



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 2025 to 2026

16 July 2026



Legal Aid Agency

Director of Legal Aid Casework Annual Report 2025 to 2026

For the period 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026

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 16 July 2026.

HC 444



© Crown copyright 2026

This publication is licensed under the terms of the Open Government Licence v3.0 except where otherwise stated. To view this licence, visit nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3.

Where we have identified any third party copyright information you will need to obtain permission from the copyright holders concerned.

This publication is available at www.gov.uk/official-documents.

Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at Legal Aid Agency, 102 Petty France, London, SW1H 9AJ.

ISBN 978-1-5286-6741-8

E03629564 07/26

Printed on paper containing 40% recycled fibre content minimum.

Printed in the UK by HH Associates Ltd. on behalf of the Controller of His Majesty's Stationery Office.

Contents

Foreword	6
Introduction	7
The role of the Director	8
The legislative scheme	8
Regulatory and legislative framework changes	9
Decision-making process and structure	12
Appeals and reviews	14
Litigation	15
Accountability	17
Parliamentary questions and Freedom of Information Act requests	17
Complaints	17
Statistics	19
Equality and Diversity	20
Conclusion	21

Foreword

I am pleased to present the Annual Report of the Director of Legal Aid Casework for the financial year from 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026.

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.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'J Harbottle'. The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial 'J'.

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) in several pilot areas. This highlighted that these orders, intended to protect victims of domestic abuse, can be applied for by persons other than the victim, that they can be made in any court and that breach of an order is a criminal offence. The guidance sets out how applicants and respondents are eligible for legal aid funding in relation to these applications.

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 the former 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:
 - a. the individual's Convention rights (within the meaning of the Human Rights Act 1998); or
 - b. any rights of the individual to the provision of legal services relating to assimilated law (EU) rights.
12. An alternative test (wider public interest) applies only to applications for advocacy for family members of the deceased at inquests.
13. 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.

14. 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.
15. 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
16. Sections 5 and 6 of the LASPO Act 2012 permit the Director, through authorisations, to delegate her statutory functions. Published tables of authorisations in practice delegate her functions either to the LAA or (in relation to Controlled Work and some cases of emergency representation) legal aid providers.

Regulatory and legislative framework changes

17. The legislative framework has undergone changes in 2025 to 2026:
 - I. Reference was made in the previous year's report to the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012 (Legal Aid: Domestic Abuse) (Miscellaneous Amendments) Order 2025,¹ which came into force on 21 May 2025. As well as making general amendments to the legal aid legislation to replace the term 'domestic violence' with 'domestic abuse', specific amendments were made:
 1. Amending the LASPO Act 2012 to bring into scope of civil legal aid services to victims of domestic abuse who apply for leave to enter or remain in the UK under Appendix Victim of Domestic Abuse to the immigration rules;²
 2. Widening the scope of civil legal aid for victims of abuse and third parties in relation to certain applications relating to domestic abuse protection orders, and in relation to civil or family proceedings where the court has made such an order of its own motion.³
 3. Amending the Criminal Legal Aid (General) Regulations 2013⁴ to bring within criminal legal aid services to an individual who may be the subject of a domestic abuse protection order made by a court of its own motion.⁵
 4. Amending the Civil Legal Aid (Procedure) Regulations 2012⁶ to allow, where relevant, a health professional practising abroad to provide evidence of domestic abuse for the purposes of a legal aid application.⁷

¹ S.I. 2025 No.611.

² Article 3.

³ Article 4.

⁴ S.I. 2013 No.9.

⁵ Article 10.

⁶ S.I. 2012 No.3098.

⁷ Article 5(2).

- II. The Criminal and Civil Legal Aid (Amendment) Regulations 2025⁸ came into force on 27 June 2025 and contained measures to facilitate business continuity measures following the cyber-attack on LAA digital systems:
1. The Civil Legal Aid (Procedure) Regulations were amended to remove restrictions on the Director's power to delegate functions to legal aid providers and to remove consequential reporting requirements for providers.⁹
 2. Civil Legal Aid (Procedure) Regulations 2012 were amended also so that where, after an individual had received legal aid in the form of emergency representation without a full assessment of their financial resources, they were found on a full assessment not to be financially eligible, their legal aid must be withdrawn but not revoked. This meant that they would not be liable to repay the costs of their representation, in the circumstances that the usual time limit of eight weeks for representation on an emergency basis had been significantly extended.¹⁰
 3. The Civil Legal Aid (Financial Resources and Payment for Services) Regulations 2013¹¹ were amended so that no financial contributions would be payable by individuals found to be financially eligible.¹²
 4. The Criminal Legal Aid (General) Regulations 2013 were amended to support the delegation to providers of determinations for representation in criminal proceedings in the magistrates' court.¹³
- III. The Criminal Legal Aid (General and Remuneration) (Amendment) Regulations 2025¹⁴ came into force on 1 December 2025. They specify proceedings in the High Court concerning a release decision of the Parole Board referred under section 32ZAA of the Crime (Sentences) Act 1997 or section 256AZBA of the Criminal Justice Act 2003 as criminal proceedings. They also made amendments to the fees and rates payable under the Criminal Legal Aid (Remuneration) Regulations 2013.¹⁵ Further remuneration amendments were made with effect from 3 March 2026 by the Criminal Legal Aid (Remuneration) (Amendment) Regulations 2026.¹⁶
- IV. Within civil legal aid, the Civil Legal Aid (Procedure and Remuneration) (Amendment) Regulations 2025,¹⁷ with effect from 22 December 2025, replaced the reference to the Housing Possession Court Duty Scheme within the Civil Legal Aid (Procedure) Regulations 2012 with a reference to the Housing Loss Prevention Advice Service.¹⁸ It also implemented fee increases for Controlled Work immigration and asylum and housing cases. The Civil Legal Aid (Remuneration) (Amendment) Regulations 2025 had

⁸ S.I. 2025 No.750.

⁹ Regulation 2(3) to (5).

¹⁰ Regulation 2(6).

¹¹ S.I. 2013 No.480.

¹² Regulation 3.

¹³ Regulation 4.

¹⁴ S.I. 2025 No.1251.

¹⁵ Regulation 3.

¹⁶ S.I. 2026 No.106.

¹⁷ S.I. 2025 No.1248.

¹⁸ Regulation 2.

amended the Civil Legal Aid (Remuneration) Regulations 2013,¹⁹ with effect from 1 May 2025, to allow Controlled Work welfare benefits cases to be paid at hourly rates where they reached a certain threshold of costs, in the same way as for all other categories of law.

- V. The Criminal Legal Aid (Standard Crime Contract) (Amendment) Regulations 2025²⁰ came into force on 1 October 2025 and updated relevant criminal legal aid regulations to refer to the 2025, rather than 2022, Standard Crime Contract.

¹⁹ S.I. 2013 No.422.

²⁰ S.I. 2025 No.1009.

Decision-making process and structure

18. Determinations on individual applications and the functions of the Director are in practice delegated to LAA staff.²¹ Specifically, individual case determinations are made by Case Management led by Alistair Adan, Deputy Director and totalling around 989 staff. Case Management is divided into two groups, Civil and Crime.
19. 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.
20. Crime Case Management includes the National Criminal Applications Team, Crime Billing Team, Criminal Finance Team, a Contact Centre Team, and the Criminal Cases Unit.
21. 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.
22. The LAA continues to work closely with stakeholders via the Process Efficiency Team (PET) as well as the Civil and Crime Contracts Consultative Groups. The Process Efficiency Team is 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. PET meets and communicates with stakeholders consistently to identify operational issues and business improvements. In particular, the LAA has worked in partnership in this forum following the restoration of LAA systems. The LAA continues to provide training to providers via the LAA Learning Website and hosting training session on key LAA systems and processes.
23. Following the cyber-attack detected in April 2025, the LAA maintained access to justice by implementing contingency and business continuity measures, while simultaneously focusing on restoring our digital services. Working with providers and representative bodies, we prioritised:
 - i. Developing Sign in to Legal Aid Services (SiLAS), a single secure sign-in platform for legal aid systems which has 21,417 active user accounts.

²¹ 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.

- ii. Bringing all our services back online, including the Client and Cost Management System (CCMS), so providers can submit civil legal aid applications and bills for processing.
 - iii. Developing the Submit a Bulk Claim (SaBC) payment system to support accurate provider payments for controlled work, which has all providers onboarded and has processed 99% of claims accrued while systems were offline.
24. We remain committed to modernising legal aid services through an ambitious transformation programme that delivers flexible, secure and resilient services. User needs and the end-to-end journey have been central to the programme's design, ensuring systems are accessible, easy to understand, and able to adapt to changing requirements. This approach is simplifying processes for legal providers, significantly reducing administrative burdens, supporting the long-term sustainability of the sector, and enhancing user experience through optimised non-digital access routes. These principles are being delivered in practice through services such as Apply for Criminal Legal Aid, where ongoing investment has improved usability and expanded Welsh language functionality. Increased functionality of Apply for Civil Legal Aid has also driven uptake, with 6,479 providers now using the service and 60,758 applications submitted between 1 April 2025 and 31 March 2026.
25. We continue to work closely with providers and MOJ policy colleagues to implement legal aid reforms. The Lord Chancellor has laid amendments to primary and secondary legislation to expand legal aid for bereaved families at inquests. In criminal legal aid, in response to the Proposals for Solicitor Fee Scheme Reform consultation, an additional £92 million per year was secured, meaning solicitors have received an overall funding uplift of 24% since the Criminal Legal Aid Independent Review (CLAIR). Civil legal aid fees for controlled work in housing and immigration were increased, injecting an additional £18 million into the civil legal aid sector each year, alongside higher overnight accommodation rates for both crime and civil legal aid providers and experts.
26. The ECCT deals with the more costly and complex civil cases funded by the LAA. This includes immigration cases, except for those funded via in-scope 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.
27. 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.
28. 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 caselaw. Applications can be, and sometimes are, made directly by legal aid applicants.
29. 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.

30. Legal advice to the Director, and litigation on behalf of the Director, is provided by lawyers from the Government Legal Department.
31. 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

32. 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.
33. 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.
34. Other issues are referred to the Director for reconsideration.
35. 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.
36. Appeals are allocated according to the specialist areas of law and or costs declared by each panel member.
37. 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 14 SCRCP members.
38. Aside from the SCRCP, a single panel member considers most appeals.
39. There were 73 panel members as of 31 March 2026. A recruitment exercise is planned to conclude in July 2026. An induction package and online training will be provided for those who are appointed.
40. If a client is dissatisfied with the final determination following a review and or appeal the only recourse remaining is litigation.

Litigation

41. 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.
42. Five significant decisions, arising from ECF applications to the Director, were handed down in the course of 2025 to 2026.
43. Judgment in the case of *R (on the application of HJK and others) v The Director of Legal Aid Casework (Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority intervening)*, [2025] EWHC 774 (Admin) was handed down on 1 April 2025. The four Claimants were victims of human trafficking who sought legal aid to make out-of-time applications under the Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme (CICS). English was not the first language of the applicants, and each had suffered mental illness as a result of their experiences. It was accepted that any dispute as to their entitlement to payment would engage Article 6 ECHR (right to a fair trial). Their legal aid applications were initially refused on the basis that there was no dispute about their entitlement to payment at the point that they initially applied for compensation. Following the issuing of the judicial reviews, these decisions were withdrawn. New decisions accepted that Article 6 ECHR was engaged at the stage of making the applications for compensation but held that Article 6 did not require legal assistance to be provided at that stage. The court, however, found that, in these circumstances, the applicants could not effectively present their cases for compensation without legal assistance. The court rejected the suggestion that applicants' rights under the ECHR could be met by their submitting an initial application without legal assistance and then relying on the Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority to investigate the claim.
44. In *R (on the application of Joyce Oji) v Director of Legal Aid Casework* [2026] EWCA Civ 11, [2026] the Court of Appeal dismissed the Claimant's appeal against the previous dismissal of her claim for judicial review against the Director. The challenge concerned the Director's refusal of legal aid to assist in an application to the Windrush Compensation Scheme. The High Court had held that Article 6 ECHR was not engaged at the point of the initial application because there was not yet a dispute about entitlement to compensation. The High court had also expressed the view that Article 6 would not be engaged in relation to any dispute that might arise, as the Scheme was created voluntarily by the government, rather than because a law required it to do so. While agreeing with the ground on which the challenge had been dismissed, the Court of Appeal disagreed with the reasoning on the latter point. Although there had been no requirement for the Secretary of State to create the Scheme, once the Scheme was established, eligible applicants had a right to receive payments in line with its rules that could be enforced by judicial review. This meant that disputes about payment could potentially engage the right to a fair hearing under Article 6 of the ECHR. It was a different point from whether payments under the scheme fell within the ambit of Article 1 of the first Protocol to the ECHR for the purposes of Article 14 ECHR.
45. In *R (on the application of EB) v Director of Legal Aid Casework* [2026] EWHC 402 (Admin), the Claimant challenged the Director's refusal of legal aid to assist in an application under regulation 5 of the Misuse of Drugs Regulations 2001

and section 7 of the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 for a licence to possess psilocybin, a controlled substance, for the treatment of anorexia nervosa. The court quashed the Director's decision which it held to have been affected by serious factual errors. In particular, the Director did not recognise that the applicant was seeking for the substance to be administered in a medical setting and therefore failed to consider the factors relevant to whether refusing legal aid would be compatible with Article 8 of the ECHR. The court declined the invitation to decide whether refusing legal aid would ultimately breach the applicant's human rights.

46. In *Smith v The Lord Chancellor and another company* [2025] EWFC 241 the court considered whether the Lord Chancellor should pay the legal costs of a party in child arrangements proceedings under the Children Act 1989 where the other party had received legal aid. The applicant argued that legal aid should not have been granted and that the Lord Chancellor should therefore be responsible for his costs. The President of the Family Division upheld the Lord Chancellor's position that, first, the circumstances in which costs can be awarded against the Lord Chancellor are limited by the Civil Legal Aid (Costs) Regulations 2013; and, second, that those regulations did not permit a costs order to be made against the Lord Chancellor in these circumstances. The court therefore did not need to address the Lord Chancellor's other argument that this application represented an attempt to challenge the Director's decision to grant legal aid, and that such a challenge should instead have been brought by judicial review during the original proceedings
47. *R (on the application of Janicki) v Director of Legal Aid* [2026] EWHC 814 (Admin) was one of two challenges, ordered to be heard together, from victims of human trafficking who had been refused legal aid for tribunal appeals against decisions of the Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority. Shortly before the final hearing it was discovered that the Claimant had died suddenly four months earlier. His former partner made two applications: as a personal representative of the deceased's estate and in relation to her own potential claim for compensation and legal aid. The Court refused both applications. On the first application, it was agreed by both sides that the deceased's compensation claim did not continue after his death and could not pass to his estate; as such, the Court did not see any basis on which to hear a claim. On the latter application, the Court did not accept that the former partner's compensation claim or legal aid application would necessarily be refused on the same grounds as the deceased's claim had been.

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 2025 to 2026 the LAA received 239 requests for information under the Freedom of Information Act. Of these, 37 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 111 legal aid operations related parliamentary questions. Of these, 21 related to the Director specifically. Grants of legal aid to foreign nationals processing times of legal aid applications and gender split of legal aid in family cases 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 2026 were most recently published on 25 June 2026.
57. During 2025 to 2026 we experienced significant system outage between May and November. This impacted services in different ways. Key performance for 2025 to 2026 will be calculated in a way that reflects the impact of system outages and ensures transparency over data quality and coverage. Where systems and intake processes were unaffected, year-end performance will be calculated on a consistent basis with previous years, with any periods relying on manual data clearly disclosed. Where system data was unavailable, year-end performance will be calculated using only the months for which reliable system data exists. For each performance measure we explicitly state in the Annual Report and Accounts the data coverage, including the number of months on which reported performance is based, and highlight any resulting limitations on comparability. These methodological adjustments mean that some headline figures, including total volumes of applications, are not directly comparable with prior years.
58. The Annual Report and Accounts for 2025 to 2026 will include further detail on the number of applications made in the year. This is due to be laid in parliament in October 2026.

Equality and Diversity

59. 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.
60. 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.
61. The Director has reviewed the equal opportunity information that recipients of legal aid provided during 2025 to 2026 to monitor the extent to which the LAA continues to cater for the diverse population of England and Wales.
62. The LAA published statistics relating to the diversity of legal aid clients over the period 2025 to 2026 as part of the Legal Aid Statistics report published on 20 November 2025. The Director will continue to review this information over the coming year.

Conclusion

- 63. 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.
- 64. 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.



© Crown copyright 2026

This publication is licensed under the terms of the Open Government Licence v3.0 except where otherwise stated. To view this licence, visit nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3

Where we have identified any third party copyright information you will need to obtain permission from the copyright holders concerned.

ISBN 978-1-5286-6741-8
E03629564 07/26

