



CIVIL LEGAL  
ASSISTANCE OFFICE  
Highland and Islands



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## Introducing the Civil Legal Assistance Office - Highland and Islands

The **Civil Legal Assistance Office - Highland and Islands** helps people in the area get help with their legal problems. The Scottish Legal Aid Board (the Board) employs three full-time solicitors to give legal help on many different kinds of problem, where there is an unmet legal need.




We work from an office based in Inverness, but we serve people in Highland, Moray, Western Isles, Orkney and Shetland.



## Need legal help? All you have to do is get in touch

### Civil Legal Assistance Office - Highland and Islands

First Floor  
David Whyte House  
57 Church Street  
INVERNESS  
IV1 1DR

-  0845 123 2353
-  [mail@pvs.slab.org.uk](mailto:mail@pvs.slab.org.uk)
-  [www.slab.org.uk/civiloffice](http://www.slab.org.uk/civiloffice)

## Your guide to the Civil Legal Assistance Office - Highland and Islands

### The Civil Legal Assistance Office - Highland and Islands

helps people in the area get help with their legal problems. This leaflet explains more about the services we offer, who can use us and how to contact us.



## Can your service help me?

If you live in one of these areas, and you are having difficulties finding legal help, we may be able to help you. You must be eligible for civil legal assistance to use our service, although we may be able to help with information if you are not eligible.

We do not deal with cases under criminal legal aid.

## What is civil legal assistance

The Board can provide funding to help people who qualify to get legal advice and the help of a solicitor to put their case in court (“representation”), in civil cases. It may be free or you may have to pay a contribution towards the cost of your case.

There are two kinds of help you may be able to get under civil legal assistance:

- First, there is advice and assistance. This helps pay for advice from a solicitor on any matter of Scots law, for example to try to settle a dispute for you without going to court. However, it does not normally pay for representation in court.
- Second, there is civil legal aid. This helps pay for your solicitor to act for you in court. It covers the preparation work, as well as the hearing itself, and can provide funding for advocates and experts if needed. Most cases begin with advice and assistance; legal aid may be the next step if necessary.

## How do I find out if I am eligible for it?

It is best to find out whether you are likely to be eligible for civil legal assistance before you try to contact the **Civil Legal Assistance Office**.

The easiest way to do this is to phone the Board’s **Legal Aid Helpline on 0845 122 8686** – open seven days a week from 7am until 11pm.

Alternatively, you can use the Board’s handy online calculators or leaflets on its website **www.slab.org.uk** Or you may find a copy of the Board’s leaflet “A guide to civil legal aid” which lets you work out if you may be eligible, in your local library or Citizens Advice Bureau.

## If I am eligible to use your service, what happens if I contact you for help?

First, we will ask you for some general details about you and your case. Although our service is confidential, you will have to give us some personal information including your name. If you want to get help anonymously, you will have to contact another advice agency such as your local Citizens Advice Bureau.

Based on these details, we will tell you if we think we are the best people to help you. For some problems someone else, like a Citizens Advice Bureau, may be better able to help you. Especially if your problem does not specifically relate to the law, another organisation may be able to handle the case better than a solicitor.

If we think a solicitor is the right person to help you, we will try to find a solicitor in private practice who can take on your case. If there is a solicitor in the areas covered by our service who is willing to act for you, we will put you in touch with them.

## What happens if no solicitor in private practice can act for me?

If we cannot find a solicitor in private practice who will act for you under legal aid, and you are eligible for civil legal assistance, we may be able to do some work for you ourselves. This will depend on:

- First, whether we can handle the type of case concerned. We can deal with most of the common problems like court proceedings, housing, employment, debt, and relationships. But if the problem is more specialised, we may not be able to deal with it.
- Second, whether we have a solicitor free to do it. A big part of our service is to give people legal help when they can’t get a solicitor in private practice to do so. But we are a small office, and we can’t guarantee that we can meet the needs of everyone looking for our help.

## How do I contact your service?

If possible, phone us on **0845 123 2353** or e-mail us at **mail@pvs.slab.org.uk**. This will allow us to get your details before deciding whether you need to see one of our solicitors.

Alternatively, you can write to us at the address on the back cover of the leaflet.

You must get an appointment before one of our solicitors can meet you. We can’t see you without an appointment. Before we can arrange an appointment, we need to look at your case and decide if someone else can help you, or we can find you a solicitor in private practice.

You may also be able to find out more about our service from other places, like advice services or other solicitors. We have a close link with all Citizens Advice Bureaux in the Highlands and Islands. Their advisers can tell you more about our service, how to contact us and whether you are likely to be eligible for legal aid.