelming importance to the client,
  - the cost-benefit ratio of the proceedings, and
  - discharge or revocation based on a client's behaviour.

36. Other issues are referred to the Director for reconsideration.
37. Some panel members in their roles as Independent Costs Assessors (ICA) consider appeals against the provisional assessment of costs by LAA staff. Costs Lawyers are also eligible to apply for the ICA role.
38. Appeals are allocated according to the specialist areas of law and or costs declared by each panel member.
39. There is a sub panel, the Special Controls Review Panel (SCRCP), which is made up of three specialist members of the FCARP who consider appeals relating to certain high-cost cases and other more complex cases. Within the FCARP there are 15 SCRCP members.
40. Aside from the SCRCP, a single panel member considers most appeals.
41. There were 71 panel members as at 31 March 2025. A recruitment exercise for the FCARP in 2024 resulted in 31 new appointments which took effect from 1 December 2024. These recruits replaced a similar number who had left the panel following the expiry of their terms. A further recruitment exercise is planned for the autumn of 2025. An induction package and



online training will be provided for those who are appointed.

42. If a client is dissatisfied with the final determination following a review and or appeal the only recourse remaining is litigation.

## **Litigation**

43. The Director's decision-making in individual cases is susceptible to challenge in the courts, including by way of judicial review. Further, the Director may be affected by any wider challenges brought to the operation of the legal aid scheme.
44. Three significant decisions, arising from ECF applications to the Director, were handed down in the course of 2024 to 2025.
45. *R (Oji) v The Director of Legal Aid Casework [2024] EWHC 1281 (Admin)* concerned an ECF application for assistance in submitting a claim to the Windrush Compensation Scheme. The LAA's refusal of the application was challenged on the basis that legal aid had been required under Articles 6 and 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR).

- I. The Article 6 ground was rejected for two reasons. First, the engagement of Article 6 required a dispute in relation to a civil right or obligation, and there was no dispute between Ms Oji and the Secretary of State for Home Department (SSHD) at the point of her application to the compensation scheme. Second, the nature of the scheme, providing for discretionary payments in respect of a specific historical wrong rather than a statutory entitlement, was in any event not such as to engage Article 6. As regards Article 8, while a compensation payment could materially improve a claimant's life, it would not sufficiently have an effect on the essence of their private or family life to engage that Article.
- II. The Claimant also argued that section 10(3)(b) of the LASPO Act 2012 created a general discretion to grant ECF, the exercise of which the Director should have considered having rejected the Claimant's Article 6 and 8 arguments under section 10(3)(a). That argument was not accepted. It was confirmed that the discretion under section 10(3)(b) only arises where the Director has considered but been unable to reach a decision under section 10(3)(a).

III. The Claimant has been granted permission to appeal by the Court of Appeal, the appeal is to be heard on 10 December 2025.

46. *R (Alhasan) v Director of Legal Aid Casework and the Lord Chancellor [2024] EWHC 2013 (Admin)* involved a challenge against the Director in relation to a refusal of ECF and against the Lord Chancellor in relation to the legal aid legislation. While services relating to asylum claims are generally in scope under the LASPO Act 2012, attendance at an asylum interview is excluded, except where regulations provide otherwise. The Civil Legal Aid (Immigration Interviews) (Exceptions) Regulations 2012 provide that attendance at an asylum interview is in scope where the individual is under 18 at the time of the interview.

I. The Claimant had applied for asylum before his 18<sup>th</sup> birthday, and accordingly benefitted from Home Office safeguards for child applicants throughout his asylum process, but had turned 18 by the point of his asylum interview. His only possible route to be accompanied by a legal representative at the interview under legal aid was therefore through ECF. The Director, however, refused his ECF application.

- II. As against the Lord Chancellor the Claimant alleged that the regulations discriminated against him, in breach of Article 14 of the ECHR, in comparison with an applicant who remained a child at the point of their interview. As against the Director he argued that ECF should have been granted to protect his interests in the determination of his Articles 3 and 8 ECHR rights. It was held, however, that the regulations served a legitimate aim in controlling expenditure and were rational in tying the availability of services to the time at which they are received. The Director's ECF decision was held to have answered the question of an ECHR breach in a legally correct way, having regard to the role of the asylum interview within the application process as a whole. The assistance an individual might gain from representation at the interview was not sufficient to give rise to a positive obligation under Article 3 or 8 of the ECHR for legal aid.
- III. The issue of the Director's discretion under section 10(3)(b) of the LASPO Act 2012 was again raised, with reference to the earlier decision in *Oji*, but given the way in which the Claimant had pleaded his case the Court did not consider that it

needed to decide the correct interpretation of that provision.

47. *R (CWJ) v the Director of Legal Aid Casework and the Lord Chancellor [2025] EWHC 306 (Admin)*, may primarily be seen as a decision on its own facts. The Claimant had sought ECF to challenge his school exclusion before the Independent Review Panel (IRP). The LAA refused the application on the basis of a longstanding Court of Appeal authority<sup>20</sup> that such proceedings did not involve the determination of a civil right or obligation, where Article 1 of Protocol 2 to the ECHR did not guarantee a right of education at any particular institution, so that the right to a fair hearing under Article 6 of the ECHR did not arise. The Claimant referred additionally to discrimination issues, alleging a failure of the governing body to comply with their Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED). The Court found, however, that there had been no allegation before the IRP that the Claimant's exclusion discriminated against him in breach of section 85(2)(e) of the Equality Act 2010. The PSED on its own did not give rise to a civil right or obligation engaging Article 6 of the ECHR, whereas allegations under section 85(2)(e) could do so. A challenge to the

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<sup>20</sup> *R (on the application of LG) v The Independent Panel for Tom Hood School [2010] EWCA Civ 142*

lawfulness of Lord Chancellor's guidance  
(amended during the course of the  
proceedings) also failed.

## Accountability

48. There has been no change to the way the Director's functions continue to be open to public scrutiny. The mechanisms in place allowing the LAA's work to be scrutinised and interested parties to hold the Director to account are explained below.

### **Parliamentary questions and Freedom of Information Act requests**

49. Members of both Houses of Parliament can table parliamentary questions asking about the work carried out by the Director in respect of cases or individuals. All questions and answers are published on Parliament.UK. Similarly, the public can also submit requests for information held by the LAA under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and Data Protection Act 2018.
50. In 2024 to 2025 the LAA received 247 requests for information under the Freedom of Information Act. Of these, 44 related to the functions of the Director of Legal Aid Casework specifically. The majority related to grants of legal aid under ECF, applications in the Immigration and Asylum category of law

and applications made under the domestic abuse gateway.

51. In the same period there were 15 legal aid operations related parliamentary questions. Of these, three related to the Director specifically. Grants of legal aid to foreign nationals and in respect of unauthorised encampments were common topics. All responses to written parliamentary questions are published on Parliament.UK.
52. Information about an individual legal aid client is likely to be personal data and can only be released where the case meets the criteria set out within the UK General Data Protection Regulation and the Data Protection Act 2018.

## **Complaints**

53. The LAA thoroughly investigates all complaints using a two-tier complaints procedure. The initial complaint gives the LAA the chance to review the way the matter was handled at a local level and put the situation right if possible. If a complainant is not content with the initial response, they can escalate their complaint and request a further review. If the complainant remains dissatisfied with the escalated response, they have the right to refer their complaint to the



Parliamentary and Health Service  
Ombudsman (PHSO) via their local MP.

54. Complainants may also request financial redress from the LAA where there has been maladministration. As with complaints, if the complainant is dissatisfied with the LAA's response they have the right to refer their complaint to the PHSO via their local MP.
55. The LAA does not separately record complaints or compensation claims that relate specifically to the remit of the Director. Challenges to individual funding determinations should be made under the correct review or appeal process. However, a significant proportion of complaints, compensation claims and PHSO referrals relate to the applications process or the calculation of criminal contributions both of which concern the functions of the Director.

## Statistics

56. The LAA deals with applications for legal aid across various categories of law. The LAA publishes national statistics on numbers of applications within the [Legal Aid Statistics bulletin](#). This is published every quarter and statistics covering the period to the end of March 2025 were most recently published on 26 June 2025.
57. The number of legal aid cases administered by the LAA has increased by 6% in 2024 to 2025 compared to 2023 to 2024. In 2024 to 2025, there were 418,583 applications for legal aid, an increase of 8% compared to 2023 to 2024. Of these, 96% were granted, this can be broken down further into the following areas.
58. Magistrates' courts received 191,778 applications for legal aid in 2024 to 2025, an 11% increase compared to 2023 to 2024. Of these, 97% were granted.
59. The Crown Court received 105,075 applications for legal aid in 2024 to 2025, an 8% increase compared to 2023 to 2024. The proportion of Crown Court applications granted remains at 99%.

60. 118,212 applications for civil representation were received in 2024 to 2025.
61. 15,907 applications for civil representation supported by evidence of domestic abuse or child abuse were received in 2024 to 2025, up 29% from 2023 to 2024. 13,059 certificates for civil representation were granted in 2024 to 2025 via the domestic abuse and child abuse gateway.
62. 3,518 ECF applications were received in 2024 to 2025, which is a 5% increase compared to 2023 to 2024.

## Equality and Diversity

- 63. The LAA is subject to the public sector equality duty under section 149 (1) of the Equality Act 2010 and contributes to the delivery of the MOJ People Strategy.
- 64. The LAA requests that applicants for legal aid provide some personal equality information. This information enables the LAA to understand better the needs of legal aid applicants and compile statistics on their diversity.
- 65. The Director has reviewed the equal opportunity information that recipients of legal aid provided during 2024 to 2025 to monitor the extent to which the LAA continues to cater for the diverse population of England and Wales.
- 66. The LAA published statistics relating to the diversity of legal aid clients over the period 2024 to 2025 as part of the Legal Aid Statistics bulletin published on 26 June 2025. The Director will continue to review this information over the coming year.

## Conclusion


67. This report demonstrates that the LAA continues to ensure that controls and processes are in place to ensure the role of Director is conducted independently and to the highest standards of objectivity and transparency. The LAA shows its capabilities in responding to legislative and regulatory changes and in providing the support that the Director needs to perform their duties.
68. A copy of this report has been sent to the Lord Chancellor in accordance with section 7(3) of the LASPO Act 2012. The Lord Chancellor will lay a copy of the report before Parliament.



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