## Findings from a survey of people who received telephone advice from the Scottish Legal Aid Board’s Solicitor Contact Line service.

**In February and March 2016 the Scottish Legal Aid Board (SLAB) carried out a survey of people who received telephone advice from a solicitor employed by SLAB’s Solicitor Contact Line (SCL). This paper presents the findings from that survey. This builds on the initial SCL client feedback pilot undertaken in 2015.**

### Why we needed the research

As in the pilot, this work formed part of our research programme. We wanted to collect the views of people who had received telephone or face to face advice from a SLAB employed solicitor via the SCL.  It is important to seek feedback directly from people who have used the services of the SCL and to hear about their experience of accessing legal advice, their understanding of what was happening and their satisfaction with the service.  It is also an opportunity to learn more about what happens to people after they receive advice from a SCL solicitor. This research forms part of our stakeholder engagement programme; SLAB have collected views from the full range of applicants for legal assistance (applicants using private solicitors for criminal and civil legal assistance, PDSO and CLAO clients and those using the SCL).

### Aims and objectives

The aims and objectives of the research included:

* Measuring overall satisfaction with the service people had received via the SCL
* Determine levels of satisfaction with the advice received
* Establish the extent to which the user of the service understood the process and advice given
* Identify any issues or challenges that arose during the process and how these were dealt with
* Find out what happened to the individual after they received advice from the SCL.

### How the research was carried out

This research built on the experiences gained through the SCL client feedback pilot in 3 main ways: extending the data collection period (the period when the sample was gathered) to three weeks (Tuesday 9th February – Monday 29th February); extending the fieldwork period (when interviews were carried out or postal surveys accepted) to 4½ weeks [Friday 12th February – Monday 14th March 2016) and expanded the survey methods to include the option of postal surveys. The telephone survey tool was unchanged and the postal survey followed this closely, with changes only where this was necessary for clarity (e.g. enhanced instructions such as ‘please tick one box only’).

The fieldwork was carried out by way of both telephone and postal surveys during February/March 2016. The questionnaire was prepared in-house by our Research team and the fieldwork was carried out by the external research agency Progressive Partnership.

SCL solicitors sought consent from people who had received advice to be contacted to give their feedback on the advice and service they had received.  Anyone who did not give their consent, or was under the age of 18 or required an appropriate adult was not included in the sample.

### What the research tells us

The SCL provided advice to 460 people over that three week period, 136 of whom provided both consent to contact them and contact details. Overall, 63 people took part in the survey; a response rate of 46%, identical to that received in the pilot survey. However, when looking at response rates by method of contact (telephone or postal) the 2016 telephone survey had a much higher response rate than the pilot: 66% (59 people from 90 contact numbers). This suggests that the extended fieldwork period was useful in increasing response rates, and feedback from Progressive also supports this. There were 46 postal contacts, and 4 responses were received within the fieldwork period. This gives a response rate of 9%, good for a postal survey of this nature and similar to that of the SLAB 2012 criminal applicants postal survey, which had an 8.2% response rate. Whilst the postal element did not increase the overall response rate, it was clearly useful in enabling a greater number of people the opportunity to give feedback on their experience with the SCL.

The questionnaire included a set of questions specifically for anyone where an SCL solicitor had attended to provide them face to face advice at the police station. The 2016 survey did not include anyone who had had face to face advice.

Nearly all contacts that were able to be reached agreed to take part in the research; only one contact refused and two thought they were ineligible to take part. One had no recollection of using the solicitor contact line and the other said the call was handled on their behalf, likely to be through an interpreter.

The findings overall were very positive, particularly in relation to the support given by SCL solicitors, which was extremely high. Findings are generally similar to those from the pilot in 2015.

Key results include:

* 100% of respondents trusted the solicitor to act in their best interests, made them feel they could ask the solicitor questions, made them feel at ease and treated them with respect.
* 100% of respondents agreed that the solicitor listened to them, explained things clearly in a way that they could understand and advised them on what to say or do during interview.
* 83% of respondents remember being given the Letter of Rights
* 81% were satisfied with the length of time they had to wait to speak to a solicitor, 3% were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied and 13% were dissatisfied.
* 89% of respondents felt that they had enough privacy when talking to the SLAB solicitor on the phone. 3 out of 4 thought they had enough privacy when talking to the solicitor in person at the police station (with the remaining 1 unable to remember).
* 100% of respondents felt that the overall service they received from the SLAB solicitor was very good (89%) or good (11%).
* Outcomes: 33% of respondents were released without charge while 48% of respondents were arrested and charged with an offence. 11% were released pending further enquiry and 8% preferred not to say. This is a sizeable compared with 2015 (36%).

### Topline Results

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Q1 What part of Scotland do you live in?**  | **%** |
|  | **2016** | **2015** |
| Strathclyde | 33.3 | 32.3 |
| Lothian and Borders | 15.9 | 9.7 |
| Dumfries and Galloway | 4.8 | - |
| Fife | 4.8 | - |
| Central | 14.3 | 29.0 |
| Tayside | 4.8 | - |
| Grampian | 12.7 | 19.4 |
| Highlands & Islands | 9.5 | 9.7 |
| Outside Scotland | - | - |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Q2 While you were in the police station do you remember being given a booklet that explained your rights whilst in police custody? This is called the “Letter of Rights”.**  | **%** |
|  | **2016** | **2015** |
| Yes | 82.5 | 83.9 |
| No | 7.9 | 9.7 |
| I don’t remember | 9.5 | 6.5 |

|  |
| --- |
| **Q3 How satisfied were you with the length of time you had to wait between requesting advice from a solicitor and getting advice from the SLAB solicitor over the phone?**  |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Very satisfied | Satisfied | Neither satisfied or dissatisfied | Dissatisfied | Very dissatisfied | Don’t know/can’t remember |
| **2016** | 36.5 | 44.4 | 3.2 | 7.9 | 4.8 | 3.2 |
|  **2015** | 58.1 | 19.4 |  9.7 |  6.5 | - |  6.5 |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Q4 Approximately how long do you think you had to wait between requesting advice from a solicitor and speaking to a solicitor?** | **%** |
|  | **2016** | **2015** |
| 30 minutes or less | 60.3 | 64.5 |
| Between 30 minutes to 1 hour | 14.3 | 16.1 |
| Over 1 hour | 25.4 | 19.4 |

|  |
| --- |
| **Q5a** Please tell us whether you agree or disagree with these statements about the SLAB solicitor you spoke to on the telephone: **The solicitor listened to me** |
|  | Strongly agree | Tend to agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Tend to disagree | Strongly disagree | Don’t know/not relevant |
| 2016 | 95.2 | 4.8 | - | - | - | - |
| 2015 | 96.8 | 3.2 | - | - | - | - |

|  |
| --- |
| **Q5b** Please tell us whether you agree or disagree with these statements about the SLAB solicitor you spoke to on the telephone: **The solicitor explained things clearly in a way I could understand** |
|  | Strongly agree | Tend to agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Tend to disagree | Strongly disagree | Don’t know/not relevant |
| 2016 | 98.4 | 1.6 | - | - | - | - |
| 2015 | 96.8 | 3.2 | - | - | - | - |

|  |
| --- |
| **Q5c** Please tell us whether you agree or disagree with these statements about the SLAB solicitor you spoke to on the telephone: **The solicitor advised me on what to say or do during the interview** |
|  | Strongly agree | Tend to agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Tend to disagree | Strongly disagree | Don’t know/not relevant |
| 2016 | 98.4 | 1.6 | - | - | - | - |
| 2015 | 87.1 | 6.5 | 6.5 | - | - | - |

|  |
| --- |
| **Q5d** Please tell us whether you agree or disagree with these statements about the SLAB solicitor you spoke to on the telephone: **The solicitor made me feel that I could ask him/her questions** |
|  | Strongly agree | Tend to agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Tend to disagree | Strongly disagree | Don’t know/not relevant |
| 2016 | 96.8 | 3.2 | - | - | - | - |
| 2015 | 93.5 | 3.2 | - | - | - | 3.2 |

|  |
| --- |
| **Q5e** Please tell us whether you agree or disagree with these statements about the SLAB solicitor you spoke to on the telephone: **The solicitor treated me with respect** |
|  | Strongly agree | Tend to agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Tend to disagree | Strongly disagree | Don’t know/not relevant |
| 2016 | 100.0 | - | - | - | - | - |
| 2015 | 100.0 | - | - | - | - | - |

|  |
| --- |
| **Q5f** Please tell us whether you agree or disagree with these statements about the SLAB solicitor you spoke to on the telephone: **I trusted the solicitor to act in my best interests** |
|  | Strongly agree | Tend to agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Tend to disagree | Strongly disagree | Don’t know/not relevant |
| 2016 | 98.4 | 1.6 | - | - | - | - |
| 2015 | 96.8 | 3.2 | - | - | - | - |

|  |
| --- |
| **Q5g** Please tell us whether you agree or disagree with these statements about the SLAB solicitor you spoke to on the telephone: **The solicitor made me feel at ease** |
|  | Strongly agree | Tend to agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Tend to disagree | Strongly disagree | Don’t know/not relevant |
| 2016 | 96.8 | 3.2 | - | - | - | - |
| 2015 | 93.5 | 3.2 | 3.2 | - | - | - |

|  |
| --- |
| **Q6 Did you feel that you have enough privacy when talking to the SLAB solicitor** **on the telephone?** |
|  | Yes | No | Don’t know/can’t remember |
| 2016 | 88.9 | 7.9 | 3.2 |
| 2015 | 87.1 | 6.5 | 6.5 |

|  |
| --- |
| **Q7 In your opinion was the overall service you received from the SLAB Solicitor** |
|  | Very Good | Good | Satisfactory | Poor | Very poor | Don’t know/can’t remember |
| 2016 | 88.9 | 11.1 | - | - | - | - |
| 2015 | 90.3 | 9.7 | - | - | - | - |

|  |
| --- |
| **Q8 What, if anything, did the SLAB solicitor do particularly well?** 45 responses were received. As in 2015, the main themes mentioned were around the quality of advice given by the solicitor and that the solicitor was supportive, reassuring and clearly explained what was happening and why. Typical comments included: “[solicitor] reassured me, explained everything to me as it was all new to me”, “put me at ease”, “listened to me well”, “quite patient answering my questions”, “explained everything so I understand it” and “very informative”. |

|  |
| --- |
| **Q9 What, if anything, do you think the SLAB solicitor could have done better?** 4 responses were received, 1 related to being unable to contact the SCL again at a later date (mentioned by 2 of 4 responses in 2015). The others were in relation to: difficulty in finding an opportunity in the conversation to ask questions of the solicitor (“when they’re in full flow it can be hard to keep track of what you want to ask”), concerns that there was a suggestion that they might have to pay for the service and “having someone there” (presumably face to face at the police station, although this is unclear).  |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Q10 What was the outcome at the police station after you got advice from the SLAB solicitor?**  | **%** |
|  | **2016** | **2015** |
| I was released without charge | 33.3 | 35.5 |
| I was released pending further enquiry | 11.1 | 22.6 |
| I was arrested and charged with an offence | 47.6 | 35.5 |
| Prefer not to say | 7.9 | 6.5 |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Q11 How many times, if any, have you been charged with a criminal offence (including the event we have spoken about today)?**  | **%** |
|  | **2016** | **2015** |
| 0 | 19.0 | 64.5 |
| 1  | 41.3 | 12.9 |
| 2-5 | 22.2 | 16.1 |
| 6-10 | 4.8 | 3.2 |
| More than 10 | 3.2 | - |
| Don’t know/can’t remember | 1.6 | 3.2 |
| Prefer not to say | 7.9 | - |

**DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **QD1 Interviewer to select respondent as:**  | **%** |
|  | **2016** | **2015** |
| Male | 77.8 | 67.7 |
| Female | 22.2 | 32.3 |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **QD2 Which age group are you in?**  | **%** |
|  | **2016** | **2015** |
| 18-24 | 23.8 | 12.9 |
| 25-34 | 22.2 | 29 |
| 35-44 | 15.9 | 25.8 |
| 45-54 | 17.5 | 6.5 |
| 55-64 | 11.1 | 19.4 |
| 65 or above | 6.3 | - |
| Prefer not to say | 3.2 | 6.5 |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **QD3 Do you have a long-standing illness, health problem or disability that limits your daily activity or the kind of work that you do?** | **%** |
|  | **2016** | **2015** |
| Yes  | 23.8 | 32.3 |
| No | 65.1 | 54.8 |
| Prefer not to say | 11.1 | 12.9 |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **QD4** *Only asked to those who said they do have a disability*(2016: 15 people, 2015: 10 people)**How would you describe your disability?\*** | **%** |
|  | **2016** | **2015** |
| Hearing impairment | - | - |
| Visual impairment (not corrected by spectacles or contact lenses) | 1.6 (7.6) | - |
| Speech impairment | - | - |
| Physical co-ordination difficulties (includes problems of manual dexterity and of muscular control e.g. incontinence, epilepsy) | - | - |
| Reduced physical capacity (includes debilitating pain and lack of strength, breath, energy or stamina e.g. from asthma, angina or diabetes) | 9.5 (40.0) | 16.1 (50.0) |
| Severe disfigurement | - | - |
| Learning disabilities  | - | 3.2 (10.0) |
| Mental illness  | 4.8 (20.0) | 16.1 (50.0) |
| Other (please tell us about this) *‘Other’ responses: asthma, brain tumour, epilepsy, hypertensive, suicidal*  | 7.9 (33.3) | 3.2 (10.0) |
| Prefer not to say | - | - |

**\*** *Percentages are given as % of all respondents first, followed by % of those who answered ‘yes’ to QD3 in brackets. Percentages in brackets may add to more than 100% since respondents were able to give more than one response.*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **QD4b** *Only asked to those who said they do have a disability* **Did anything to do with your disability make it more difficult to access the SLAB Solicitor?** | **%** |
|  | **2016** | **2015** |
| Yes *Responses: felt more nervous, no antidepressants* | 13.3 | - |
| No | 80.0 | 100 |
| Prefer not to say |  6.7 | - |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **QD5 What is your ethnic group?**  | **%** |
|  | **2016** | **2015** |
| White | 73.0 | 80.6 |
| Mixed or multiple ethnic groups | 1.6 | - |
| Asian, Asian Scottish, Asian British | 9.5 | 3.2 |
| African, Caribbean, Black | 6.3 | 3.2 |
| Other ethnic group | 1.6 | 3.2 |
| Prefer not to say | 7.9 | 9.7 |

### Conclusion

As in 2015, the survey was successful in allowing those who had received advice from an SCL solicitor the opportunity to give their views and opinions. This survey built on the pilot by extending the fieldwork period and methods, and this was useful in increasing the number and proportion of people taking part.

The survey results confirm those from 2015 and show that the SCL is providing an important service and providing it well. All the satisfaction measures scored extremely high, with some scoring 100% satisfaction.

### Further information

If you would like further information about this research please contact SLAB’s Research team via Reception on 0131 226 7061 or email research@slab.org.uk.

*Research Briefing August 2016*

*Scottish Legal Aid Board, 91 Haymarket Terrace, Edinburgh, EH12 5HE*

*Tel: 0131 226 7061*

***www.slab.org.uk***

