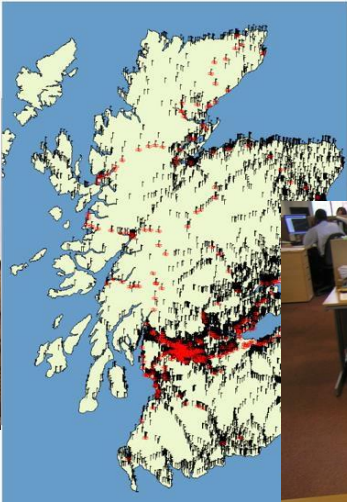


FINAL RESEARCH FINDINGS



Wellside
Research

SYSTRA

RESEARCH WITH APPLICANTS FOR CIVIL LEGAL AID

FINAL RESEARCH FINDINGS

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

SLAB commissioned SYSTRA and Wellside Research to conduct the 2016 Civil Legal Aid Applicants Survey. The overall purpose of the research was to inform improvements to the civil legal aid applicant experience, in relation to areas where SLAB can make a difference.

The research was split into two phases. The first phase consisted of qualitative interviews with SLAB staff in order to inform the development of the survey tool, while the survey of civil applicants was undertaken as the second phase.

The survey was administered as a self-completion postal survey, although a separate telephone option was also provided. Four separate versions of the questionnaire were developed to address the experiences of different sample types, which included:

- Those that had been granted civil legal assistance with no conditions or clawback applicable;
- Those that had been granted civil legal assistance but were required to make contributions towards the cost of their solicitor's fees;
- Those that had been granted civil legal assistance but were required to make clawback payments at the end of their case; and
- Those that had been refused legal aid.

A total population of 7,996 clients was drawn by SLAB from their database, covering those who had contact between January 2015 and July 2016. However, 405 surveys were returned as undeliverable, giving a total survey population of 7,591. A total of 536 completed questionnaires were returned, giving a total response rate of 7%.

Summary of Survey Results

General Services

- Although most respondents had not contacted SLAB or the CLAO to find a solicitor (81%), most of those that did found them helpful (71%).
- Most respondents found it relatively easy to find a legal aid solicitor (76%).
- Only around half (54%) of the respondents could remember being given the legal aid information booklet, with just under two thirds of them finding it helpful (62%).
- Around a quarter (27%) had used SLAB's general helpdesk phone number, with less than half (46%) finding it easy to get through to the person/department they wanted.
- Around a quarter (23%) had used SLAB's website, with over half (55%) indicating it was easy to find the information they were looking for.

The Application Process

- A paper application form is preferred by a greater proportion of respondents (52%) compared to the potential for an online version/option (20%).
- In the majority of cases, Form 1 was completed by the solicitor (71%), and Form 2 was completed by the applicant (63%). However, in 19% of cases it appears that applicants are completing Form 1 themselves despite this being designed/intended for completion by the solicitor.
- Less than half (47%) found the application form easy to complete.

- Most had to provide evidence (92%) in support of their financial application, with two thirds (67%) finding it easy to do so.
- Difficulties in filling in the financial form or providing evidence stemmed from the technical nature and language in the form and the level of detail required; difficulties in accessing hard copies for evidence for the specified timescales; challenges for those with less straight forward circumstances, e.g. those in the process of divorce and self-employed; and challenges for those with additional support needs, including those with mental health issues, health issues, general language and literacy barriers/issues. Frustration with receiving separate requests for information was also noted by many. It should be noted that SLAB have undertaken a review of the application form recently which has focused on simplifying the language, etc., however, the impact of these changes may not be reflected in the results due to the time period the sample was drawn from.
- Most had contact with SLAB during the application process (71%), typically by letter (63%) although over a third (35%) by telephone. Satisfaction with this contact was relatively high:
 - 54% satisfied with time taken to get an answer;
 - 61% satisfied that they were given an explanation they could understand;
 - 61% satisfied that the response answered the question;
 - 69% satisfied with the helpfulness and politeness of staff; and
 - 55% satisfied overall with contact with SLAB at the application stage.

Refusals

- Only 12% of sample had been refused legal aid, of which just over a third (37%) did not know in advance there was a chance they may be refused, and only 29% were satisfied with the explanation given for the decision.
- Only a third (32%) of those refused were satisfied with the explanation of their options after refusal, with 44% had sought to/were seeking to appeal the outcome.

Contributions

- Only 18% of the sample had to make contributions, of which a quarter (26%) did not know about the potential for this until SLAB wrote to them.
- Around two thirds (68%) were satisfied with the clarity of SLAB's letter outlining the contributions, and 66% were satisfied with the range of payment options available.
- Around two thirds (65%) had contact with SLAB in relation to contributions, and again, satisfaction with this contact was relatively high:
 - 57% satisfied with time taken to get an answer;
 - 61% satisfied that they were given an explanation they could understand;
 - 65% satisfied that the response answered the question; and
 - 71% satisfied with the helpfulness and politeness of staff.

Clawback

- Only 9% of the sample were asked to pay clawback, with around one third (32%) unaware of the potential for this until SLAB wrote to them, and nearly half (48%) considered they were asked to pay more than they had expected.
- Only a third (34%) were satisfied with the clarity of the letter from SLAB outlining why and how much they would have to pay, while less than half (44%) were satisfied with the range of payment options available.
- Half (50%) had contact with SLAB staff about clawback, with:
 - 56% satisfied with time taken to get an answer;
 - 52% satisfied that they were given an explanation they could understand;

- 44% satisfied that the response answered the question; and
- 68% satisfied with the helpfulness and politeness of staff.

Overall Satisfaction

- Most respondents (67%) were satisfied with their overall experience of the legal aid process, with:
 - 70% satisfied with the ease of understanding what applicants needed to do to apply;
 - 56% satisfied with the time taken to get legal aid in place;
 - 59% satisfied with the information provided by SLAB;
 - 61% satisfied with the efficiency of SLAB staff; and
 - 61% satisfied with the helpfulness and politeness of SLAB staff.

Accessibility of Legal Aid

Only a minority of respondents (7%) stated that they had experienced difficulties in accessing legal aid because of a protected characteristic¹, with most of these respondents identifying themselves as having a disability. The difficulties that had been experienced were generally related to either their disability or to language barriers.

When considering statistically significant differences in satisfaction throughout the questionnaire by demographics, mixed results were found. Those with disabilities were generally more positive throughout the survey, while those who stated they had experienced difficulties in accessing legal aid due to a protected characteristic were generally less positive throughout. Results were more mixed by ethnicity and religion.

Key Driver Analysis

One variable was highlighted as a key driver of overall satisfaction. This main predictor was respondents' satisfaction with **'the time taken to get legal aid in place'**, and **accounted for 68% of the variance** in satisfaction with their overall experience of the legal aid process. Any improvements that can be made to this element should contribute to improving levels of overall satisfaction in future. As such, the speed of the application and decision process should provide a focus for SLAB going forward.

Recommendations

A summary of the specific recommendations drawn from the survey results is provided below:

- Provision of greater clarity/transparency to applicants from the outset over the expected/likely timescale to receive a decision about their application for legal aid.
- To streamline the requests for evidence.
- Greater consideration in the financial application form and requirements for evidence of those with less typical circumstances and those that cannot access the required evidence.
- Promote greater use of online technology, for information sharing, contacting applicants, accepting evidence, and for the application form.

¹ Respondents in this group linked these difficulties to the following characteristics: age; disability; ethnicity; religion and belief; gender; and care status.

- Raise awareness of the potential for refusal, contributions and clawback before applicants submit an application.
- Provision of greater clarity to applicants over the potential to incur both legal aid contributions and solicitor fees.
- Clawback and refusal letters to be made clearer and easier to understand.
- Review the general telephone helpline for ways to make this more user-friendly.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Civil Legal Aid

1.1.1 The Scottish Legal Aid Board (SLAB) provide assistance in both criminal and civil matters. This helps people to get legal advice and the services of a solicitor to put their case forward in court in either jurisdiction. Depending upon a person's financial situation and the nature of the case, legal assistance (of any type) may be free, or incur a fee (a contribution towards the costs, not the full amount) which is typically paid for via a contribution from the money or property they win in their case, or which they keep as a result of their legal action, or which will need to be paid back later.

1.1.2 Examples of civil matters include:

- Divorce/separation and other matters affecting families, such as child custody;
- Trying to get compensation for injuries after an accident or medical negligence;
- Housing matters, such as rent or mortgage arrears, repairs and eviction;
- Debt and welfare rights;
- Matters relating to immigration, nationality and asylum;
- Adults with incapacity, including guardianship and intervention orders; and
- Power of attorney.

1.1.3 There are two categories of civil legal assistance:

- **Advice and Assistance (A&A)** – which helps pay for a solicitor's advice on any matter of Scot's law, and typically trying to resolve a matter without going to court. In addition to providing clients with general advice, under A&A solicitors can also provide advice about whether there is a legal case worth pursuing, attempt to negotiate with the other party to settle out of court, write letters or seek reports, and advise clients about the potential for legal aid in order to escalate the matter to court; and
- **Civil Legal Aid** – which helps to pay for a solicitor to act for a client in court. This covers the preparation work, the hearing itself, and can contribute towards the costs of using advocates and experts if necessary.

1.1.4 Depending upon the nature and severity of the case, some people will only require advice and assistance, whilst others will only need civil legal aid, and in certain cases people will require both. In many cases, clients will start with advice and assistance, and if the matter cannot be settled out of court, they will then move to civil legal aid.

1.1.5 Solicitors generally advise their clients about their eligibility for legal aid, however, the criteria is different for A&A and legal aid, and so a person may qualify for one but not the other. SLAB typically has little or no direct contact with most applicants. In A&A cases the solicitor typically assesses eligibility and provides advice to clients before alerting SLAB to this for payment, and in legal aid cases the solicitor applies for legal aid and liaises with SLAB. The exceptions are:

- applicants who require a detailed financial assessment of eligibility, SLAB may contact them directly about this; and

- those who are required to make a financial payment towards the cost of their legal aid, those who contribute financially will have contact with SLAB's Treasury Department.

1.1.6 As part of SLAB's ongoing programme of stakeholder engagement, regular surveys of civil applicants have been undertaken, previously in 2013, 2009 and 2007. SLAB commissioned SYSTRA and Wellside Research to conduct the latest survey in 2016, and this report details the findings from that work, as well as comparisons with the previous surveys in 2013 and 2009.

1.2 Research Aims and Objectives

1.2.1 The overall purpose of this research was to:

“inform improvements to the civil legal aid applicant experience, in relation to areas where SLAB can make a difference”.

1.2.2 The specific research objectives were to:

- Measure knowledge of, and levels of satisfaction with, SLAB's services;
- Identify how and where SLAB's services can be improved;
- Identify any differences in opinion between groups of applicants; and
- Provide comparisons with previous applicant surveys to give an indication of changing views over time.

1.2.3 SLAB also indicated that the focus of the 2016 survey should be the civil legal aid process only. Some respondents could, of course, have applied for/received civil A&A as well as legal aid, however, the contents of the questionnaire would concentrate upon the legal aid application process.

1.3 Methodology

1.3.1 For the first time, the research was split into two phases. The first phase consisted of qualitative interviews with SLAB staff, while the survey of civil applicants was undertaken as the second phase.

Phase 1 – Staff Interviews

1.3.2 A total of 11 semi-structured depth interviews were carried out with SLAB staff. Staff represented a range of different departments, grades, and levels of interactions with civil applicants. These interviews were designed to provide a more detailed understanding of the processes that civil applications go through within SLAB and the types, levels and nature of contact that SLAB staff may have with applicants. The interviews were also designed to feed into the questionnaire design, both ensuring that the survey tool was suitable for civil applicants and would provide useful information for the end users, i.e. SLAB staff.

1.3.3 Staff were interviewed over a two week period in mid-October. All interviews were conducted face-to-face at SLAB's offices, and consisted of both one-to-one interviews and paired interviews where appropriate. Interviews typically lasted around an hour.

1.3.4 The topic guide used for these interviews is included as Appendix A, with the key findings presented in Chapter 2.

Phase 2 – Civil Applicant Survey

1.3.5 The survey was designed to be administered by post, with paper based self-completion questionnaires sent to a sample of eligible clients. Postal questionnaires were returned to SYSTRA anonymously using a pre-paid postage facility. A separate telephone option was also provided and explained as part of a covering letter to clients, to facilitate participation of those who did not want to complete the paper based questionnaire.

1.3.6 The questionnaire was primarily quantitative in nature, consisting of mainly closed, pre-coded questions, although some open questions were also included. Key topics covered in the questionnaire included:

- Methods and ease of finding a solicitor;
- Experiences of the legal aid application process;
- Experiences of those that were refused legal aid;
- Experiences of those who were granted legal aid but required to make contributions towards the cost of this;
- Experiences of those who were granted legal aid but were subject to ‘clawback’ (i.e. asked to pay some or all of their solicitor’s costs from money or property that had been awarded to them in the outcome of their case);
- Overall experiences of SLAB’s services; and
- Respondent demographics.

1.3.7 Due to the different samples eligible to participate, and the differing processes and experiences they would be subject to, it was decided that the questionnaire should be divided into four separate versions. This reduced the need for significant and complex routing, and ensured that respondents were only presented with the sections/questions that were of relevance to them. The four sample types included:

- Those that had been granted civil legal assistance with no conditions or clawback applicable – referred to throughout as ‘granted without contributions’;
- Those that had been granted civil legal assistance but were required to make contributions towards the cost of their solicitor’s fees – referred to throughout as ‘granted with contributions’;
- Those that had been granted civil legal assistance but were required to make clawback payments at the end of their case – referred to throughout as ‘clawback’; and
- Those that had been refused legal aid – referred to throughout as ‘refused’.

1.3.8 A total population of 7,996 clients was drawn by SLAB from their database. This consisted of all those that had either applied for civil legal aid, had made contributions, or had made clawback payments between January 2015 and July 2016. The population included the four different sample groups outlined above, as well as a mix of sample type (i.e. family versus non-family cases) and local authority area. A number of exclusions applied to the eligibility of those selected to be invited to participate in the survey. These included:

- Adults with incapacity (where known);
- Interdict/power of arrest cases without a reg. 18 in place;
- Cases where the Mental Health Act – Part VI applied;
- Those related to fatal accident enquiries;
- The defence in relation to anti-social behaviour orders;
- Those listed in the database with a ‘care of’ address; and
- Cases where the applicant was under 17 at the time of the application.

1.3.9 Due to the timing of the work, and the need for additional tasks in advance of the questionnaire distribution, the survey was conducted over a four week period in November to December. As such, the festive period impacted upon the response rates achieved within this four week period. The deadline for returns was extended until early January, and contingency plans were drawn up for potential booster exercises in January should these be required. However, the final response rate of 7% was considered acceptable by SLAB and so booster exercises were not implemented.

Data Analysis

1.3.10 The data was analysed at the aggregate level and also disaggregated by case type and demographic profile. Only those comparisons which were statistically significant at the 95% confidence level have been reported. Differences were explored for the following subgroups:

- Sample type;
- Family versus non-family case;
- Sheriffdom the applicant was based in;
- Gender;
- Age;
- Disability;
- Ethnicity (combining White Scottish, White British and White Irish to form one group, and all others to form a minority ethnic group in order to provide sufficient sample sizes for comparison purposes);
- Religion (maintaining ‘None’ as a group, combining Church of Scotland, Roman Catholic, and Other Cristian to form another group; and combining all others to form a final group of minority religions in order to provide sufficient sample sizes for comparison purposes); and
- Difficulty in accessing legal aid because of a protected characteristic (respondents in this group linked their difficulties to the following characteristics: age; disability; ethnicity; religion and belief; gender; and care status).

1.3.11 Although additional demographic data was generated (e.g. looked after status, gender identity, and sexual identity), the sample sizes in the minority groups were too small to provide reliable statistical comparisons. As such, comparisons by these groups have not been included in the report.

1.4 Data Protection and Respondent Anonymity

1.4.1 When signing the civil legal aid application form the client agrees to the Board using their personal data in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998, and for SLAB’s functions under the Legal Aid (Scotland) Act 1986 (which includes research).

- 1.4.2 The introductory letter covered anonymity of response, as well as consent to take part with the following: “You are free to choose whether or not to take part in the survey. All responses to the questionnaire will be treated anonymously... No one else (including SLAB) will know whether you have taken part, so whether you decide to complete the questionnaire or not will have no impact on legal aid, either now or in the future.”
- 1.4.3 Applicants aged under 17 were removed from the sample to be invited to participate. In addition, certain applicants and types of cases considered to be more sensitive in nature and/or those whose experiences would be less representative were also removed. These included cases where mental health and adults with incapacity were relevant, as well as defendants made subject to anti-social behaviour orders. This is consistent with what was done in the previous surveys, resulting in a consistent approach and more accurate comparisons between years. Should SLAB have an interest in understanding these applicants experiences, a separate and more tailored piece of research would be required.
- 1.4.4 Applicant data was supplied to SYSTRA securely and in line with the terms of the Data Protection Act 1998. SYSTRA is also registered under the Data Protection Act, and fully adheres to the Market Research Society’s Code of Conduct and the Social Research Association’s Ethical Guidelines for conducting research, and as such, the data received by SYSTRA was handled in line with these requirements. The data has been analysed and reported at such a level to ensure anonymity of respondents, with small disaggregate sample sizes either not included in the analysis/reporting, or combined with other groups to avoid issues of identification. Open ended responses were also read for any issues around anonymity with content edited to remove names or other identifying information. Raw data will not be returned to SLAB, but rather data tables will be provided. While the final dataset was returned to SLAB, this has been thoroughly checked for anonymity of respondents, with any identifying issues edited/addressed by SYSTRA prior to delivery.
- 1.4.5 Before the fieldwork began, a news item was put on SLAB’s website outlining the work. This was accessible to solicitors, applicants and potential applicants, the general public, justice colleagues, and other organisations.
- 1.4.6 Similarly robust criteria was applied for SLAB staff members who were invited to take part in a depth interview. All staff to be invited were contacted initially by the SLAB project management team to introduce the research and seek their cooperation, prior to being contacted by SYSTRA’s researchers. Respondents were assured of the provision of anonymity from the outset and throughout the process, with key results included in this report presented at such a level to preserve this. Indeed, names, job titles and departments have not been named in order to ensure that individuals cannot be identified.
- 1.4.7 All of these activities contribute to confidence in the integrity of the research, and enable us to reassure those who may have concerns about the work.

1.5 Research Caveats and Reporting Conventions

- 1.5.1 The achieved sample size of 536 respondents provides reasonably tight confidence intervals (of +/- 4%) at the aggregate level. This allows us to be 95% confident that where 50% of respondents gave a particular response, the true figure would be in the region of 46% - 54%.
- 1.5.2 While the 2016 sample was disaggregated to compare results between groups, this resulted in small sample sizes at some questions and for some groups. Where the disaggregated sample size was considered too small to provide robust and reliable results and/or where this risked identifying individuals, these results have been excluded from the report. Significance testing was also conducted to identify statistically significant differences between sample groups in the 2016 survey results. Only those that were significant at the 95% level have been included within this report.
- 1.5.3 Although comparisons are provided with the 2013 and 2009 survey results, not all are directly comparable due to differences in the question wording and response options in some cases. Further, it should be noted that there are significant differences in the sample profile between the 2016 survey and the two previous years, namely that A&A applicants were not targeted by the 2016 survey but were included in the 2013 and 2009 sweeps. This means that the samples are not directly comparable. As A&A clients will have different experiences to those requiring legal aid, and significantly less contact with SLAB, their exclusion from the 2016 survey means that sample differences could be driving any noted differences in reported satisfaction at the aggregate level rather than these being a result of genuine changes in applicants experiences.
- 1.5.4 As a result of the differences in both the overall sample sizes and profiles across the three years, direct statistical comparisons cannot be made. Therefore, no significance tests have been undertaken to compare the data between survey years, and results should be treated as indicative only.
- 1.5.5 Further, it should be noted that the change in survey administration this year could also impact upon the responses. In both 2009 and 2013, the survey was administered as a telephone interview, whereas the 2016 survey was a self-completion postal questionnaire. Research has shown² that telephone survey methods can introduce a number of potential response biases, including interviewer bias, 'yes-saying' bias/bias towards more positive responses, and reduced willingness to disclose sensitive information when compared to self-administered surveys. As such, this mode effect could contribute towards any differences in the survey results between 2009/2013 and 2016, and should be borne in mind when interpreting the results.

² See Bowling, A. (2005) *Mode of questionnaire administration can have serious effects on data quality*. Journal of Public Health, 27 (3): 281-291, <https://academic.oup.com/jpubhealth/article/27/3/281/1511097/Mode-of-questionnaire-administration-can-have> and Pew Research Centre (2015) *From Telephone to the Web: The Challenge of Mode of Interview Effects in Public Opinion Polls*, <http://www.pewresearch.org/2015/05/13/from-telephone-to-the-web-the-challenge-of-mode-of-interview-effects-in-public-opinion-polls/>

2. SLAB STAFF INTERVIEWS – KEY FINDINGS

2.1 Introduction

2.1.1 A list of 11 staff members were provided by SLAB for inclusion within Phase 1 of the research, all of whom agreed and participated in an interview. The topic guide used for these interviews is included at Appendix A.

2.1.2 The staff interviews aimed to provide a better understanding of the applicants' journey through the process and stages where they may have direct contact with SLAB. During the interviews staff were asked to:

- provide an overview of the application process, as it applied to their team;
- provide details of the nature and frequency of the contact their team may have with applicants;
- identify any targets that are applicable to their team/services;
- identify where other external factors (e.g. the applicants solicitor) may impact upon service provision or an applicant's experience/perception of SLAB service provision;
- discuss their expectations regarding service elements that may elicit high or low satisfaction levels from civil applicants; and
- highlight any topics or questions they would like to see included in the questionnaire.

2.2 The Civil Application Process and Contact Points

2.2.1 Typically an applicant's journey will begin by sourcing a solicitor and meeting with them to discuss the case. The solicitor will then decide upon the most appropriate route for a client to take with regards to legal A&A or legal aid applications. If they consider that a client is suitable for a legal aid application they should provide their client with booklet containing information for legal aid applicants.

2.2.2 There are two separate application processes to be completed, the financial form(s) and the merits application.

The Financial Application Process

2.2.3 Two potential routes exist for the financial forms, the **non-means tested** version which applies to those individuals in receipt of certain passported benefits³, and the **means tested** financial form. The solicitor completes the non-means tested form ('Form 1') online, on behalf of the applicant. Meanwhile, the applicant should complete the means tested form (the 'Financial Eligibility Form 2') and submit this, along with any required evidence to their solicitor to be submitted to SLAB. Evidence in support of their application typically includes wage slips and bank statements.

³ These include where the applicant receives, or where they are included in their partner's claim for Income Support, income based Jobseekers Allowance, income based Employment and Support Allowance, or Universal Credit.

- 2.2.4 Applications are then submitted to SLAB for processing. The application is initially reviewed for completeness, both in terms of certain key questions within the application document itself, and for the provision of the basic documentary evidence. If this information has all been provided a letter will be sent to the applicant confirming receipt of the application and informing them that it is complete and being sent for assessment. If key information or evidence is missing however, the application is rejected with a letter outlining this and the reasons for rejection being issued to the applicant. The applicant can then amend/update the application and resubmit if they choose to.
- 2.2.5 It should be noted that processes have changed in the past few months, with SLAB having more direct contact with applicants to chase up missing information, and allowing the provision of certain types of information by phone or email. When information or evidence is missing SLAB staff attempt to speak with the applicant by telephone to allow them to provide this. Only where SLAB cannot contact applicants by phone (after several attempts over a number of days), or where the applicant still fails to submit the missing information following this phone contact will SLAB issue a rejection letter. However, it is unlikely that these new, more flexible processes will have affected any of the respondents to the survey.
- 2.2.6 Once SLAB are satisfied that all the basic financial information has been provided the financial form progresses to the assessment stage. During this assessment, SLAB may request additional information and/or evidence should they note issues in the evidence which has not already been declared, for example transactions on bank accounts that suggest a non-disclosed account is held by the applicant, additional income and/or possible capital. As such, SLAB may write to the applicant at this stage to request additional information, and have telephone contact with applicants who need to query these requirements or are having difficulty in providing the required evidence.
- 2.2.7 If the financial assessment determines that legal aid is not granted, a letter is issued to the applicant explaining this. Again, the applicant can appeal the decision and provide further information and/or evidence in support of this.
- 2.2.8 This financial assessment process not only determines whether an applicant could be granted civil legal aid or not, but also determines whether they would be required to make any contributions towards the cost of their case.

The Merits Application Process

- 2.2.9 In all cases, the solicitor completed the merits application, which sets out the legal merits of the case. The assessment of this application runs in parallel with the financial assessment, and is conducted by in-house solicitors. Assessors will typically have less contact with the applicant directly, but may have some contact with the client's solicitor should they have any questions or require clarification.
- 2.2.10 In order for legal aid to be granted, both the financial applications and the merits application must be successful. However, as they are treated as two separate assessments, applicants are informed of the outcome of each element separately, and could find that despite one element being successful the other may not be, meaning that ultimately legal aid will be denied.

Communicating the Outcome of the Application

- 2.2.11 If legal aid is granted, SLAB will inform the applicant via letter. Should the applicant be required to make contributions SLAB will also outline the information which formed the basis of their calculations, detail the options for making payments, and outline what will happen if payments are not made. The letter will also outline three options for progressing, (a) to continue as per the letter, (b) if there have been any changes to their financial situation they can provide further information/evidence, and while the legal aid grant will remain in place, the application will then return to the assessment stage, or (c) they can drop the application for legal aid.
- 2.2.12 Should contributions be made throughout the case, and this exceeds the final bill from the solicitor, SLAB will either refund the applicant the amount they have overpaid, or they will reduce the amount of any outstanding payments. If a client stops paying their contributions SLAB will issue reminder notices and may terminate legal aid.
- 2.2.13 If the applicant receives money or property in the settlement of their case SLAB can ask that they contribute something towards the costs of their case. In some cases this can result in SLAB requesting substantial payments, e.g. where property has been awarded, and this element tends to lead to the highest level of complaints.
- 2.2.14 All letters from SLAB are sent directly to the applicant, but their solicitor also receives a copy. Letters also contain the direct dial phone numbers for the member of staff that has been dealing with the application or processing of payments (depending upon the stage of the application/case) so that clients can get in touch with relevant members of staff easily.

2.3 Topics/Questions of Interest to Staff

- 2.3.1 Staff members were also asked to identify any topics or questions that they wished to see included in the applicant survey questionnaire. These general topics and specific questions are summarised below:
- General issues related to finding a legal aid solicitor and finding out about legal aid:
 - How did applicants hear about legal aid and/or their solicitor?
 - Were applicants aware of the mygovscot website and/or SLAB's website, and had they used the SLAB website?
 - Whether solicitors are issuing clients with the information booklet, and whether the applicants read it, and whether they find it useful?
 - The application form itself:
 - Keen to know which versions of the financial forms the solicitor chose to complete/issue?
 - Did applicants understand the application form?
 - Would applicants prefer a paper based or an online application form?

- Knowledge and experience of the application process:
 - Did SLAB request any information that was difficult for the applicant to provide?
 - Did the applicant know they might have to pay something towards the cost of their case? How much did they know about the possibility for recovery?
- Effectiveness of Communication Methods:
 - To uncover opinions of the outcome letter, particularly when contributions are required. Are these easy to understand, or are they too long, or contain too much jargon?
 - What improvements could SLAB make in its processes when contacting applicants? Would a wider range of contact methods be appropriate/desirable, e.g. texts or emails?
 - How efficient and customer friendly were SLAB when they contacted applicants by letter and by telephone?
- Payments/Recovery:
 - Were applicants happy with the assessment/calculation that determined they would need to make contributions, did they feel this was fair?
 - Are the current payment options suitable or are other methods desirable?
- General service delivery:
 - How easy is it to contact the right team or person via the general helpdesk number?
 - Were SLAB staff members helpful, give enough information, polite, patient, etc.?
 - Did the applicant get enough information from SLAB?
 - How could applicants overall experience have been improved?

2.3.2 Initially, a draft questionnaire was created to suitably accommodate all of the above issues/questions, however, this became very lengthy and required significant routing to be used, making it less user friendly for civil applicants to complete. As such, the questionnaire was trimmed back, with some of the topics/questions not being addressed directly. However, a number of general open ended questions were asked to allow respondents to identify any areas of the service they felt could be improved, and it was assumed that many of the issues that had not been addressed directly would be raised here by respondents if they considered them to be an issue. These open ended responses were also analysed to identify any such connections with the questions provided by staff.

2.3.3 The four versions of the final civil applicant questionnaire is included at Appendix B.

3. SURVEY SAMPLE PROFILE

3.1 Main Sample Breakdown

3.1.1 Overall, a total of 7,996 individuals were eligible for the survey, covering all applicants/clients between January 2015 and July 2016. However, 405 surveys were returned as undeliverable, giving a total survey population of 7,591. A total of 536 completed questionnaires were returned by post or conducted by telephone (on request), giving a total response rate of 7%.

3.1.2 The main sample was broken down by various sample types, these were:

- Clawback;
- Refused;
- Granted with no contributions; and
- Granted with contributions.

3.1.3 Each sample type received an individually tailored questionnaire. Table 1 details the breakdown of the population and returns by sample type. This shows that the greatest proportion of respondents came from the Granted with no contributions sample type, and that responses are largely representative of the population breakdown.

Table 1. Responses by Sample type

SAMPLE TYPE	TOTAL POPULATION	PROPORTION OF POPULATION %	VALID ADDRESSES	NUMBER OF RESPONSES	PROPORTION OF SAMPLE %	RESPONSE RATE %
Clawback	750	9	692	50	9	7
Refused	1086	14	1025	64	12	6
Granted with no contributions	4927	62	4657	323	60	7
Granted with contributions	1233	15	1217	99	19	8
Total	7,996	100	7591	536	100	7

3.1.4 A total of 415 (77%) respondents had applied for legal aid in connection to a family case, and 121 (23%) respondents for a non-family case. The clawback sample type had the greatest proportion of family cases (90%, n=45), with refused having the greatest proportion of non-family cases (28%, n=18).

3.1.5 When disaggregated by Sheriffdom, the achieved sample ranged from 22% of respondents in South Strathclyde, Dumfries and Galloway to 13% in each of Grampian, Highland and Islands, Lothian and Borders, and North Strathclyde. A further 1% of

respondents were situated in England and Wales. A full breakdown of responses by Sheriffdom is provided in Table 2.

Table 2. Responses by Sheriffdom

SHERIFFDOM	NUMBER	%
Glasgow & Strathkelvin	97	18
Grampian, Highland & Islands	68	13
Lothian & Borders	70	13
North Strathclyde	69	13
South Strathclyde, Dumfries & Galloway	116	22
Tayside, Central & Fife	108	20
England & Wales	8	1
Total	536	100

3.2 Demographics

3.2.1 Nearly two thirds (64%, n=343) of the respondents were female and just over one third (36%, n=193) were male.

3.2.2 Table 3 shows the number and percentage of respondents by age group. A total of 39% (n=209) of respondents were between the ages of 35 and 44, compared to only 5% (n=27) of respondents being aged 65 or over.

Table 3. Age of Respondents

AGE	NUMBER	%
16-24	36	7
25-34	111	21
35-44	209	39
50-64	153	28
65 or over	27	5
Total	536	100

3.2.3 All respondents were asked if their gender identity was the same as the gender they were assigned at birth. Most (95%, n=507) said their gender identity was the same, with only 1% (n=7) stating it was not. The remainder of respondents (4%, n=22) either did not wish to say or did not provide an answer.

3.2.4 The majority of respondents described their sexual identity as 'heterosexual/straight' (93%, n=483), with 1% (n=4) of respondents being 'gay/lesbian', 1% (n=3) being 'bisexual' and 1% (n=3) selecting 'other'. The remaining respondents (4%, n=23) either did not wish to say or did not answer the question.

3.2.5 Respondents were asked which ethnic group they considered themselves to belong to. Just under three quarters (73%, n=391) of respondents described themselves as ‘White Scottish’. Table 4 provides a full breakdown of respondents’ ethnicity.

Table 4. Ethnicity of Respondents

AGE	NUMBER	%
Prefer not to say/not answered	23	5
White Scottish	391	73
White Other British	47	9
White Irish	2	<1
White Gypsy/Traveller	1	<1
White Polish	13	2
White any other ethnic group	15	3
Any Mixed or Multiple Ethnic Groups	8	2
Pakistani, Pakistani Scottish or Pakistani British	7	1
Indian, Indian Scottish or Indian British	5	1
Chinese, Chinese Scottish or Chinese British	4	1
Asian Other	5	1
African, African Scottish or African British	12	2
African, Caribbean or Black Other	2	<1
Other ethnic group	1	<1
Total	536	100

3.2.6 Over one third (38%, n=205) of respondents described themselves as not belonging to any religion, religious denomination or body, with a further 8% (n=43) not wishing to say or not providing an answer. Of the remainder of respondents , ‘Church of Scotland’ was the most common response (23%, n=121), followed by ‘Roman Catholic’ (15%, n=81), ‘Other Christian’ (7%, n=39), ‘Muslim’ (3%, n=17) and ‘Other’ (3%, n=17). The remaining respondents described themselves as being:

- Buddhist (1%, n=4);
- Pagan (1%, n=4);
- Sikh (1%, n=4); and
- Hindu (<1%, n=1).

3.2.7 All respondents were asked if they had a long standing illness, health problem or disability that limits their daily activity or the kind of work that they do. Just over half (52%, n=282) of the respondents answered yes, 40% (n=214) answered no, and the remaining respondents either did not wish to say or did not provide an answer (8%, n=40). The most common descriptions given for disability/long standing illness were:

- reduced physical capacity (25%);
- mental illness (24%); and
- physical co-ordination (12%).

3.2.8 All respondents were asked if they were currently, or had ever been, looked after by a Local Authority. Over three quarters (78%, n=418) of the respondents had never been looked after, 3% (n=15) stated they had previously been looked after, and 2% (n=10) stated they were currently looked after. The remaining respondents (17%, n=93) either did not wish to say or did not provide an answer.

4. SURVEY RESULTS

4.1 Finding a Solicitor

Assistance from SLAB and the CLAO

- 4.1.1 A total of 521 (97%) respondents provided an answer regarding contact they had with the Scottish Legal Aid Board (SLAB) and/or the Civil Legal Aid Office (CLAO) to seek help in finding a legal aid solicitor. The majority (81%, n=422) had not contacted either office, 10% (n=53) had contacted SLAB by telephone, 3% (n=13) had used SLAB's website and 9% (n=47) had contacted the CLAO. (Note: this question allowed multiple responses).
- 4.1.2 Those respondents that had contacted SLAB or CLAO were asked to rate how helpful they were in identifying a suitable solicitor. A total of 104 respondents provided an answer, with just over half (53%, n=55) finding SLAB/CLAO 'very helpful', compared to only 9% (n=9) who found SLAB/CLAO office 'very unhelpful' when identifying a suitable solicitor. When combining 'very' and 'fairly' helpful, a total of 71% (n=74) of respondents found SLAB or the CLAO office helpful in finding a solicitor. A full breakdown is provided in Table 5 below.

Table 5. Helpfulness of SLAB/CLAO

RESPONSE	NUMBER	%
Don't know / Can't remember	4	4
Very unhelpful	9	9
Fairly unhelpful	6	6
Neither	11	10
Fairly helpful	19	18
Very helpful	55	53
Total	104	100

- 4.1.3 Respondents from ethnic minority groups (75%, n=15) were more likely to find SLAB or CLAO 'very helpful' when identifying a suitable solicitor, compared to White British and Irish respondents (50%, n=38).

Ease/Difficulty of Finding a Legal Aid Solicitor

- 4.1.4 Overall, 94% (n=505) rated the difficulty of finding a legal aid solicitor, with over half (58%, n=292) finding it 'very easy', compared to just 6% (n=28) finding it 'very difficult'. When combining 'very' and 'fairly' responses, just over three quarters (76%, n=383) found it easy to find a legal aid solicitor, compared to only 8% (n=40) finding it difficult. The 2016 results were similar to those in 2013 and 2009, with only 5% of respondents in 2013 stating that they had problems in finding a legal aid solicitor, and 5% in 2009 finding it very difficult to find a legal aid solicitor. A full breakdown of responses is outlined in Table 6.

Table 6. Difficulty of finding a legal aid solicitor

RESPONSE	NUMBER	%
Don't know / Can't remember	21	4
Very difficult	28	6
Fairly difficult	12	2
Neither	61	12
Fairly easy	91	18
Very easy	292	58
Total	505	100

- 4.1.5 Those with contributions (58%, n=54) and with no contributions (61%, n=188) were more likely to find it 'very easy' to find a legal aid solicitor than those with clawback (48%, n=23) and those that had been refused legal aid (46%, n=27).
- 4.1.6 A greater proportion of non-family sample type respondents (13%, n=14) found it 'very difficult' to find a legal aid solicitor, compared to only 4% (n=14) of family case respondents.
- 4.1.7 A greater proportion of respondents in Lothian and Borders found it 'very' (12%, n=8) or 'fairly' (7%, n=5) difficult to find a legal aid solicitor compared to the other Sheriffdoms. Meanwhile, those in North Strathclyde (67%, n=42) and Tayside, Central and Fife (69%, n=71) were more likely to find it 'very easy' to find a legal aid solicitor.
- 4.1.8 A greater proportion of respondents aged 25-34 (56%, n=18) found it 'very easy' to find a legal aid solicitor compared to all other age groups. Meanwhile, those aged 65 and over were more likely to find it 'very difficult' (22%, n=6) compared to other age groups. Similarly, a greater proportion of those with a disability (8%, n=15) found it 'very difficult' to find a legal aid solicitor, compared to those who did not (4%, n=11).
- 4.1.9 Respondents who felt they had encountered difficulties in accessing legal aid due to their protected characteristics were more likely to find it 'very difficult' (21%, n=7) to find a legal aid solicitor, compared to those with no difficulties in access (4%, n=16). Conversely, those who had not found it difficult to access legal aid were also more likely to find it 'very easy' (61%, n=258) to find a legal aid solicitor, compared to those who had experienced difficulties they attributed to their protected characteristics (29%, n=10).
- 4.1.10 Those with no religion or religious denomination were more likely to be 'very' or 'fairly' satisfied (81%, n=161) with how easy it was to find a legal aid solicitor, compared to those from Church of Scotland, Roman Catholic and Other Christian (75%, n=167) and all other religions (66%, n=29).

Legal Aid Information Booklet

- 4.1.11 All respondents were asked if they had received an information booklet about legal aid by their solicitor. Almost all respondents (99%, n=528) provided an answer, with just over half (54%, n=285) stating that they did receive the booklet, one quarter (25%, n=

132) stating they did not receive the booklet, and 21% (n=111) stating they did not know or could not remember.

- 4.1.12 Respondents who had received the information booklet went on to rate how helpful it was. A total of 278 respondents provided an answer, with 62% (n=174) finding it either 'very' or 'fairly' helpful, compared to only 6% (n=16) finding it either 'very' or 'fairly' unhelpful. Only 4% (n=10) of respondents stated that they did not read the booklet. A full breakdown of responses is provided in Table 7.

Table 7. Helpfulness of Legal Aid Booklet

RESPONSE	NUMBER	%
Don't know / Can't remember	24	9
Very unhelpful	8	3
Fairly unhelpful	8	3
Neither	54	19
Fairly easy	68	24
Very easy	106	38
Did not read it	10	4
Total	278	100

- 4.1.13 A slightly greater proportion of those without a disability (27%, n=77) did not remember being given the booklet, compared to 22% (n=47) of those with a disability. Those with a disability tended to find the booklet more helpful, with 44% (n=50) stating it was 'very helpful', compared to 25% (n=52) of those without a disability.
- 4.1.14 Respondents who had found it difficult to access legal aid because of a protected characteristic were less likely to find the information booklet 'very' or 'fairly helpful' (31%, n=5) compared to all other respondents (65%, n=156).
- 4.1.15 Further, a greater proportion of respondents in Lothian and Borders found the booklet both 'very helpful' (52%, n=17) and 'very unhelpful' (9%, n=3) compared to other areas. Respondents in South Strathclyde, Dumfries and Galloway were also more likely to find the booklet 'very helpful' (51%, n=28).

4.2 The Application Process

The Application Form

- 4.2.1 Although the application process is entirely paper based at the moment, respondents were asked if they would prefer an online or paper based application form/process. A total of 527 respondents provided an answer, with just over half (52%, n=275) preferring paper, 28% (n=146) did not know or had no preference, and 20% (n=106) would prefer an online option. However, it should be noted that, as the survey was only offered in a paper (or telephone) format, those that prefer online forms may have been less inclined to return the survey, therefore this result could under-represent potential demand for an online application process.

4.2.2 Respondents who were granted legal aid with no contributions were the least likely to prefer an online version (15%, n=46) of the application form/process, and also the most likely to prefer a paper based (57%, n=181) system compared to all other sample types.

4.2.3 Respondents would have filled in either financial Form 1 or Form 2, or in some cases they completed both. As would be expected, in the majority of cases, Form 1 was completed by the solicitor (71%, n=177), and Form 2 was completed by the applicant (63%, n=145). However, solicitors appear to be assisting in the completion of Form 2, with over a quarter of respondents (28%, n=66) indicating that their solicitor completed the form. More noteworthy however, is that in a number of cases (19%, n=48) it appears that applicants were completing Form 1 themselves despite this form being designed/expected to be completed entirely by the solicitor. A full breakdown can be seen in the Table 8.

Table 8. Completion Methods of the Financial Forms

FORM	COMPLETED BY RESPONDENT		COMPLETED BY SOLICITOR		DON'T KNOW / CAN'T REMEMBER		Total	
	NUMBER	%	NUMBER	%	NUMBER	%	NUMBER	%
Form 1	48	19	177	71	25	10	250	100
Form 2	145	63	66	28	21	9	232	100

Note: The form type completed by applicants with Clawback was not available and so their data is excluded from the table.

4.2.4 Respondents that had filled in either financial form themselves were also asked to rate how easy or difficult they found it to fill in. A total of 214 respondents provided an answer, with less than half (47%, n=101) stating it was 'very' or 'fairly' easy, while 17% (n=35) found it 'very' or 'fairly' difficult to fill in the financial form. A further third (33%, n=71) found the form 'neither' easy nor difficult to fill in. A full breakdown of responses is provided in Table 9.

Table 9. Easy/difficult to fill in the financial legal aid form

RESPONSE	NUMBER	%
Don't know / Can't remember	7	3
Very difficult	18	9
Fairly difficult	17	8
Neither	71	33
Fairly easy	58	27
Very easy	43	20
Total	214	100

4.2.5 Compared to previous results, 2016 appears to represent a reduction in how easy it is to fill in the financial form. In 2013, 85% of respondents found it easy to fill in the financial legal aid form, and in 2009, 70% of respondents found it easy to fill in the financial legal aid form. However, it should be noted that a new financial legal aid form was introduced following the 2013 survey, therefore the results above compare different versions of this form. It should also be noted that the 2013 survey did not include a 'neither' option. Despite a decline in how easy respondents found the form to complete, SLAB noted that there has been no notable increase in the rejection rates of applications over this time period.

Providing Evidence

4.2.6 Almost all (92%, n=427) respondents stated they had to provide evidence to support their financial form, compared with only 4% (n=21) stating they did not need to provide evidence and 4% (n=21) who did not know/could not remember. In 2013, 95% of respondents, and in 2009, 81% of respondents went on to provide evidence to support their financial legal aid form.

4.2.7 A greater proportion of females (95% , n=323) had to provide evidence to support their financial form, compared to males (87%, n=164). Also, a greater proportion of those that did not experience difficulties in accessing legal aid had to provide evidence (93%, n=416), compared to those that had found it difficult to access legal aid because of their protected characteristics (83%, n=29).

4.2.8 Respondents who did provide evidence were asked to rate how easy or difficult it was to provide this evidence. Of these respondents, 67% (n=318) found it 'very' or 'fairly' easy to provide the evidence, compared to 14% (n=69) of respondents who found it 'very' or 'fairly' difficult. A further 18% (n=85) found it 'neither' easy nor difficult to provide the evidence. In 2013 and 2009, 92% of respondents found it easy to provide to provide the evidence to support their financial form, therefore in 2016 it seems that respondents have found it more difficult to provide evidence than in previous years. However, in 2013 the survey did not include a 'neither' option. A full breakdown of 2016 responses can be seen in Table 10.

Table 10. Easy/difficult to provide evidence

RESPONSE	NUMBER	%
Don't know / Can't remember	6	1
Very difficult	24	5
Fairly difficult	45	9
Neither	85	18
Fairly easy	113	24
Very easy	205	43
Total	478	100

- 4.2.9 Respondents with clawback (45%, n=19) and those with no contributions (49%, 140) were more likely to find it 'very easy' to provide evidence to support their financial form. Meanwhile, those who were refused (13%, n=7) were more likely to have found it 'very difficult' to provide evidence to support their financial form, and those who had to make contributions (15%, n=14) were more likely to find it 'fairly difficult' to provide evidence.
- 4.2.10 Also, a greater proportion of respondents with disabilities found it 'very easy' (50%, n=94) to provide evidence to support their financial form, compared to those with no disability (39%, n=102). It should be noted that those with a disability are more likely to be on a passported benefit. Similarly, a greater proportion of respondents in Lothian and Borders (49%, n=30) found it 'very easy' to provide evidence to support their financial form, compared to other Sheriffdoms.
- 4.2.11 Respondents from ethnic minority groups were also more likely to find it 'very' or 'fairly' easy (73%, n=47) to provide evidence to support their financial form, compared to those who were White British or Irish (66%, n=262).
- 4.2.12 Respondents who had not found it difficult to access legal aid were more likely to find it 'very easy' (45%, n=186) to provide evidence to support their financial form, compared to those that had found it difficult to access legal aid because of a protected characteristic (26%, n=7). Those who had found it difficult to access legal aid because of a protected characteristic were more likely to find it 'very difficult' (22%, n=6) to provide evidence to support their financial form, compared to those who had not found it difficult to access legal aid (4%, n=15).
- 4.2.13 Those who had experienced difficulties in filling in the financial form and/or in providing evidence were asked to outline the reasons for their difficulties. A range of issues were identified, with the most common including:
- The complexity of the form and level of detail required;
 - The technical language used on the form⁴ made it difficult for applicants to understand and complete, however, respondents did not give specific examples of any terms or sections of the form the found overly technical;
 - General delays to the process in order to collate the required evidence;
 - Paperless banking meant that applicants found the provision of bank statements challenging, either having to print these themselves, or asking the bank to send them. Some respondents noted they had had to travel to their branch to request these. In addition, many banks now charge a fee for providing paper statements;
 - No access to the required documents, some were asylum seekers and therefore did not have the required documentation, while others were unable to access the family home where the documents were (e.g. in some divorce and domestic abuse cases);
 - Less straight forward circumstances - e.g. those in the process of divorce and self-employed;

⁴ It should be noted that SLAB have conducted a review of the form recently which resulted in much of the language being amended. It is not clear from the results when survey respondents completed their financial applications, and therefore, it may be that some results reflect experiences with the older version of the form.

- Mental health issues, health issues, general language and literacy barriers/issues were all cited as creating difficulties in either completing the form or in being able to provide the required documents;
- Having to request paperwork from other organisations, e.g. pensions, tax credits, DLA and other benefits, etc. This was considered time consuming, difficult to obtain, and inconvenient;
- Some statements and award letters (e.g. certain benefits) are only issued annually so the timescale required (i.e. within last 3 months) created difficulties; and
- Frustration over separate requests for different information.

Contact with SLAB

4.2.14 All respondents were asked if they had contact with SLAB during their application process. A total of 527 respondents provided an answer, with the majority (71%, n=374) stating they had had contact with SLAB, 22% (n=117) stating they did not have contact with SLAB and 7% (n=38) stating they did not know or could not remember.

4.2.15 Those respondents in Glasgow and Strathkelvin (60%, n=57) were the least likely to have contact with SLAB during the application process, compared to those respondents in Grampian, Highland and Islands (82%, n=56) who were most likely to have contact with SLAB at this stage.

4.2.16 Respondents were also asked how they had contacted SLAB, with the majority having contact by letter (63%, n=237). A further 44% (n=165) of respondents contacted SLAB via their solicitor, 35% (n=130) by telephone, 6% (n=23) by email, 2% (n=6) by some other method, and less than 1% (n=1) by text. (Note: this question allowed multiple responses). The level of email correspondence may be under-represented in the results of this survey however, due to the administration method, i.e. those that prefer to use electronic/online medium may have been less inclined to respond to the paper-based questionnaire. However, these results are similar to the 2009 survey where 70% of respondents received letters (post or email) from SLAB and 30% contacted SLAB by telephone.

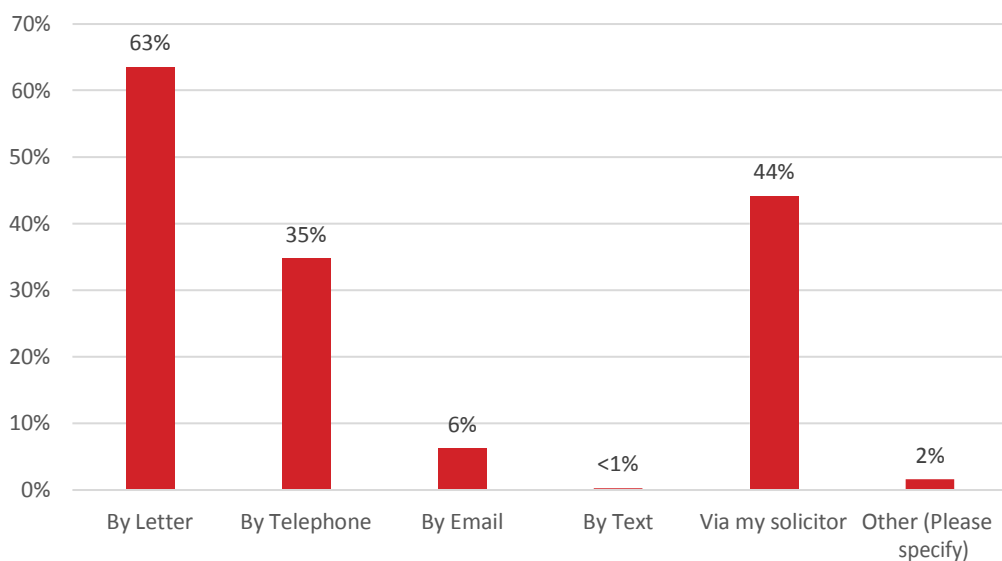


Figure 1. Type of Contact with SLAB

4.2.17 Respondents who had contact with SLAB staff were then asked to rate their satisfaction with a series of elements relating to this contact. These included:

- The length of time it took to get an answer;
- That things were explained in a way you could understand;
- The response answered your question; and
- The helpfulness and politeness of the staff you had contact with.

4.2.18 Figure 2 details satisfaction levels with each element.



Figure 2. Satisfaction with SLAB Staff During the Application Process

4.2.19 A total of 366 respondents provided a response for the ‘**length of time it took to get an answer**’. Of these just over half (54%, n=196) were either ‘very’ or ‘fairly’ satisfied, compared to 23% (n=85) respondents being ‘very’ or ‘fairly’ dissatisfied. A further 20% (n=73) were ‘neither’ satisfied nor dissatisfied with the time taken to get an answer. In 2013, 78% of respondents were ‘very’ or ‘fairly’ happy with the length of time taken to get an answer, and in 2009 71% of respondents were ‘very’ or ‘fairly’ happy, therefore 2016 has seen a reduction in satisfaction of just under 25%.

4.2.20 Respondents with clawback (61%, n=20) were the most satisfied with the length of time taken to get an answer, followed by those with no contributions (57%, n=121) and then those with contributions (52%, n=39). Those respondents that were refused legal aid were the most likely to be ‘very dissatisfied’ (38%, n=17), and lower proportion either ‘very’ or ‘fairly’ satisfied (36%, n=16).

4.2.21 A greater proportion of males were ‘very dissatisfied’ (18%, n=23) compared to females (11%, n=27). However, a greater proportion of males were also ‘very’ and ‘fairly’ satisfied (59%, n=74) compared to females (51%, n=122).

- 4.2.22 A total of 359 respondents rated whether **things were explained to them in a way they could understand**, with the majority (61%, n=219) being 'very' or 'fairly' satisfied, compared to 19% (n=69) being 'very' or 'fairly' dissatisfied. A further 16% (n=5) were 'neither' satisfied nor dissatisfied with the way things were explained. In 2013, 84% of respondents were 'very' or 'fairly' satisfied with the way things were explained to them and in 2009, 74% of respondents were 'very' or 'fairly' satisfied with the way things were explained to them, meaning a reduction in satisfaction in 2016.
- 4.2.23 Respondents that had no contributions (65%, n=134) had the highest proportion of 'very' or 'fairly' satisfied respondents regarding the way things were explained, followed by those respondents with contributions (59%, n=44) and then respondents who were refused legal aid (57%, n=17). Respondents that had to pay clawback had the lowest proportion of respondents that were 'very' or 'fairly' satisfied (47%, n=15).
- 4.2.24 A total of 354 respondents rated **whether SLAB's response had answered their question**. Over half (62%, n=216) were either 'very' or 'fairly' satisfied, compared to 16% (n=57) being 'very' or 'fairly' dissatisfied. A further 15% (n=55) were 'neither' satisfied nor dissatisfied and the remaining 7% (n=26) did not know or could not remember. In 2013, 81% of respondents were either 'very' or 'fairly' satisfied that the response answered their question and in 2009, 70% of respondents were either 'very' or 'fairly' satisfied, therefore there has been a reduction of satisfaction in 2016.
- 4.2.25 Those respondents that were refused (38%, n=24) legal aid were the most likely to be 'very' and 'fairly' dissatisfied that SLAB's response had answered their question.
- 4.2.26 A total of 358 respondents rated **the helpfulness and politeness of staff**. Over half (69%, n=248) were either 'very' or 'fairly' satisfied, compared to only 7% (n=26) of respondents being 'very' or 'fairly' dissatisfied. A further 14% (n=49) of respondents did not know or could not remember and 10% (n=35) of respondents were 'neither' satisfied not dissatisfied with the helpfulness and politeness of staff.
- 4.2.27 A greater proportion of males (59%, n=72) were 'very satisfied' with the helpfulness and politeness of staff, compared to females (49%, n=115).
- 4.2.28 When asked overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied they were with the contact they had with SLAB at the application process a total of 518 respondents provided an answer. Just over half (55%, n=284) were 'very' or 'fairly' satisfied overall, compared with only 11% (n=54) who were 'very' or 'fairly' dissatisfied overall. A full breakdown of responses can be found in Table 11.

Table 11. Overall satisfaction with contact with SLAB During the Application Process

RESPONSE	NUMBER	%
Can't remember	41	8
Very dissatisfied	25	5
Fairly dissatisfied	29	6
Neither	69	13
Fairly satisfied	122	24
Very satisfied	162	31
N/A, did not have contact	70	13
Total	518	100

- 4.2.29 Those who were refused legal aid were the least satisfied with the overall contact with SLAB during the application process, with 31% (n=18) being either 'very' or 'fairly' dissatisfied and 31% (n=18) being either 'very' or 'fairly' satisfied. Meanwhile the other sample types were more satisfied, with 56% (n=176) of those with no contributions, 63% (n=61) of those with contributions, and 58% (n=29) of clawback respondents being either 'very' or 'fairly' dissatisfied.
- 4.2.30 A greater proportion of males (16%, n=30) were 'very' or 'fairly' dissatisfied with the overall contact with SLAB, compared to females (7%, n=24).
- 4.2.31 Respondents aged 25-34 (42%, n=46) were more likely to be 'very satisfied' with the overall contact with SLAB compared to all other groups. Conversely, respondents aged 65 and over (20%, n=5) were more likely to be 'very dissatisfied' compared to all other age groups.
- 4.2.32 A smaller proportion of those with a disability (20%, n=41) were 'fairly satisfied' with the overall contact with SLAB compared to those with no disability (27%, n=74).
- 4.2.33 Respondents from ethnic minority groups (63%, n=45) and those from other religions (62%, n=28) were more likely to be 'very' or 'fairly' satisfied with the contact they had with SLAB at the application stage. This compares to 55% (n=233) of White British or Irish respondents, and 57% (134) of respondents from the Church of Scotland, Roman Catholic and Other Christian beliefs, and 56% (n=111) of those with no religion or religious denomination.
- 4.2.34 All respondents were asked if they would have preferred any other method of contact from SLAB. Only 9% (n=49) of respondents indicated that they would have preferred another contact method, with some of the more popular suggestions listed below.
- Face to face meeting;
 - Text messaging; and
 - Online.

- 4.2.35 Respondents who had found it difficult to access legal aid because of a protected characteristic were more likely to want an alternative contact method (26%, n=8), compared to those who had not found it difficult to access legal aid (9%, n=35).
- 4.2.36 Those from other religions (13%, n=6) were slightly more likely to have preferred another method of contact with SLAB, compared to those from Church of Scotland, Roman Catholic and Other Christian (9%, n=20) and those with no religion or religious denomination (7%, n=13).

4.3 Refused Legal Aid

- 4.3.1 Respondents that had been refused legal aid were identifiable in the total sample, and were allocated a dedicated questionnaire. It was not possible, however, to determine from the database or the questionnaire responses if respondents had been rejected based on their financial application/status or for merit reasons. The open ended responses suggest that a significant proportion of refusals were for merit reasons, however this cannot be empirically confirmed and could simply be a result of respondent bias in the open ended responses.
- 4.3.2 A total of 64 (12%) respondents were refused legal aid, significantly lower than in 2013 (23%) and slightly lower than in 2009 (13%). Of these, over half (57%, n=36) knew that they might be refused, just over one third (37%, n=23) did not know they might be refused, 4 respondents (6%) could not remember and one respondent (<1%) did not provide an answer.
- 4.3.3 Respondents were asked to rate how clearly SLAB explained why they were refused. A total of 60 respondents answered the question, with one third (33%, n= 20) finding the explanation given by SLAB 'very' or 'fairly' unclear, compared to 29% (n=17) of respondents finding the explanation 'very' or 'fairly' clear. A full breakdown can be seen in the Table 12.

Table 12. Explanation of Refusal

RESPONSE	NUMBER	%
Don't know / Can't remember	8	13
Very unclear	11	18
Fairly unclear	9	15
Neither	15	25
Fairly clear	4	7
Very clear	13	22
Total	60	100

- 4.3.4 Compared to 2013 and 2009, 2016 respondents felt the explanations given were slightly clearer, with 35% in 2013 and 41% in 2009 being dissatisfied with how clearly the refusal decision was explained to them.

- 4.3.5 Respondents were also provided with the opportunity to outline in what way they felt the information regarding their refusal was not clear, and how it could be improved. Some considered that the letter had been too technical, and contained too much jargon and legal terms which they could not understand⁵. Some had sought out their solicitor to help interpret the letter and reasons for refusal as they could not understand this themselves. One respondent noted that the information in their refusal appeared to be fairly generic and not specific enough about their case/circumstances. In a number of cases it appears that the refusal was as a result of an unsuccessful assessment on the merit of their case, which led many to consider that the decision had been unfair, with some stating that the merits of the case are a matter for the courts to decide:

“The refusal outlined that the fact that the advocate and solicitor has not produced the evidence to prove to SLAB that I had been subjected to [case specific detail] it was very clear that the documents that proved my case should have been accepted through the sheriff court then passed to SLAB.”

- 4.3.6 A total of 56 respondents rated the clarity of the explanation given of their options after refusal. Around one third (32%, n=18) stated that the explanation of options was ‘very’ or ‘fairly’ clear, and around one third (32%, n=18) stated the explanation of options was ‘very’ or ‘fairly’ unclear. A full breakdown can be seen in Table 13.

Table 13. Explanation of Options

RESPONSE	NUMBER	%
Don't know / Can't remember	6	11
Very unclear	12	21
Fairly unclear	6	11
Neither	14	25
Fairly clear	8	14
Very clear	10	18
Total	56	100

- 4.3.7 Respondents that were refused legal aid were also asked what they did next, with a total of 59 respondents providing an answer. Just under half (44%, n=26) had asked for a review of the decision, similar to the results in 2013 (54%) and 2009 (48%). They were slightly more likely in 2016 (14%) to ‘pay a solicitor privately’ (2013 5%, 2009 15%) and less likely in 2016 (12%) to ‘do nothing else’ (2013 17%, 2009 27%). A full breakdown of 2016 responses can be seen in Table 14.

⁵ Again, respondents did not provide any specific information about what language or sections of the letter they found too technical. Also, SLAB have conducted a review of their communication materials recently which resulted in much of the language being amended. It is not clear from the results when survey respondents received their rejection letters, and therefore, it may be that some results reflect experiences with the older version of the letter.

Table 14. What Happened Next

RESPONSE	NUMBER	%
Don't know / Can't remember	9	15
Asked for a review of the decision	26	44
Paid a solicitor privately	8	14
Did nothing else about the problem	7	12
Other (please specify)	9	15
Total	59	100

4.4 Legal Aid Contributions

4.4.1 Respondents that were required to make contributions towards their legal aid costs were identifiable in the total sample, and were allocated a dedicated questionnaire.

4.4.2 A total of 99 (18%) respondents had to make a contribution. Of these, almost half (45%, n=44) knew about the potential for this before applying for legal aid, just over one quarter (26%, n=25) was not aware of the potential until SLAB wrote to them, and just under one quarter (23%, n=22) was told about the potential for a contribution during or after the application process. A further 7% (n=7) did not know or could not remember and 1 respondent did not provide an answer.

4.4.3 A total of 95 respondents also rated their satisfaction with how clear and easy it was to understand the letter from SLAB about their contributions. Just over two thirds (68%, n=64) stated they were either 'very' or 'fairly' satisfied with how clear and easy the letter was to understand, compared to 15% (n=15) who were 'very' or 'fairly' dissatisfied. A further 15% (n=14) of respondents also stated that they were 'neither' satisfied nor dissatisfied with how clear and easy the SLAB letter was to understand. This would seem to represent a reduction in satisfaction from 2013 when 83% of respondents were 'very' or 'fairly' satisfied, however, the change in administration mode (i.e. mode effect) could have contributed to this difference. A full breakdown of 2016 responses can be seen in Table 15.

Table 15. How Clear/Easy SLAB Letter was to Understand

RESPONSE	NUMBER	%
Don't know / Can't remember	2	2
Very dissatisfied	8	8
Fairly dissatisfied	7	7
Neither	14	15
Fairly satisfied	29	31
Very satisfied	35	37
Total	95	100

4.4.4 Respondents were also asked to rate their satisfaction with the range of payment options available to them to make contributions. A total of 96 respondents provided an answer, with over half (62%, n=63) being either 'very' or 'fairly' satisfied with the options available, compared to 15% (n=15) being 'very' or 'fairly' dissatisfied. A further 17% (n=16) of respondents also stated that they were 'neither' satisfied nor dissatisfied with the payment options available. A full breakdown of responses can be seen in the Table 16.

Table 16. Payment Options

RESPONSE	NUMBER	%
Don't know / Can't remember	2	2
Very dissatisfied	7	7
Fairly dissatisfied	8	8
Neither	16	17
Fairly satisfied	28	29
Very satisfied	35	37
Total	96	100

4.4.5 Respondents from ethnic minority groups (90%, n=17) were more likely to be 'very' or 'fairly' satisfied with the payment options, compared to those who were White British or Irish (60%, n=45).

4.4.6 Most respondents (n=97) with contributions specified whether they had contact with SLAB staff in relation to their contributions at any point. Of these respondents, nearly two thirds (65%, n=63) stated that they did have contact with SLAB staff, 30% (n=29) did not have contact, and 5% (n=5) did not know or could not remember. This is a significant increase in the proportion of applicants who have direct contact with SLAB, with only around a quarter having contact in previous survey sweeps, i.e. 23% in 2013 and 26% in 2009.

4.4.7 Respondents that had contact with SLAB staff were asked to rate their satisfaction with a series of elements relating to this contact. These included:

- The length of time to took to get an answer;
- That things were explained in a way you could understand;
- The response answered your question; and
- The helpfulness and politeness of the staff you had contract with.

4.4.8 Figure 3 shows satisfaction levels with each element.

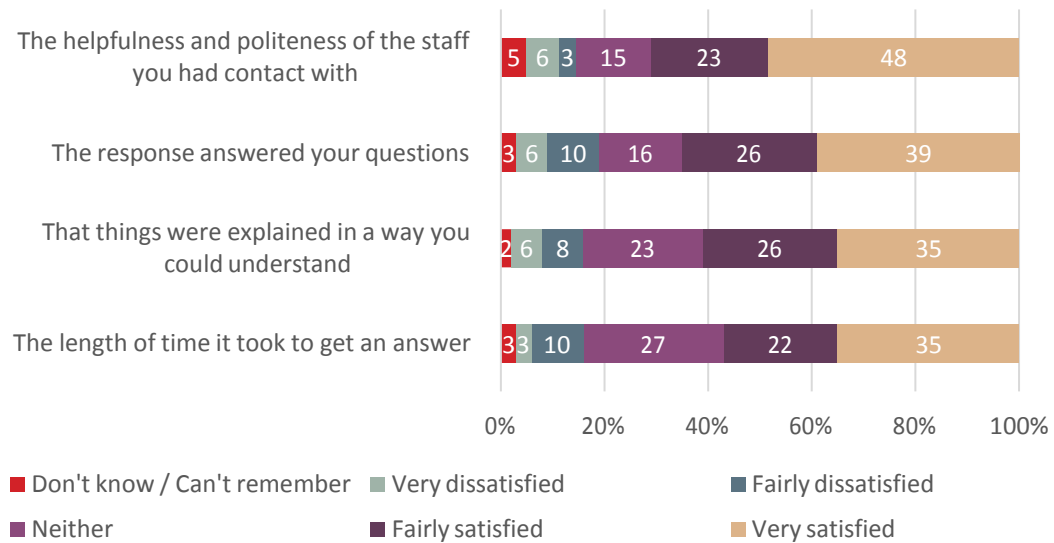


Figure 3. Satisfaction with Contact with SLAB Staff in Relation to Contributions

- 4.4.9 A total of 63 respondents provided a satisfaction rating for **the length of time it took to get an answer**, with over half (57%, n=36) being 'very' or 'fairly' satisfied, compared to 13% (n=8) being 'very' or 'fairly' dissatisfied.
- 4.4.10 When asked to rate satisfaction that **things were explained in a way they could understand**, a total of 62 respondents provided an answer. The majority were 'very' or 'fairly' satisfied (61%, n=38), compared to 14% (n=9) being 'very' or 'fairly' dissatisfied with how things were explained.
- 4.4.11 A total of 62 respondents rated their satisfaction with whether **the response answered their question**. Over half (65%, n=40) were 'very' or 'fairly' satisfied, compared with 16% (n=10) being 'very' or 'fairly' dissatisfied that the response answered the question.
- 4.4.12 A total of 62 respondents rated their satisfaction with **the helpfulness and politeness of staff**. Just under half (48%, n=30) were 'very satisfied', compared to only 6% (n=4) being 'very dissatisfied' with the helpfulness and politeness of staff.

4.5 Clawback

- 4.5.1 Respondents that were required to make clawback payments towards their legal aid costs were identifiable in the total sample, and were allocated a dedicated questionnaire. A total of 50 (9%) respondents had some form of clawback in their case.
- 4.5.2 Currently, the emphasis is on solicitors to alert their clients to the potential for clawback and to provide information around this. However, just under one third (32%, n=16) was not aware of the potential for clawback until SLAB wrote to them, 30% (n=15) knew about the potential before applying for legal aid, just over a quarter (28%, n=14) was told about the potential for clawback during or after the application process, and 10% (n=5) did not know or could not remember. In 2013 two thirds, and in 2009 74% were aware they would be required to pay some form of clawback in their case.

4.5.3 All clawback respondents were asked to rate how satisfied they were that the letter from SLAB regarding clawback explained clearly why and what they had to pay. Just over one third (34%, n=18) were either 'very' or 'fairly' satisfied, compared to 28% (n=14) being 'very' or 'fairly' dissatisfied with this. It should be noted that, although the question asked about the clarity of the content of the letter, some applicants will have disagreed with the principle of making this payment when they had been granted legal aid, and/or had an issue with how the calculation for the clawback amount had been done, which may have impacted upon their responses/thee results. A full breakdown of responses is provided in Table 17.

Table 17. Satisfaction with Clawback Letter from SLAB

RESPONSE	NUMBER	%
Don't know / Can't remember	7	14
Very dissatisfied	11	22
Fairly dissatisfied	3	6
Neither	12	24
Fairly satisfied	9	18
Very satisfied	8	16
Total	50	100

4.5.4 Respondents were also asked to rate their satisfaction with the range of payment options available to them to make clawback payments, with a total of 48 respondents provided an answer. Just under half (44%, n=21) were 'very' or 'fairly' satisfied, compared to 16% (n=8) who were 'very' or 'fairly' dissatisfied with the payment options available to them. A full breakdown of responses is provided in Table 18.

Table 18. Satisfaction with Payment Options

RESPONSE	NUMBER	%
Don't know / Can't remember	12	25
Very dissatisfied	5	10
Fairly dissatisfied	3	6
Neither	7	15
Fairly satisfied	12	25
Very satisfied	9	19
Total	48	100

4.5.5 All 50 clawback respondents indicated whether they thought the total amount they were asked to pay was more, the same, or less than they expected. Just under half (48%, n=24) stated it had been more than they expected, 32% (n=16) did not know or couldn't remember, 14% (n=7) thought it was the same as expected, and only 6% (n=3) thought it was less than expected. In 2013, 27% (n=4) indicated the amount they had to pay in clawback had been more than expected, 33% (n=5) paid less than expected, and 40% (n=6) of respondents did not know how the amount they had to pay compared to

their expectations (however, the small sample size in 2013 should be noted when drawing comparisons between years).

4.5.6 When results are disaggregated by when respondents became aware of the potential for clawback (see Table 19), only 20% (n=3) of those respondents who were made aware of the potential for clawback were asked to pay more than they expected, compared to 57% (n=8) of those that became aware of the potential for clawback during or after the application process, and 75% (n=12) of those that were unaware of clawback until SLAB wrote to them.

Table 19. Awareness of Potential for Clawback by Extent of Clawback Payments

RESPONSE	PAID MORE THAN EXPECTED	PAID SAME AS EXPECTED	PAID LESS THAN EXPECTED	TOTAL (N)
Knew about potential for clawback before applying for legal aid	20%	40%	7%	15
Knew about potential for clawback during or after the application process	57%	7%	7%	14
Not aware of potential for clawback until SLAB wrote to them	75%	0%	6%	16

4.5.7 Half of the respondents (50%, n=25) stated that they had spoken with someone at SLAB about the clawback in their case. Of the remaining respondents, 42% (n=21) stated they had not and 8% (n=4) did not know or could not remember speaking to anyone at SLAB.

4.5.8 Respondents that had spoken with SLAB staff were asked to rate their satisfaction with a series of elements relating to this contact. These included:

- The length of time it took to get an answer;
- That things were explained in a way you could understand;
- The response answered your question; and
- The helpfulness and politeness of the staff you had contract with.

4.5.9 Figure 4 details satisfaction levels with each element.

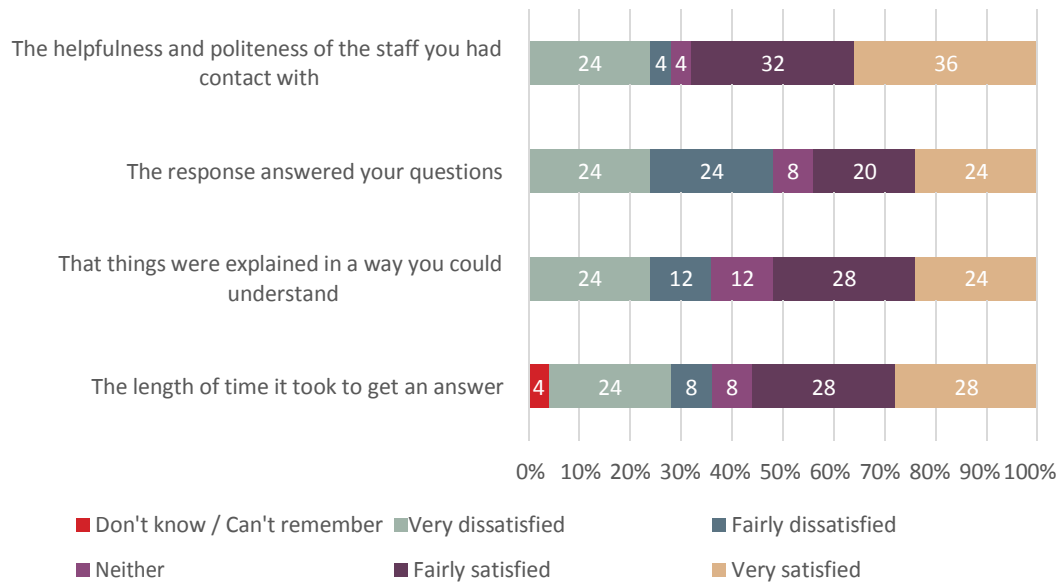


Figure 4. Satisfaction with Contact with SLAB Staff in Relation to Clawback

- 4.5.10 A total of 25 respondents provided a rating for the **length of time it took to get an answer**, with over half (56%, n=14) being 'very' or 'fairly' satisfied, compared to 32% (n=8) being 'very' or 'fairly' dissatisfied⁶.
- 4.5.11 A total of 25 respondents provided a rating on **whether things were explained in a way they could understand**, with just over half (52%, n=13) being 'very' or 'fairly' satisfied, compared to 36% (n=9) being 'very' or 'fairly' dissatisfied⁷.
- 4.5.12 All 25 respondents rated whether **the response answered their question**, with around half being 'very' or 'fairly' dissatisfied (48%, n=12), and around half (44%, n=6) being 'very' or 'fairly' satisfied
- 4.5.13 Finally all 25 respondents rated **the helpfulness and politeness of staff**, with the majority (68%, n=17) being 'very' or 'fairly' satisfied, compared to 28% (n=7) being 'very' or 'fairly' dissatisfied.

⁶ It should be noted that response times to answering mail has improved recently, but due to the timescale the sample was drawn from, these results may not reflect these changes.

⁷ It should be noted that SLAB have reviewed the language used in letters recently, but due to the timescale the sample was drawn from, these results may not reflect these changes.

5. OVERALL EXPERIENCE

5.1 Additional Information Applicants would Like

- 5.1.1 All respondents were asked if there was anything they would like to have been told, or told earlier, about legal aid. All 536 respondents provided an answer, with the majority (77%, n=414) stating no, and 22% (n=122) stating yes. Only three respondents that would have liked more information had not read the information booklet provided at the outset by their solicitor.
- 5.1.2 Both 'Clawback' (44%, n=22) and 'Refused' (44%, n=28) respondents were more likely to indicate that they would have liked some additional information, compared to 'Granted with contributions' (28%, n=28) and 'Granted with no contribution' (14%, n=44) respondents.
- 5.1.3 Respondents who had found it difficult to access legal aid because of a protected characteristic were more likely to want some additional information (60%, n=21), compared to those had not found it difficult to access legal aid (19%, n=85).
- 5.1.4 Of those that indicated that there were things they would like to have been told, or told earlier, about legal aid, a wide range of issues were identified. The most common issue discussed by applicants focused upon the need for greater clarity and/or information about the potential for contributions and/or clawback. A number had been unaware of these in advance, and others would have preferred to know the extent of the possible contributions/clawback before proceeding with the case. Indeed at least one respondent noted that they may have chosen a different path if they had been aware of the potential extent of these payments.

"I would have liked to have been informed about possible contributions and overall cost of the case."

"I would have liked to have known the outstanding amount before agreeing to go ahead with the Legal Aid."

"Would have liked more clear information about how the process works and how much the case was going to cost so I would have been aware of what was ahead of me."

"Understanding the financial implications may have led me to reaching a different decision."

- 5.1.5 A few respondents also noted that they would like to have been told that they would need to make both contributions/clawback payments to SLAB and also pay a final bill from their solicitor:

"I asked 5 times for a breakdown of costs as I didn't understand why I had to pay both Legal Aid and solicitors full costs."

“I got help but still got a huge invoice from my solicitor which I was not aware of. I thought everything was covered. I’m still in financial difficulty due to this.”

“That we would have to pay Legal Aid as well as the solicitor’s fees.”

“The end payment - when questioned solicitor about affairs “XXX” [solicitor] would say Legal Aid will pay which was not always the case.”

5.1.6 A number of other things respondents would like to have been told, or told earlier, were also discussed. The most common issues included:

- Being told about the timescales involved in the assessment process;
- Greater transparency over eligibility/chances of being granted legal aid from the outset;
- Clearer explanations of refusal;
- Clarity, updates and breakdown of solicitor and legal aid costs, particularly in case of clawback; and
- Being told by their solicitor earlier in their case that they could apply for legal aid.

5.2 Satisfaction with the Overall Process

5.2.1 Respondents were asked to rate their overall satisfaction with a series of elements relating to their most recent experience of the civil legal aid process. These were:

- Your overall experience of the legal aid process;
- How easy it was to understand what you needed to do to apply for legal aid;
- The time taken to get legal aid in place;
- The information you were provided with by SLAB;
- The efficiency of SLAB staff; and
- The helpfulness and politeness of SLAB staff.

5.2.2 Figure 5 details satisfaction levels with each element.

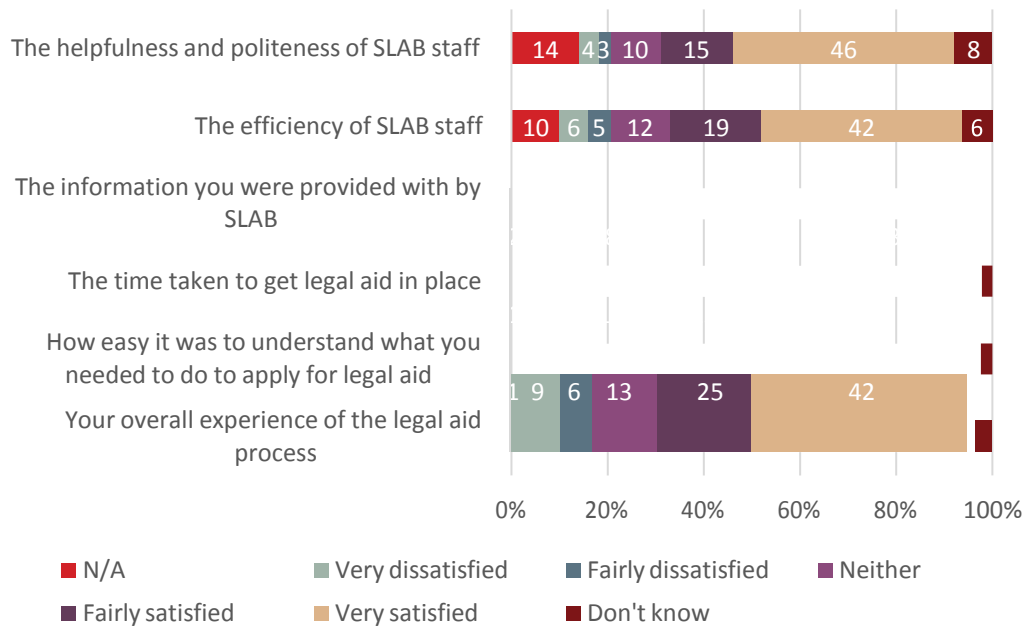


Figure 5. Overall Satisfaction with Service Elements

Overall Experience of the Legal Aid Process

- 5.2.3 All respondents were asked to rate their overall experience of the legal aid process. A total of 517 respondents provided an answer, with two thirds (67%, n=347) being ‘very’ or ‘fairly’ satisfied with their overall experience, compared to 15% (n=77) who were ‘very’ or ‘fairly’ dissatisfied. A further 13% (n=68) were ‘neither’ satisfied nor dissatisfied with their overall experience.
- 5.2.4 When compared with the 2013 survey results, 84% of respondents were either satisfied or neutral about their overall experience of the full legal aid process, while 80% were either satisfied or neutral this year.
- 5.2.5 A smaller proportion of those with a disability were ‘fairly satisfied’ (49%, n=99) overall, but this group were also more likely to be ‘very satisfied’ (14%, n=29) and ‘very dissatisfied’ (12%, n=24) compared to those without a disability.
- 5.2.6 Respondents who had not found it difficult to access legal aid were more likely to be ‘very’ or ‘fairly’ satisfied overall (72%, n=317), compared to those that had found it difficult to access legal aid because of a protected characteristic (28%, n=9). Conversely, those who found it difficult to access legal aid because of a protected characteristics were more likely to be ‘very’ or ‘fairly’ dissatisfied overall (53%, n=17), compared to those who had not found it difficult (11%, n=48).
- 5.2.7 Those respondents that had been refused legal aid were the least satisfied overall, with 53% (n=33) either ‘very’ or ‘fairly’ dissatisfied and only 22% (n=14) either ‘very’ or ‘fairly’ satisfied. Those with clawback were the next least satisfied, with 20% (n=10) either ‘very’ or ‘fairly’ dissatisfied and 58% (n=29) either ‘very’ or ‘fairly’ satisfied overall. Those granted legal aid with contributions were more satisfied, with 68% (n=65) either ‘very’ or ‘fairly’ satisfied overall. While those granted legal aid with no contributions

were the most satisfied, with 77% (n=239) being either 'very' or 'fairly' satisfied overall. Those with no contributions also had the greatest proportion of respondents who were 'very satisfied' (56%, n=173). A full breakdown by sample type is detailed in Figure 6.

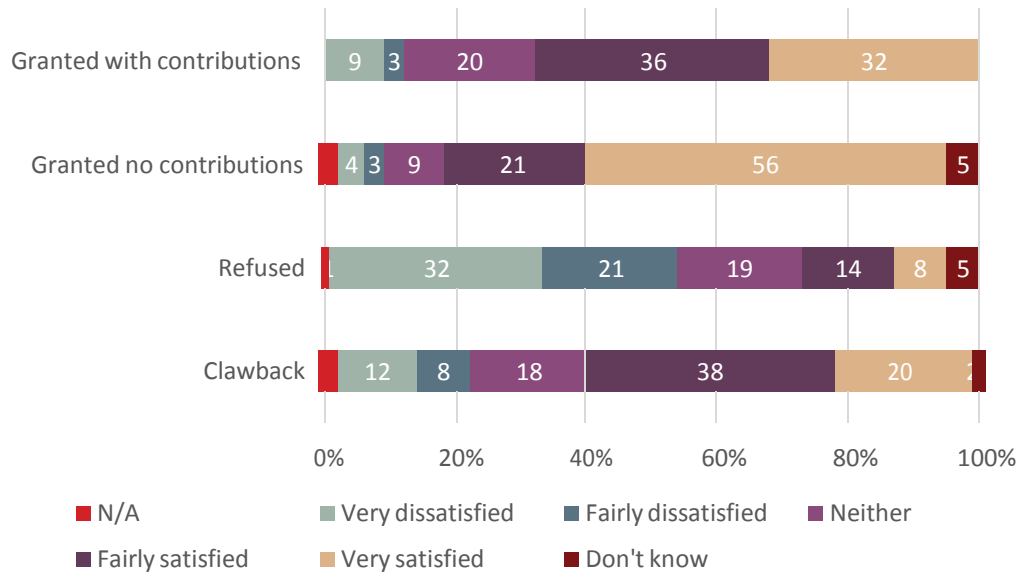


Figure 6. Overall Experience of the Legal Aid Process

Ease of Understanding what you Needed to do to Apply for Legal Aid

- 5.2.8 A total of 515 respondents rated how easy it was to understand what they needed to do to apply for legal aid. The majority (70%, n=358) were 'very' or 'fairly' satisfied with how easy it was to understand, compared to 13% (n=65) who were 'very' or 'fairly' dissatisfied. A further 14% (n=73) were 'neither' satisfied not dissatisfied.
- 5.2.9 A greater proportion of those with a disability were 'very satisfied' (50%, n=102) with how easy it was to understand what they needed to do to apply for legal aid, compared to those without a disability (43%, n=120).
- 5.2.10 Respondents who were White British or Irish were more likely to be 'very satisfied' (47%, n=200) with how easy it was to understand what they needed to do to apply for legal aid, compared to those from an ethnic minority group (38%, n=27).
- 5.2.11 Respondents who had not found it difficult to access legal aid were more likely to be 'very satisfied' (48%, n=213) with how easy it was to understand what they needed to do to apply for legal aid, compared to those that had found it difficult to access legal aid because of a protected characteristic (19%, n=6). Conversely, those who had found it more difficult to access legal aid because of a protected characteristic were more likely to be 'very dissatisfied' (28%, n=9), compared to those who had not found it difficult (4%, n=17).
- 5.2.12 Again, those who were refused legal aid were the least satisfied in relation to understanding what they had to do to apply for legal aid, with 27% (n=17) either 'very' or 'fairly' dissatisfied and 54% (n=34) who were either 'very' or 'fairly' satisfied. Those with clawback were the next least satisfied, with 18% (n=9) who were either 'very' or 'fairly' dissatisfied and 54% (n=27) who were either 'very' or 'fairly' satisfied. Those with

contributions were more satisfied with this element, with 66% (n=62) being either 'very' or 'fairly' satisfied. However, those with no contributions were the most satisfied, with 77% (n=235) being either 'very' or 'fairly' satisfied. Again, this group also contained the greatest proportion of respondents who were 'very satisfied' (54%, n=164). A full breakdown by sample type is detailed in Figure 7.

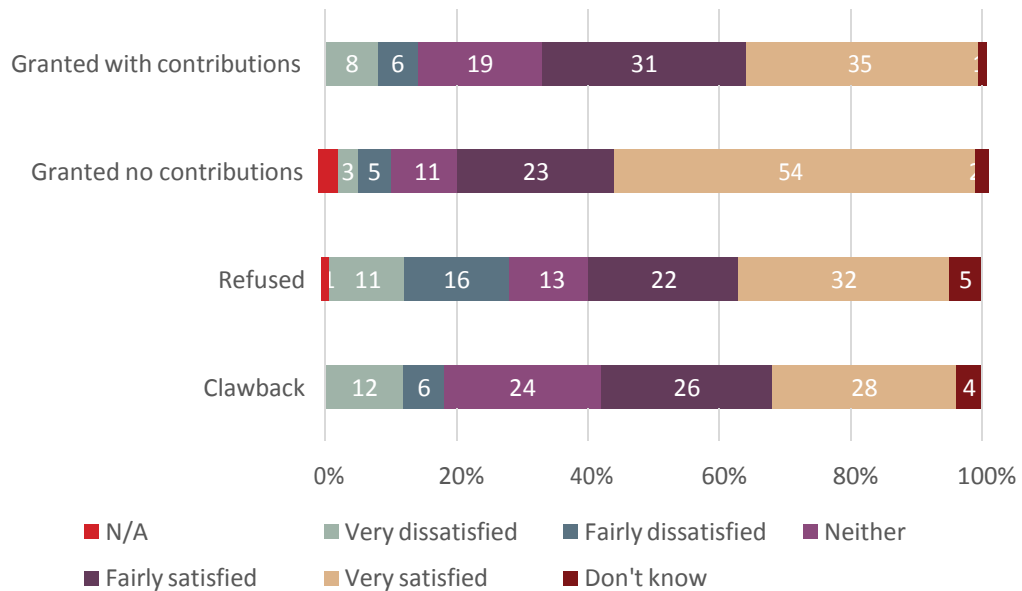


Figure 7. Understanding what Applicants Needed to do to Apply for Legal Aid

Time Taken to get Legal Aid in Place

- 5.2.13 A total of 514 respondents rated their satisfaction with the time taken to get legal aid in place. Over half (56%, n=285) were 'very' or 'fairly' satisfied, compared to just under one quarter (23%, n=119) who were 'very' or 'fairly' dissatisfied. A further 17% (n=89) were 'neither' satisfied nor dissatisfied.
- 5.2.14 Respondents who had not found it difficult to access legal aid were more likely to be 'very' or 'fairly' satisfied (59%, n=259) with the time taken to get legal aid in place, compared to those had found it difficult to access legal aid because of a protected characteristic (34%, n=11). Conversely, those who had found it more difficult to access legal aid because of a protected characteristic were more likely to be 'very dissatisfied' (44%, n=14), compared to those who had not found it difficult (12%, n=53).
- 5.2.15 Again, those refused legal aid were the least satisfied with the time taken to get legal aid in place, with 46% (n=29) being 'very' or 'fairly' dissatisfied and only 24% (n=15) being 'very' or 'fairly' satisfied. Clawback respondents were the next least satisfied, 54% being 'very' or 'fairly' satisfied. Those who were granted legal aid with and without contributions were fairly equally satisfied with this element overall, with 59% (n=56) of those with contributions and 61% (n=187) those without contributions being either 'very' or 'fairly' satisfied. However, those without contributions contained a greater proportion of those that were 'very satisfied' (42%, n=127) with the time taken. A full breakdown by sample type is provided in Figure 8.

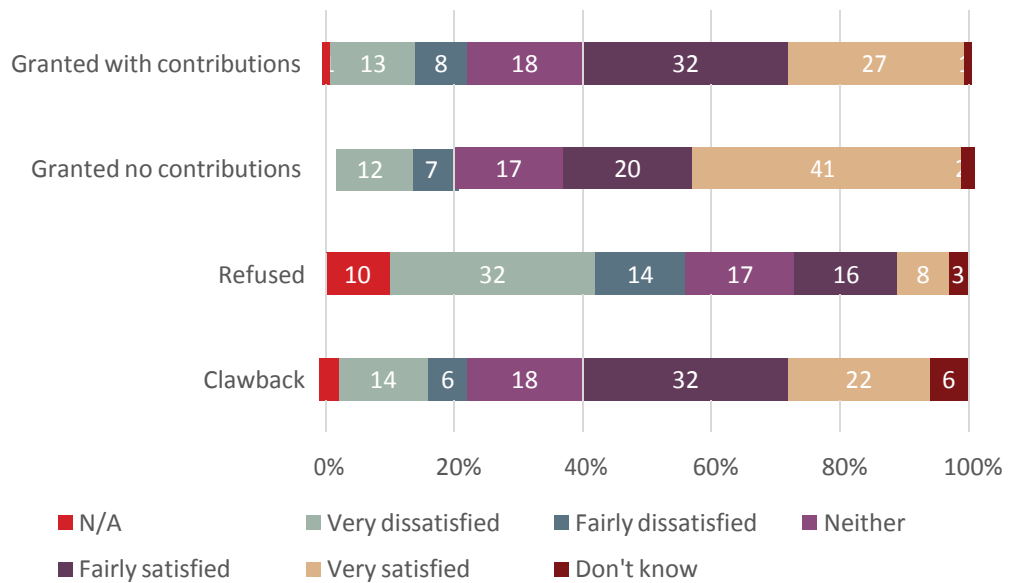


Figure 8. Satisfaction with the Time Taken to get Legal Aid in Place

Information Provided by SLAB

- 5.2.16 A total of 513 respondents rated the information they were provided with by SLAB. Over half (59%, n=304) were 'very' or 'fairly' satisfied, compared to 15% (n=77) who were 'very' or 'fairly' dissatisfied. A further 16% (n=84) of respondents were 'neither' satisfied nor dissatisfied.
- 5.2.17 A greater proportion of those with a disability were 'very satisfied' (42%, n=84) with the information they were provided with by SLAB, compared to those with no disability (36%, n=100).
- 5.2.18 Respondents who had not found it difficult to access legal aid were more likely to be 'very' or 'fairly' satisfied (63%, n=278) with the information provide by SLAB, compared to those had found it difficult to access legal aid because of a protected characteristic (23%, n=7). Conversely, those who had found it difficult to access legal aid because of a protected characteristic were more likely to be 'very or 'fairly' dissatisfied (42%, n=13), compared to those who had not found it difficult (32%, n=57).
- 5.2.19 Those that were refused legal aid were the least satisfied with this element, with 43% (n=27) being either 'very' or 'fairly' dissatisfied and only 24% (n=15) being 'very' or 'fairly' satisfied. Clawback respondents were again, the next least satisfied, with 16% (n=8) being either 'very' or 'fairly' dissatisfied and 50% (n=25) being 'very' or 'fairly' satisfied. This time, those without contributions were the next most satisfied, with 65% (n=197) being 'very' or 'fairly' satisfied, although they also had the highest proportion of respondents who were 'very' satisfied (45%, n=137). Those with contributions were therefore the most satisfied with this element, with 71% (n=67) being either 'very' or 'fairly' satisfied. A full breakdown by sample type is provided in Figure 9.

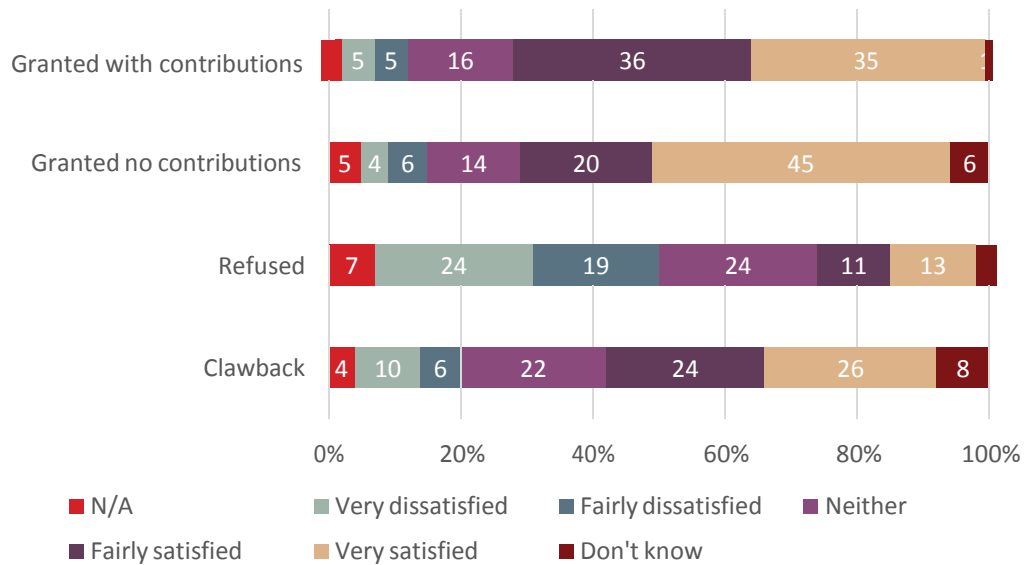


Figure 9. Satisfaction with the Information Provided by SLAB

Efficiency of SLAB Staff

- 5.2.20 A total of 507 respondents rated their satisfaction with the efficiency of SLAB staff. Almost two thirds (61%, n=307) were ‘very’ or ‘fairly’ satisfied, compared to 11% (n=54) who were ‘very’ or ‘fairly’ dissatisfied with the efficiency of staff. A further 12% (n=63) of respondents were ‘neither’ satisfied nor dissatisfied.
- 5.2.21 A lower proportion of those with a disability (13%, n=26) were ‘fairly satisfied’, compared to those without a disability (24%, n=65).
- 5.2.22 Those that were refused legal aid were generally the least satisfied with this element, with 27% (n=17) being ‘very’ or ‘fairly’ dissatisfied and 34% (n=21) being ‘very’ or ‘fairly’ satisfied. Clawback and those without contributions had fairly equal levels of satisfaction, with 64% (n=31) of clawback respondents, and 63% (n=190) of those without contributions being either ‘very’ or ‘fairly’ satisfied with the efficiency of SLAB staff, although those without contributions were more concentrated in the ‘very satisfied’ category (47%, n=142). Those granted with contributions were the most satisfied, with 68% (n=65) being either ‘very’ or ‘fairly’ satisfied with the efficiency of SLAB staff. A full breakdown by sample type is detailed in Figure 10.

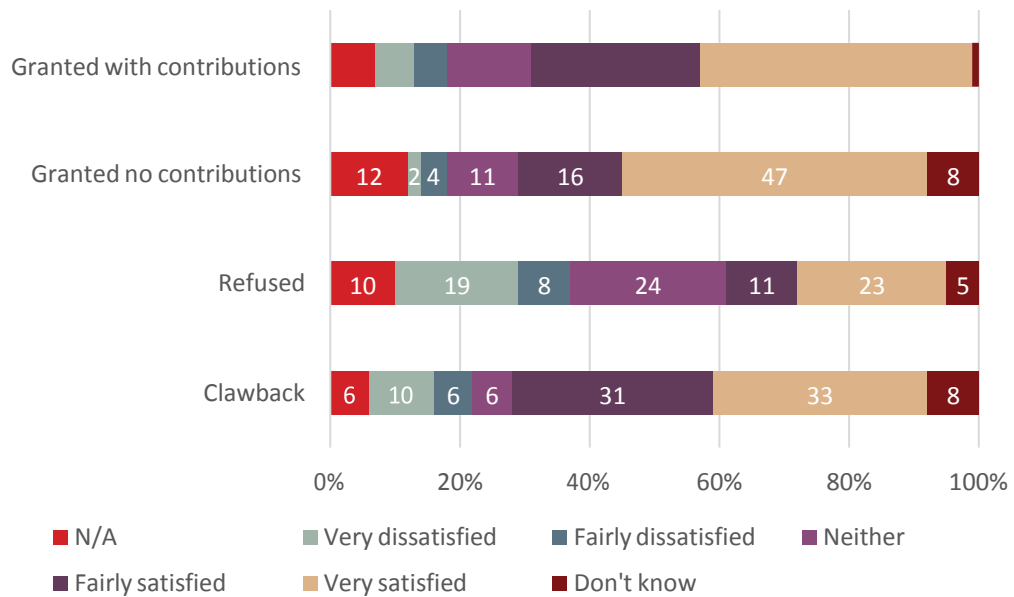


Figure 10. Satisfaction with the Efficiency of SLAB Staff

Helpfulness and Politeness of SLAB Staff

- 5.2.23 A total of 509 respondents rated the helpfulness and politeness of SLAB staff. Just under two thirds (61%, n=311) were ‘very’ or ‘fairly’ satisfied, compared to 7% (n=34) who were ‘very’ or ‘fairly’ dissatisfied with the helpfulness and politeness of staff. A further 10% (n=52) were ‘neither’ satisfied not dissatisfied.
- 5.2.24 Consistent with the other elements, those that were refused legal aid were the least satisfied with the helpfulness and politeness of SLAB staff, with 19% (n=12) being either ‘very’ or ‘fairly’ dissatisfied and 41% (n=26) being either ‘very’ or ‘fairly’ satisfied. Those granted with no contributions were the next most satisfied, with 60% (n=180) were either ‘fairly’ or ‘very’ satisfied, followed by clawback respondents, where 70% (n=34) were either ‘very’ or ‘fairly’ satisfied. Meaning that those granted legal aid with contributions were the most satisfied with the helpfulness and politeness of SLAB staff, with 74% (n=71) being ‘very’ or ‘fairly’ satisfied. A full breakdown by sample type is provided in Figure 11.

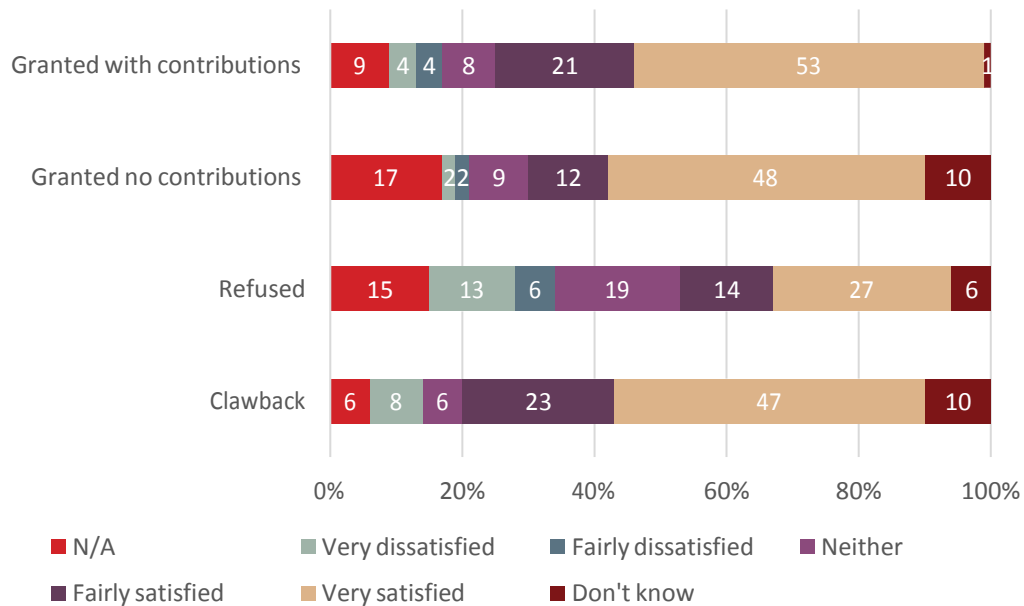


Figure 11. Satisfaction with the Helpfulness and Politeness of SLAB Staff

5.3 Satisfaction with the Helpdesk and Website

SLAB Telephone Helpdesk

5.3.1 All 536 respondents were asked if they had contacted SLAB via the general helpdesk phone number, with 521 respondents providing an answer. Just over half (56%, n=291) had not made contact via the general helpdesk number, over one quarter (27%, n=139) had made contact, and 17% (n=91) did not know or could not remember. Those with no contributions (20%, n=62) were less likely to contact SLAB this way compared to the other sample types. Similarly, a greater proportion of those with a disability (62%, n=130) did not contact SLAB via the general helpdesk number compared to those without a disability (51%, n=147). Respondents who had found it difficult to access legal aid because of a protected characteristic were more likely to contact SLAB via the helpdesk number (46%, n=15), compared to those had not found it difficult to access legal aid (25%, n=112).

5.3.2 Respondents also rated their satisfaction with how easy it was to be put through to the right team or person using the helpdesk. A total of 450 respondents provided an answer, with just under half (46%, n=206) being 'very' or 'fairly' satisfied with how easy it was to be put through to the right team or person, compared to 7% (n=32) being 'very' or 'fairly' dissatisfied. A further 34% (n=154) did not know or could not remember, and 13% (n=58) were 'neither' satisfied nor dissatisfied. A full breakdown of respondents is provided in Table 20.

Table 20. Easy/Difficult to be Put Through to the Right Team/Person

RESPONSE	NUMBER	%
Don't know / Can't remember	154	34
Very difficult	11	2
Fairly difficult	21	5
Neither	58	13
Fairly easy	73	16
Very easy	133	30
Total	450	100

5.3.3 Those who were refused (9%, n=5) legal aid were less likely than other respondents to be 'very satisfied', while those with contributions (59%, n=50) had the greatest proportion of respondents either 'very' or 'fairly' satisfied.

5.3.4 Respondents who had not found it difficult to access legal aid were more likely to be 'very' or 'fairly' satisfied with being put through to the right person/team (47%, n=178), compared to those had found it difficult to access legal aid because of a protected characteristic (34%, n=11). Conversely, those who had found it difficult to access legal aid because of a protected characteristic were more likely to be 'very' or 'fairly' dissatisfied with being put through (28%, n=9), compared to those who had not found it difficult (5%, n=19).

SLAB Website

5.3.5 A total of 517 respondents also indicated whether they had used SLAB's website before or during their experience of legal aid. Two thirds (67%, n=348) stated they had not, just under one quarter (23%, n=120) had used the website, and 10% (n=49) did not know or could not remember. Those with contributions (78%, n=75) were less likely than other respondents to use the website. Similarly, a greater proportion of those without a disability (70%, n=195) had not used the website. Respondents who had found it difficult to access legal aid because of a protected characteristic were more likely to use the website (47%, n=16), compared to those who had not found it difficult to access legal aid (20%, n=88).

5.3.6 All respondents that had used the website were asked to rate how easy they found it to find what they wanted on the website. Just over half (55%, n=66) found it 'very' or 'fairly' easy to find the information, compared to just under one quarter (23%, n=27) who found it 'very' or 'fairly' difficult. In 2013 only 4 people found it difficult (6% of responses) to find what they were looking for on the website, compared to 23% (n=27) in 2016. A full breakdown of 2016 respondents is provided in Table 21.

Table 21. Easy/Difficult to Find Information on SLAB's Website

RESPONSE	NUMBER	%
Don't know / Can't remember	4	3
Very difficult	15	13
Fairly difficult	12	10
Neither	23	19
Fairly easy	32	27
Very easy	34	28
Total	120	100

5.3.7 Respondents who had not found it difficult to access legal aid were more likely to find it 'very' or 'fairly' easy to find information on SLAB's website (67%, n=59), compared to those that had found it difficult to access legal aid because of a protected characteristic (25%, n=4). Conversely, those who had found it difficult to access legal aid because of a protected characteristic were more likely to find it 'very' or 'fairly' difficult (56%, n=9), compared to those who had not found it difficult (14%, n=12).

5.4 Suggestions for Improvement

5.4.1 All respondents were asked to outline any suggestions they had on how to improve the civil legal aid process.

5.4.2 Encouragingly, 69 respondents indicated that they had no suggestions for improvements and a further 14 noted that they had been happy with the service they had received and saw no need for changes:

"I think it's good how it is!"

"No, you guys do a brilliant job."

"No. First class and thank you."

"No suggestions as I have been really satisfied in the past and present dealing with SLAB."

Quicker and More Efficient

5.4.3 Of those that did provide suggestions for areas that could be improved, many focused on a need to make the application process quicker and more efficient:

"Try to speed up the application process."

"Being clear of exact info needed at beginning of application to save wasting time with two, three or even 4 'extra information' requests."

“There seems to be the same information requested more than once it needs to be more simpler to complete, very long winded.”

“Outline clearly and up-front what type of documents you require. I was not asked for documents and refused because of not providing them. It would have been helpful to know what you needed in the first place.”

Clarity Around Payments

- 5.4.4 Again, a number of respondents expressed a desire for greater clarity at the outset regarding the costs they may need to pay and what is/is not included in their assistance:

“Please make it clear at the start about what will be re-payable and the clawback clause.”

“Tell people they will pay both legal aid board, and full solicitors fees.”

“Charges need to be made clear, and fixed charges by solicitors, so know clearly what you need to pay back.”

“Make lawyers more accountable, i.e. details of charges and costs to SLAB.”

“Address search costs are not included in divorce cases... I had to acquire additional funds permission. The address is required to serve the ex-partner so surely the search fee should be a reasonable included expense, not an extra needing permission and an eight week delay.”

Greater Direct Contact with SLAB

- 5.4.5 Some respondents favoured greater direct contact between SLAB and applicants:

“There should be an initial phone call to cut out the lawyer to ensure that the rules and process are explained to the person applying before any unnecessary legal bills happen.”

“Perhaps more direct one-to-one contact with the applicant rather than through the lawyer route. Lawyers are very busy people and things can be shelved until reminded of them. I, personally, found the whole process rather difficult when it could have been a bit simpler.”

“There should be a proper response via telephone or office based appointment, advice on what to do next.”

- 5.4.6 It should be noted however, that SLAB have recently increased the levels of contact they have with applicants, but satisfaction with this newer approach is not captured by the survey due to the time period used to draw the sample.

- 5.4.7 A few respondents also indicated a preference for some form of an interview process, either by telephone or in person. This was considered useful both in providing relevant and accurate information to the client regarding the legal aid criteria and process, as well as in ensuring that the correct information is provided to SLAB:

"I think it might be helpful in these situations if maybe an interview even over the phone with the applicant was done in order for a better informed decision to be made."

"A personal interview by SLAB is essential to assess the viability of the case and to pass reasons for acceptance or refusal at the meeting."

"I would prefer a phone call, or a home visit, because people like myself have difficulties. Would rather speak one-to-one in my home so they could break everything down, and speak to me slowly."

"Have face to face meetings and get a better understanding of what is actually going on, and this way you wouldn't be long in finding out who is in genuine need of the service and who is just good at paperwork!"

Quick Wins

- 5.4.8 Although only suggested by a minority of respondents, some 'quick wins' could include:

"A simple booklet bullet pointing all the key important points for the SLAB process. Only the key points, just a quick ref guide . Also the pitfalls to look out for and key phone numbers."

"Keep people up to date on the progress of their application, whether it be a letter, email, or phone call."

- 5.4.9 Greater use of online technology was also seen as desirable by some respondents. Examples of this included greater availability of information online, the opportunity to download documents, forms that can be completed and submitted electronically, accepting electronic signatures on forms, the submission of evidence via email, and a "password link for all applicants to check their current spend status".

Improving Accessibility

- 5.4.10 A few equality and accessibility issues were also raised, again by a minority of respondents. These included the availability of information in other languages (Chinese was mentioned specifically), and the use of British Sign Language (BSL) transcripts on the website:

"In relation to the website there is no BSL transcript for easy access for deaf people, you have contact BSL, but to read information on the website is not always easy for deaf people."

Maintaining Confidentiality

- 5.4.11 A few respondents felt that the process of seeking confirmation/information from the other party in a case was inappropriate and should be stopped. However, other's held the opposite view:

"No-one should be asked if they agree to someone else's application for Legal Aid as this is a private contract between the client and the Legal Aid board, and the decision is theirs alone based on the information on the provided documents so no need to ask for a party who might have faced court to agree if you should be granted or object to it."

"I think when someone asks for legal aid then the other person in the case should be allowed to give evidence to disprove the reasons for the applicant asking for legal aid."

Problems with Solicitors

- 5.4.12 Some respondents also noted problems they had experienced with their solicitor. In some cases it appeared that solicitors limited their input or effort on cases because of a perceived 'cap' in the legal aid payments:

"... I have been refused help from several legal firms, each one saying that they only received £25/26 per hour and this prevented them from taking my case."

"Most lawyers don't want take me on when I say I'll be claiming legal aid. I was told they feel they are given a lot of hassle when claiming their money so don't want to take legal aid clients on."

- 5.4.13 Others indicated a need for solicitors to be better informed about legal aid and to be providing an improved service to legal aid clients:

“Educate solicitors on the process.”

“... give clients feedback forms at regular intervals to monitor lawyers/progress of case/client satisfaction.”

- 5.4.14 It should be noted that SLAB now contact solicitors directly if information is missing from the application forms and/or if supporting evidence is not received with the application form. This change has not impacted the results however, due to the time period the sample was drawn from, the changes are too recent.

Positive Comments About Solicitors

- 5.4.15 Some respondents were, however, positive about their solicitors and the efforts they went to both in the legal aid application and in their case generally:

“My solicitor dealt with most of this for me he was very good.”

“I was very happy with my solicitor who dealt with the entire process for me and explained every step along the way.”

“My current solicitor has made the process as easy as possible and explained it clearly.”

“My solicitor kept me informed with the Legal Aid process. Very satisfied overall.”

“My solicitor was very polite, helpful and strongly recommended and very good at her role.”

6. ACCESSIBILITY OF LEGAL AID

6.1 Impact of Protected Characteristics

6.1.1 All respondents were asked if having protected characteristics had made it more difficult to access legal aid. Only 35 (7%) respondents stated that it had, with most indicating this had been because of disability. Table 22 provides a full breakdown of the characteristics of those that stated they had found legal aid more difficult to access because of a protected characteristic.

Table 22. Difficulty Accessing Legal Aid Due to a Protected Characteristic

PROTECTED CHARACTERISTIC	NUMBER	ASSOCIATED DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS
Disability	23	8 x Reduced Physical Capacity; 8 x Learning Disability; 6 x Mental Illness; 6 x Hearing Impairment; 5 x Physical Co-ordination Difficulties; 4 x Speech Impairment; 3 x Other; 1 x Visual Impairment; 1 x Severe Disfigurement; and 2 x Prefer not to say. (Note: multiple responses possible)
Ethnicity	4	2 x 'Mixed or Multiple Ethnic Group' 1 x 'Other White Ethnic Group' 1 x 'Chinese, Chinese Scottish or Chinese British'
Age	4	1 x 16-24 1 x 25-34 1 x 56-64 1 x 65+
Gender	3	2 x male 1 x female
Care Status	3	1 x Previously looked after 1 x Never looked after 1 x Prefer not to say (Potential for wider interpretation of 'Care Status' by respondents, e.g. health care)
Religious Beliefs	2	1 x Sikh 1 x Other (Christian)
Gender Identity	0	
Sexual Identity	0	
Total Respondents	35	

Note: Multiple responses were possible at this question.

6.1.2 Respondents who stated they had found legal aid more difficult to access due to a protected characteristic were asked in what ways they had found access more difficult. A total of 21 respondents provided an answer, with 15 linking their difficulties to a disability, four to their ethnicity, two to their age, two to their care status, and one to their gender.

6.2 Challenges Experienced

6.2.1 The majority of difficulties described centred around disabilities and/or health issues:

“Disabled people should have special assistance and even full exemptions, pensioners should have special assistance and even full exemptions.”

“I just think cause of my disability use just didn't take the time to read anything about me and just refused me straight away, which I don't agree with.”

“Because I am born profoundly deaf, and I am British Sign Language User in order to communicate in a hearing world full of hearing people who NEVER understand deaf people... that's why profoundly deaf people are so frustrated.”

“My age/health status made supplying more personal data quite stressful. Never speaking to the same person with my concerns caused distress.”

“Walking, understanding and only able to go places if my worker CPN is available, so sorting out a right time for appointments.”

“Health had an impact, as had to travel. Would have to go to the library to print things and post letters - difficult due to health issue.”

“Lack of energy, lack of coordination.”

6.2.2 A number of respondents also outlined challenges resulting from learning disabilities and/or literacy issues:

“The complexity and length of process was very difficult to complete due to my ADD [Attention Deficit Disorder], it took a huge amount of time and concentration to do some of the forms and get through the process.”

“I feel like the legal system is not designed for people with mental health problems and learning difficulties, and leaves us very vulnerable to be taken advantage of.”

“I find it hard to spell and read.”

“I have to get support to in all forms.”

6.2.3 Challenges were also discussed that related to ethnicity/country of origin and/or English not being the applicants first language:

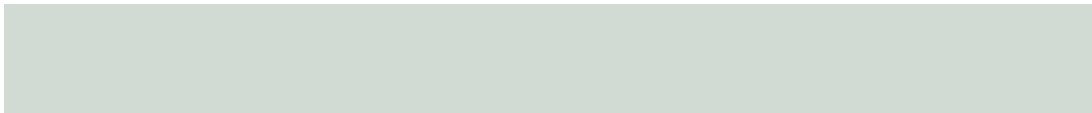
“Language barrier.”

“Some people think cause of my ethnicity that I am stupid and can't understand so they don't work as hard with me, but I know stuff and would not be taken by a fool.”

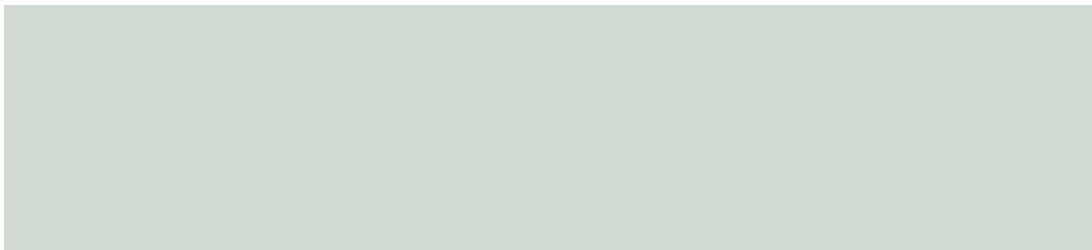
“Because I come from a different country it affects certain areas, even after becoming a resident my origins still affect applications as I need to provide extra paperwork.”

“I believe that if I had been completely white I would not have been refused legal aid... by refusing me legal aid in order for me to proceed to court and at the very least have my side acknowledged. The police service is by and large a racist organisation and the SLAB endorse the attitude by refusing applicants like myself.”

6.2.4 Gender was also raised as an issue for one respondent:



6.2.5 Two respondents however, indicated that the challenges they had faced were not as a result of the legal aid application and their contact with SLAB, but rather these were due to the challenges of their case:



6.3 Effect Upon Satisfaction

6.3.1 When considering the statistically significant differences by demographics, mixed results were found. Those with disabilities were generally more positive throughout the survey, while those who experienced difficulties in accessing legal aid due to a protected characteristic were generally less positive throughout. Results were more mixed for ethnicity and religion.

6.3.2 Those areas that some minority groups/with protected characteristics were more positive about included:

- Helpfulness of the information booklet (disabled respondents);
- Ease of providing evidence to support their financial form (disabled respondents, ethnic minorities);
- Satisfaction with the overall contact with SLAB during the application process (ethnic minorities, minority religions);
- Satisfaction with payment options available for making contributions (ethnic minorities);
- Satisfaction with the ease of understanding what they needed to do to apply for legal aid (disabled respondents); and
- Satisfaction with the information provided by SLAB (disabled respondents).

6.3.3 Those areas that some minority groups/with protected characteristics were less positive about included:

- Ease of find a legal aid solicitor (those aged 65+, those who encountered difficulties in accessing legal aid due to their protected characteristics, those from Church of Scotland, Roman Catholic and Other Christian, and all other religions);
- Helpfulness of the information booklet (those who encountered difficulties in accessing legal aid due to their protected characteristics);
- Ease of providing evidence to support their financial form (those who encountered difficulties in accessing legal aid due to their protected characteristics);
- Satisfaction with the overall contact with SLAB during the application process (those aged 65+);
- Satisfaction with the overall experience of legal aid (those who encountered difficulties in accessing legal aid due to their protected characteristics);
- Satisfaction with the ease of understanding what they needed to do to apply for legal aid (ethnic minorities, those who encountered difficulties in accessing legal aid due to their protected characteristics);
- Satisfaction with the time taken to get legal aid in place (those who encountered difficulties in accessing legal aid due to their protected characteristics);
- Satisfaction with the information provided by SLAB (those who encountered difficulties in accessing legal aid due to their protected characteristics);
- Satisfaction with being put through to the right person/team via the telephone helpdesk (those who encountered difficulties in accessing legal aid due to their protected characteristics); and
- Ease for finding information on SLAB's website (those who encountered difficulties in accessing legal aid due to their protected characteristics).

6.3.4 These results show that there are no areas of SLAB's service that are particularly favourable to a diverse range of minority groups, albeit, that it may appear that services have been better tailored towards disabled applicants than other minority groups to date. Equally, however, no single area is particularly problematic across all the minority groups. Indeed, many of the areas where satisfaction is scored lower are only relevant to one group, namely those that encountered difficulties in accessing legal aid due to their protected characteristics. In seven out of the ten areas where minority groups are less satisfied, this is the only group to feel this way.

7. KEY DRIVER ANALYSIS

7.1 Key Drivers of Overall Satisfaction

7.1.1 Respondents were asked to rate their level of satisfaction with their 'overall experience of the legal aid process'. The questionnaire also asked respondents a series of other satisfaction based questions dealing with discrete service elements. It was therefore, possible to conduct Key Driver Analysis to complement the descriptive analysis detailed in the previous chapters.

7.1.2 The key driver analysis was based on those satisfaction questions that were consistent across all versions of the questionnaires. These included:

- Helpfulness of SLAB, the SLAB website and/or the CLAO in identifying suitable solicitors;
- Ease of finding a legal aid solicitor;
- Helpfulness of the information booklet about legal aid provided by the solicitor;
- Ease of completing the civil legal aid financial form;
- Ease of providing evidence to support the financial form;
- Satisfaction with the contact they had with SLAB at the application and assessment stage;
- Satisfaction with the how easy it was to understand what they needed to do to apply for legal aid;
- Satisfaction with the time taken to get legal aid in place;
- Satisfaction with the information they were provided with by SLAB;
- Satisfaction with the efficiency of SLAB staff;
- Satisfaction with the helpfulness and politeness of SLAB staff;
- Ease of getting put through to the right team or person when using the general helpdesk phone number; and
- Ease of finding what they wanted on the website.

7.1.3 When all satisfaction variables listed above were entered into the calculation, one variable was highlighted as a key driver of overall satisfaction. This main predictor was respondents' satisfaction with **'the time taken to get legal aid in place'**. This **accounted for 68% of the variance** in satisfaction with their overall experience of the legal aid process.

7.1.4 The statistical relationships between any other of the remaining variables and the overall satisfaction score were too weak for them to be included in the statistical relationship.

8. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 Discussion of Key Findings

Satisfaction Levels

8.1.1 On the whole, civil legal aid applicants were generally satisfied with their legal aid experience and with SLAB's services. In most instances, over half of the sample provided positive responses, both around the ease of the process and requirements and in relation to the contact they had with SLAB staff.

8.1.2 Areas which generated the highest levels of satisfaction (where at least two thirds of respondents were positive) included:

- Helpfulness of SLAB or the CLAO in finding a legal aid solicitor;
- Ease of finding a legal aid solicitor;
- Ease of providing evidence to support their financial application;
- Satisfaction with the helpfulness and politeness of staff:
 - at the application stage;
 - during contact about contributions; and
 - during contact about clawback;
- Satisfaction with the clarity of SLAB's letter outlining the contributions;
- Satisfaction with the range of payment options available for contributions;
- Satisfaction with the ease of understanding what applicants needed to do to apply; and
- Satisfaction with the overall experience of the legal aid process.

8.1.3 The only areas where less than half of the respondents provided a positive response were:

Applicable to all respondents:

- Being put through to the person/department they wanted when using the general helpdesk phone number;
- Ease of completing the financial application form;

Applicable to Refusal Cases Only:

- Satisfaction with the clarity of the explanation given for refusal of legal aid;
- Satisfaction with the clarity of the explanation of their options after legal aid was refused;

Applicable to Clawback Cases Only:

- Satisfaction with the clarity of the letter from SLAB outlining why clawback payments were necessary and how much they would have to pay;
- Satisfaction with the range of payment options available for making clawback payments; and
- In relation to clawback queries, satisfaction that the response answered the question.

8.1.4 Those that had been refused legal aid were consistently less satisfied overall. Meanwhile, those with contributions were the most satisfied sample type with the efficiency, helpfulness and politeness of SLAB staff, and the information provided by

SLAB, and those without contributions were the most satisfied with the time taken to get legal aid in place, the ease of understanding with applicants needed to do to apply, and their overall experience of legal aid.

Accessibility Issues

- 8.1.5 Although some respondents did report difficulties in accessing legal aid because of a protected characteristic they represent a minority of those with protected characteristics. This group was, however, generally less satisfied with the various elements of the civil legal aid process.
- 8.1.6 Those with disabilities tended to be more positive about their experiences with civil legal aid and their contact with SLAB, perhaps suggesting that SLAB have tailored their services to be accessible to those with disabilities to a greater extent than for other minority groups/protected characteristics to date.
- 8.1.7 In terms of overall experiences, these tended to be polarised between disabled respondents being more satisfied in a few instances, and those who had encountered difficulty in accessing legal aid because of a protected characteristic being less satisfied:
- Satisfaction with the overall experience of legal aid:
 - This was lower for those who encountered difficulties in accessing legal aid due to their protected characteristics; and
 - No other differences were noted by minority group/protected characteristic.
 - Satisfaction with the ease of understanding what they needed to do to apply for legal aid was:
 - Higher for disabled respondents;
 - Lower for ethnic minorities;
 - Lower for those who encountered difficulties in accessing legal aid due to their protected characteristics; and
 - No other differences were noted by minority group.
 - Satisfaction with the time taken to get legal aid in place:
 - This was lower for those who encountered difficulties in accessing legal aid due to their protected characteristics; and
 - No other differences were noted by minority group.
 - Satisfaction with the information provided by SLAB was:
 - Higher for disabled respondents;
 - Lower for those who encountered difficulties in accessing legal aid due to their protected characteristics; and
 - No other differences were noted by minority group.
 - Efficiency of SLAB staff:
 - No differences were noted by minority group.
 - The helpfulness and politeness of SLAB staff:
 - No differences were noted by minority group.

Changes over time

- 8.1.8 Although comparisons have been provided in the report, where possible, it is difficult to say with any certainty that the changes represent true changes in experiences and levels of satisfaction. As discussed at the outset, the differences in the sample profile between 2009/2013 and 2016, along with the changes to the survey administration method could impact upon responses and contribute towards these changes. In addition, most questions were worded differently and/or contained different response options between 2009/2013 and 2016, again making direct comparisons difficult to achieve.

8.2 Recommendations

- 8.2.1 The key driver of satisfaction with the overall experience was the time taken to get legal aid in place. Therefore, any improvements that can be made to this element should contribute to improving applicants' levels of overall satisfaction in future. As such, the speed of the application and decision process should provide a focus for SLAB going forward.
- 8.2.2 In addition to this, some more specific recommendations can be drawn from the survey results. These are outlined below:
- Provide greater clarity/transparency to applicants from the outset over the expected/likely timescale to receive a decision about their application for legal aid. It may be helpful to make applicants aware of average time taken to process an application, and to stress to applicants at the outset that failure to disclose and/or submit ALL required information/evidence, or delay in submitting evidence, will result in delays to their application.
 - To streamline the requests for evidence. Much frustration at the application stage appears to be generated by what appears to applicants to be separate requests for information/evidence. Perhaps the provision of a checklist of required documents which can be issued to applicants either from the outset, or at the beginning of the assessment phase, could be helpful to applicants to ensure they consider all relevant information/documentation at the outset.
 - Greater consideration in the financial application form and requirements for evidence for those with less typical circumstances (e.g. those undergoing divorce proceedings, self-employed, etc.) and those that cannot access the required evidence (e.g. those unable to return to the family home due to divorce or domestic abuse, and refugees that may not have the required evidence) as this appears to create challenges for some applicants.
 - Promote greater use of online technology, for information sharing, contacting applicants, accepting evidence, and for the application form. However, there was a preference expressed for the paper based application form, so any development of an online version would need to be optional for applicants.
 - There appears to be a need for applicants to be made aware of the potential for refusal, contributions and clawback (and the possible extent of any contributions and clawback) before submitting an application. While SLAB need to continue to encourage legal aid solicitors to provide this information at the earliest opportunity, it may also be worth considering the potential impact/merits of SLAB making applicants aware of these directly.

- Greater clarity provided to applicants over the potential to incur both legal aid contributions and solicitor fees.
- Clawback and refusal letters to be made clearer and easier to understand.
- Review the general telephone helpline for ways to make this more user-friendly.

Continuing with Existing Developments

- 8.2.3 A number of issues/suggestions were raised in the research, which SLAB have already begun to tackle. However, due to the time period the sample was drawn the impact of these changes have not been reflected in the 2016 results. The research does, nevertheless, support these changes and their continuation.
- 8.2.4 For example, there were suggestions from respondents that SLAB should have more direct contact with applicants. Processes have already been amended within SLAB to allow staff to liaise directly with applicants by telephone and email to request and/or discuss outstanding/missing information and evidence. This is a positive step which should both improve the speed of the application process and address respondents' recommendations around increased contact.
- 8.2.5 A number of respondents raised issues in relation to the use of technical language and jargon in the financial application form and in letters from SLAB. However, the questionnaire was not detailed enough to identify the specific issues/language that was causing problems for applicants. Indeed, a self-completion survey would not be the best way to tackle such issues, rather qualitative research would be better suited to identifying and understanding the issues, and to exploring possible solutions.
- 8.2.6 Again, however, SLAB have recently reviewed the application form in order to simplify it and remove unnecessary jargon. It is not clear from the survey which version of the application form applicants had completed, and the older versions may be reflected in the results. The success of these changes will need to be monitored over a longer time period. Work is also ongoing to review the various letters issued to applicants in order to improve these, which should be welcomed by respondents.
- 8.2.7 Finally, in relation to the recommendation to improve applicants' awareness of the potential for refusal, contributions and clawback from the outset, SLAB have already begun work to address awareness of contributions and clawback. They are undertaking a video project which, once concluded, will give applicants details on all aspects of recovery under civil legal aid and what happens in a case. Provided this is available to applicants from an early stage, this should help to address this issue.

8.3 Conclusion

- 8.3.1 While response rates have dropped slightly compared to 2013, the sample size achieved provides suitable reliability around the results as well as a robust base for analysis and comparisons between years (subject to the impact of changing methodologies since 2013).
- 8.3.2 Overall, the survey shows largely positive results, and highlights those priority areas for improvement which should have most impact on overall satisfaction levels as well as confirming that some recent changes are likely to have had positive impacts on

satisfaction. Any changes which can reduce the time taken to get legal aid in place should have a positive impact on applicants' satisfaction with their overall experience of civil legal aid.

Appendix A - SLAB Staff Interview Topic Guide

Research with Applicants for Civil Legal Assistance

Phase 1: Questions for SLAB Staff

Thank you for agreeing to meet with me today. My name is Elaine and I am a social researcher. I work for a research consultancy called Wellside Research, and we have been commissioned, in partnership with SYSTRA Ltd (as lead contractor), to conduct some research on behalf of SLAB.

Ultimately, we will be conducting a survey with civil applicants with the aim of measuring levels of satisfaction and informing improvements to the civil legal aid applicant experience, in relation to areas where SLAB can make a difference. As a first step to designing the applicants' questionnaire we are speaking with a number of SLAB staff to understand the various stages of SLAB service provided to civil applicants and the types of experiences that applicants may have.

I would like to reassure you that anything you tell me will be used for this research only. Although we may use some of your responses in our onward research and reporting, nothing you tell us will be linked back to you directly - it is anonymous.

With your permission, I would like to record the conversation to help me to write up notes after our meeting. Only I will listen to the recording. I will then permanently delete the recording. Is that okay?

Before we start, do you have any questions that you would like to ask me?

1. Can you talk me through the main steps a client will go through in their contact with your team?
2. At which points in their legal aid process do they have direct contact with your team?
 - a. Can you describe that contact please?
 - *Probe for: stage of process the contact occurs, method of the contact, single or recurring contact, turnaround time, etc.?*
 - b. Are there any external factors that could have an impact on clients' perceptions of the service/contact? (*E.g. input from solicitors (or others), time taken for solicitor or court to process the case, etc.?*)
 - c. Are there any internal factors that could have an impact on clients' perceptions of the service/contact? (*E.g. outcome decisions, etc.?*)
3. What other contact occurs via the solicitor, in relation to SLAB services/processes?

4. In your view/experience, what stages and/or elements of SLAB's processes and service provision, if any, would you expect to have **high levels** of satisfaction from civil applicants? Why is that?

- *Ask as an open question without prompts. Ensure it's clear to what extent SLAB are responsible and/or to what extent the solicitors may impact this?*

Then probe for the following, again clarifying if responses relate to SLAB, the solicitors, or both:

- a. Delivery
- b. Timeliness
- c. Information
- d. Professionalism
- e. Staff attitude

5. In your view/experience, what stages and/or elements of SLAB's processes and service provision, if any, would you expect to have **lower levels** of satisfaction from civil applicants? Why is that?

- *Ask as an open question without prompts. Ensure it's clear to what extent SLAB are responsible and/or to what extent the solicitors may impact this?*

Then probe for the following, again clarifying if responses relate to SLAB, the solicitors, or both:

- a. Delivery
- b. Timeliness
- c. Information
- d. Professionalism
- e. Staff attitude

6. Are there any parts of your team's processes where delays commonly occur? *If yes:* What are these elements and what do you think the likely impact of this will be on applicant satisfaction?

7. What type of questions or topics would you like to see included in the Civil Applicants survey? Can you explain your reasons?

8. How would you like to see the results of the civil applicants survey disseminated and used?

9. Is there anything else you would like to say about the Civil Applicant process and experiences that you haven't had the chance to already, and/or anything that you think we should be aware of when designing the questionnaire or interpreting the results?

Thank and close.

Appendix B - Civil Applicant Survey Questionnaires

A. FINDING A SOLICITOR

Q1. Did you contact the Scottish Legal Aid Board (SLAB), use their website and/or the Civil Legal Aid Office (CLAO) to help you find a solicitor? (Please tick as many as apply)

Yes, I contacted SLAB by telephone	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	GO TO Q2
Yes, I used the SLAB website	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	
Yes, I used the Civil Legal Aid Office (CLAO)	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃	
No	<input type="checkbox"/> ₄	GO TO Q3

Q2. On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is ‘very unhelpful’ and 5 is ‘very helpful’, how helpful or unhelpful was SLAB, the SLAB website and/or the CLAO in identifying suitable solicitors? (Please circle one number only)

Very Unhelpful 1 2 3 4 5 Very Helpful
OR TICK Can’t Remember ₀

Q3. On a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is ‘very difficult’ and 5 is ‘very easy’, how difficult or easy was it for you to find a legal aid solicitor? (Please circle one number only)

Very Difficult 1 2 3 4 5 Very Easy
OR TICK Can’t Remember ₀

Q4. Do you remember being given an information booklet about legal aid by your solicitor? (Please tick one only)

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	GO TO Q5
No	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	GO TO SECTION B
Don’t know/Can’t remember	<input type="checkbox"/> ₀	

Q5. On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is ‘very unhelpful’ and 5 is ‘very helpful’, how helpful or unhelpful did you find this booklet? (Please circle one number only)

Very Unhelpful 1 2 3 4 5 Very Helpful
OR TICK Can’t Remember/N/A ₀
OR TICK Did not read it ₆

B. THE LEGAL AID APPLICATION PROCESS

Q6. Would you prefer an online or a paper based application form/process? (Please tick one only)

Online	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	
Paper	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	
Don’t know/No preference	<input type="checkbox"/> ₀	

Q7. Did you fill in the civil legal aid financial form? (Please tick one only)

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	GO TO Q8
No (the solicitor did it)	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	GO TO Q9
Don’t know/Can’t remember	<input type="checkbox"/> ₀	

Q8. On a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is 'very difficult' and 5 is 'very easy', how difficult or easy did you find the civil legal aid financial form to fill in? (Please circle one number only)

Very Difficult 1 2 3 4 5 Very Easy
OR TICK Can't Remember 0

Q9. Did you have to provide SLAB with evidence to support your financial form (e.g. bank statements, wage slips, benefits award letters, details of savings, etc.)? (Please tick one only)

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	GO TO Q10
No	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	GO TO Q12
Don't know/Can't remember	<input type="checkbox"/> 0	

Q10. On a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is 'very difficult' and 5 is 'very easy', how difficult or easy was this for you to provide? (Please circle one number only)

Very Difficult 1 2 3 4 5 Very Easy
OR TICK Can't Remember 0

Q11. If you had difficulties filling in the financial form or providing evidence of finances, please describe these below.

.....

.....

.....

.....

Q12. Did you have contact with SLAB during the application and assessment process (this includes SLAB contacting you, or you contacting them)? (Please tick one only)

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	GO TO Q13
No	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	GO TO Q15
Don't know/Can't remember	<input type="checkbox"/> 0	

Q13. In which of the following ways did SLAB contact you or you contact SLAB? (Please tick as many as apply)

By Letter	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	By Text	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
By Telephone	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	Via my solicitor	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
By Email	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	Other, please specify	<input type="checkbox"/> 6
		

Q14. On a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is 'very dissatisfied' and 5 is 'very satisfied', how satisfied or dissatisfied were you with the various elements outlined below: (Please circle)

		Very Dissatisfied				Very Satisfied	N/A or Can't Remember
a)	The length of time it took to get an answer	1	2	3	4	5	0
b)	That things were explained in a way you could understand	1	2	3	4	5	0
c)	The response answered your questions	1	2	3	4	5	0
d)	The helpfulness and politeness of the staff you had contact with	1	2	3	4	5	0

Q15. Overall, on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is 'very dissatisfied' and 5 is 'very satisfied', how satisfied or dissatisfied were you with the contact you had with SLAB at application and assessment stage? (Please circle one number only)

Very Dissatisfied 1 2 3 4 5 Very Satisfied
OR TICK Can't Remember ₀
OR TICK N/A, did not have contact ₉

Q16. Would you have preferred any other method of contact with SLAB? (Please tick one only)

Yes, please specify	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	No	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂
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C. CLAWBACK

If the outcome of your case found you should be awarded or get to keep money or property you can be asked to pay some or all of your solicitor's costs from that money or property. (Money or property could include your house, car, insurance policies, pension funds, compensation for injuries in an accident, etc.) This is sometimes called 'clawback'. We are asking you these questions as SLABs records show that this applied to you.

Q17. Before SLAB wrote to you regarding the clawback due on your case, did you know that this could happen in your case? (Please tick one only)

Yes, I knew about the potential for clawback before I applied for legal aid	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁
Yes, I was told about potential for clawback during or after the application process	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂
No, I was not aware of the potential for clawback in my case	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃
Don't know/Can't remember	<input type="checkbox"/> ₀

Q18. On a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is 'very dissatisfied' and 5 is 'very satisfied', how satisfied or dissatisfied are you that the letter from SLAB about the clawback explained clearly why and what you would have to pay? (Please circle one number only)

Very Dissatisfied 1 2 3 4 5 Very Satisfied
OR TICK Don't Know/Can't Remember 0

Q19. On a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is 'very dissatisfied' and 5 is 'very satisfied', how satisfied or dissatisfied were you with the range of payment options available to allow you to pay the clawback? (Please circle one number only)

Very Dissatisfied 1 2 3 4 5 Very Satisfied
OR TICK Don't Know/Can't Remember 0

Q20. Was the total amount you were asked to pay...: (Please tick one only)

More than you expected	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
Same as you expected	<input type="checkbox"/> 2
Less than you expected	<input type="checkbox"/> 3
Don't know/Can't remember	<input type="checkbox"/> 0

Q21. Did you speak to anyone at SLAB about the clawback in your case, at any point? (Please tick one only)

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	GO TO Q22 GO TO SECTION D
No	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	
Don't know/Can't remember	<input type="checkbox"/> 0	

Q22. In relation to the contact you had with SLAB staff regarding clawback, overall, on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is 'very dissatisfied' and 5 is 'very satisfied', how satisfied or dissatisfied were you with the various elements outlined below: (Please circle)

		Very Dissatisfied				Very Satisfied	N/A or Can't Remember
a)	The length of time it took to get an answer	1	2	3	4	5	0
b)	That things were explained in a way you could understand	1	2	3	4	5	0
c)	The response answered your questions	1	2	3	4	5	0
d)	The helpfulness and politeness of the staff you had contact with	1	2	3	4	5	0

D. OVERALL EXPERIENCE OF SLAB SERVICES IN RELATION TO CIVIL LEGAL AID

Q23. Is there anything that you would like to have been told, or told earlier, about legal aid? (Please tick one only)

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	GO TO Q24
No	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	GO TO Q25

Q24. What would you have liked to have been told, or told earlier, about legal aid?

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Q25. Thinking about your most recent experience of the overall civil legal aid process, on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is 'very dissatisfied' and 5 is 'very satisfied', how satisfied or dissatisfied were you with the following? (Please circle)

		Very Dissatisfied				Very Satisfied	Don't Know	N/A
a)	Your overall experience of the legal aid process, regardless of whether there has been an outcome yet or whether that outcome was good or bad.	1	2	3	4	5	6	0
b)	How easy it was to understand what you needed to do to apply for legal aid	1	2	3	4	5	6	0
c)	The time taken to get legal aid in place	1	2	3	4	5	6	0
d)	The information you were provided with by SLAB	1	2	3	4	5	6	0
e)	The efficiency of SLAB staff	1	2	3	4	5	6	0
f)	The helpfulness and politeness of SLAB staff	1	2	3	4	5	6	0

Q26. At any point did you contact SLAB via the general helpdesk phone number? (Please tick one only)

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	No	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	Don't know/Can't remember	<input type="checkbox"/> ₀
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Q27. On a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is 'very dissatisfied' and 5 is 'very satisfied', how difficult or easy did you find it to get put through to the right team or person? (Please circle one number only)

Very Difficult 1 2 3 4 5 Very difficult
OR TICK Don't Know/Can't Remember 0

Q28. Did you use SLAB's website before or during your experience of legal aid?

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	GO TO Q29
No	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	GO TO Q30
Don't know/Can't remember	<input type="checkbox"/> 0	

Q29. On a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is 'very dissatisfied' and 5 is 'very satisfied', how difficult or easy was it to find what you wanted on the website? (Please circle one number only)

Very Difficult 1 2 3 4 5 Very Easy
OR TICK Don't Know/Can't Remember 0

Q30. Is there anything else you would like to tell us about your most recent experience of the civil legal aid process?

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Q31. Do you have any suggestions on how to improve the civil legal aid process?

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If you require more room for your answers at Q30 and/or Q31, please use the back page of the survey.

E. DEMOGRAPHICS

And finally, we would like to ask a few questions about you, and whether there is anything that has made it more difficult for you to access legal aid. We are asking these questions so that we can find out if different groups of people have different views or experiences from other groups.

Q32. Would you mind telling us what is your ethnic group? Choose ONE section from A to E, then tick ONE box which best describes your ethnic group or background.

Prefer not to say	<input type="checkbox"/> 0
A. WHITE	
Scottish	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
Other British	<input type="checkbox"/> 2
Irish	<input type="checkbox"/> 3
Gypsy/Traveller	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
Polish	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Any other white ethnic group (tick and write in)	<input type="checkbox"/> 6
B. MIXED OR MULTIPLE ETHNIC GROUPS	
Any mixed or multiple ethnic groups (tick and write in)	<input type="checkbox"/> 7
C. ASIAN, ASIAN SCOTTISH OR ASIAN BRITISH	
Pakistani, Pakistani Scottish or Pakistani British	<input type="checkbox"/> 8
Indian, Indian Scottish or Indian British	<input type="checkbox"/> 9
Bangladeshi, Bangladeshi Scottish or Bangladeshi British	<input type="checkbox"/> 10
Chinese, Chinese Scottish or Chinese British	<input type="checkbox"/> 11
Other (tick and write in)	<input type="checkbox"/> 12
D. AFRICAN, CARIBBEAN OR BLACK	
African, African Scottish or African British	<input type="checkbox"/> 13
Caribbean, Caribbean Scottish, or Caribbean British	<input type="checkbox"/> 14
Black, Black Scottish or Black British	<input type="checkbox"/> 15
Other (tick and write in)	<input type="checkbox"/> 16
E. OTHER ETHNIC GROUP	
Arab	<input type="checkbox"/> 17
Other (tick and write in)	<input type="checkbox"/> 18

Q33. Do you have a long-standing illness, health problem or disability that limits your daily activity or the kind of work that you do? (Please tick one only)

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	GO TO Q34
No	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	GO TO Q35
Prefer not to say	<input type="checkbox"/> 0	

Q34. How would you describe your disability? (Please tick as many as apply)

Hearing impairment	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
Visual impairment (not corrected by spectacles or contact lenses)	<input type="checkbox"/> 2
Speech impairment	<input type="checkbox"/> 3
Physical co-ordination difficulties (includes problems of manual dexterity and of muscular control e.g. incontinence, epilepsy)	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
Reduced physical capacity (includes debilitating pain and lack of strength, breath, energy or stamina e.g. from asthma, angina or diabetes)	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Severe disfigurement	<input type="checkbox"/> 6
Learning Disabilities	<input type="checkbox"/> 7
Mental illness	<input type="checkbox"/> 8
Other (<i>tick and write in</i>)	<input type="checkbox"/> 9
Prefer not to say	<input type="checkbox"/> 0

Q35. We would like to know whether you are currently, or ever have been, 'looked after' by a Local Authority. By this we mean: subject to a supervision order with no condition of residence; with foster carers or prospective adopters, in a residential care home, in a residential school or a secure unit. Which of the following applies to you? (Please tick one only)

Currently 'looked after' by a Local Authority	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
Have previously been 'looked after' by a Local Authority	<input type="checkbox"/> 2
Never been 'looked after' by a Local Authority	<input type="checkbox"/> 3
Prefer not to say	<input type="checkbox"/> 0

Q36. What religion, religious denomination or body do you belong to, if any? (Please tick one only)

None	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	Jewish	<input type="checkbox"/> 7
Church of Scotland	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	Pagan	<input type="checkbox"/> 8
Roman Catholic	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	Sikh	<input type="checkbox"/> 9
Other Christian	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	Hindu	<input type="checkbox"/> 10
Muslim	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	Other (<i>tick and write in</i>)	<input type="checkbox"/> 11
Buddhist	<input type="checkbox"/> 6		
		Prefer not to say	<input type="checkbox"/> 0

Q37. Is your gender identity the same as the gender you were assigned at birth?
(Please tick one only)

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>	Prefer not to say	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Q38. Which of the following options best describes how you think of your sexual identity? *(Please tick one only)*

Heterosexual/Straight	<input type="checkbox"/>	Bisexual	<input type="checkbox"/>
Gay/Lesbian	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other	<input type="checkbox"/>
Prefer not to say			<input type="checkbox"/>

Q39. Did anything to do with any of the options listed below make it more difficult to access legal aid? *(Please tick as many as apply)*

No	<input type="checkbox"/>	Religious Beliefs	<input type="checkbox"/>
Disability	<input type="checkbox"/>	Gender	<input type="checkbox"/>
Age	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sexual Identity	<input type="checkbox"/>
Gender	<input type="checkbox"/>	Care Status	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ethnicity	<input type="checkbox"/>	Prefer not to say	<input type="checkbox"/>

Q40. If you ticked any of the options in Q39, in what ways did any of these make it more difficult for you to access legal aid? Please tell us why.

	<input type="checkbox"/>
Prefer not to say	<input type="checkbox"/>

END

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME.
 PLEASE RETURN YOUR COMPLETED QUESTIONNAIRE USING THE REPLY-PAID
 ENVELOPE PROVIDED. NO STAMP IS REQUIRED.**

A. FINDING A SOLICITOR

Q1. Did you contact the Scottish Legal Aid Board (SLAB), use their website and/or the Civil Legal Aid Office (CLAO) to help you find a solicitor? *(Please tick as many as apply)*

Yes, I contacted SLAB by telephone	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	GO TO Q2
Yes, I used the SLAB website	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	
Yes, I used the Civil Legal Aid Office (CLAO)	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃	
No	<input type="checkbox"/> ₄	GO TO Q3

Q2. On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is ‘very unhelpful’ and 5 is ‘very helpful’, how helpful or unhelpful was SLAB, the SLAB website and/or the CLAO in identifying suitable solicitors? *(Please circle one number only)*

Very Unhelpful 1 2 3 4 5 Very Helpful
OR TICK Can’t Remember ₀

Q3. On a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is ‘very difficult’ and 5 is ‘very easy’, how difficult or easy was it for you to find a legal aid solicitor? *(Please circle one number only)*

Very Difficult 1 2 3 4 5 Very Easy
OR TICK Can’t Remember ₀

Q4. Do you remember being given an information booklet about legal aid by your solicitor? *(Please tick one only)*

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	GO TO Q5
No	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	GO TO SECTION B
Don’t know/Can’t remember	<input type="checkbox"/> ₀	

Q5. On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is ‘very unhelpful’ and 5 is ‘very helpful’, how helpful or unhelpful did you find this booklet? *(Please circle one number only)*

Very Unhelpful 1 2 3 4 5 Very Helpful
OR TICK Can’t Remember/N/A ₀
OR TICK Did not read it ₆

B. THE LEGAL AID APPLICATION PROCESS

Q6. Would you prefer an online or a paper based application form/process? *(Please tick one only)*

Online	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	
Paper	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	
Don’t know/No preference	<input type="checkbox"/> ₀	

Q7. Did you fill in the civil legal aid financial form? (Please tick one only)

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	GO TO Q8
No (the solicitor did it)	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	GO TO Q9
Don't know/Can't remember	<input type="checkbox"/> 0	

Q8. On a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is 'very difficult' and 5 is 'very easy', how difficult or easy did you find the civil legal aid financial form to fill in? (Please circle one number only)

Very Difficult 1 2 3 4 5 Very Easy
OR TICK Can't Remember 0

Q9. Did you have to provide SLAB with evidence to support your financial form (e.g. bank statements, wage slips, benefits award letters, details of savings, etc.)? (Please tick one only)

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	GO TO Q10
No	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	GO TO Q12
Don't know/Can't remember	<input type="checkbox"/> 0	

Q10. On a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is 'very difficult' and 5 is 'very easy', how difficult or easy was this for you to provide? (Please circle one number only)

Very Difficult 1 2 3 4 5 Very Easy
OR TICK Can't Remember 0

Q11. If you had difficulties filling in the financial form or providing evidence of finances, please describe these below.

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Q12. Did you have contact with SLAB during the application and assessment process (this includes SLAB contacting you, or you contacting them)? (Please tick one only)

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	GO TO Q13
No	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	GO TO Q15
Don't know/Can't remember	<input type="checkbox"/> 0	

Q13. In which of the following ways did SLAB contact you or you contact SLAB?

(Please tick as many as apply)

By Letter	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	By Text	<input type="checkbox"/> ₄
By Telephone	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	Via my solicitor	<input type="checkbox"/> ₅
By Email	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃	Other, please specify	<input type="checkbox"/> ₆
		

Q14. On a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is ‘very dissatisfied’ and 5 is ‘very satisfied’, how satisfied or dissatisfied were you with the various elements outlined below: *(Please circle)*

		Very Dissatisfied				Very Satisfied	N/A or Can't Remember
a)	The length of time it took to get an answer	1	2	3	4	5	0
b)	That things were explained in a way you could understand	1	2	3	4	5	0
c)	The response answered your questions	1	2	3	4	5	0
d)	The helpfulness and politeness of the staff you had contact with	1	2	3	4	5	0

Q15. Overall, on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is ‘very dissatisfied’ and 5 is ‘very satisfied’, how satisfied or dissatisfied were you with the contact you had with SLAB at application and assessment stage? *(Please circle one number only)*

Very Dissatisfied 1 2 3 4 5 Very Satisfied
OR TICK Can't Remember ₀
OR TICK N/A, did not have contact ₉

Q16. Would you have preferred any other method of contact with SLAB? *(Please tick one only)*

Yes, please specify	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	No	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂
.....			

C. EXPERIENCES OF LEGAL AID

We understand from SLAB’s records that you were refused legal aid. This section will ask a few questions about how you were told about this and your options.

Q17. Did you know that you might be refused? *(Please tick one only)*

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
No	<input type="checkbox"/> 2
Don't know/Can't remember	<input type="checkbox"/> 0

Q18. On a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is ‘very unclear’ and 5 is ‘very clear’, how clearly did SLAB explain why you were refused? *(Please note, this is not about your satisfaction with the outcome, but with how clearly the information was provided to you).* *(Please circle one number only)*

Very Unclear 1 2 3 4 5 Very Clear
OR TICK Don't Know/Can't Remember 0

Q19. If you think the information regarding the refusal was unclear, why was this and/or how could this information be improved?

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Q20. On a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is ‘very unclear’ and 5 is ‘very clear’, how clear was the explanation of your options after refusal? *(Please circle one number only)*

Very Unclear 1 2 3 4 5 Very Clear
OR TICK Don't Know/Can't Remember 0

Q21. When you were refused legal aid, what did you do next? *(Please tick one only)*

Asked for a review of the decision	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
Paid a solicitor privately	<input type="checkbox"/> 2
Did nothing else about the problem	<input type="checkbox"/> 3
Other, please specify	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
Don't know/Can't remember	<input type="checkbox"/> 0

D. OVERALL EXPERIENCE OF SLAB SERVICES IN RELATION TO CIVIL LEGAL AID

Q22. Is there anything that you would like to have been told, or told earlier, about legal aid? (Please tick one only)

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	GO TO Q23
No	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	GO TO Q24

Q23. What would you have liked to have been told, or told earlier, about legal aid?

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Q24. Thinking about your most recent experience of the overall civil legal aid process, on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is 'very dissatisfied' and 5 is 'very satisfied', how satisfied or dissatisfied were you with the following? (Please circle)

		Very Dissatisfied				Very Satisfied	Don't Know	N/A
a)	Your overall experience of the legal aid process, regardless of whether there has been an outcome yet or whether that outcome was good or bad.	1	2	3	4	5	6	0
b)	How easy it was to understand what you needed to do to apply for legal aid	1	2	3	4	5	6	0
c)	The time taken to get legal aid in place	1	2	3	4	5	6	0
d)	The information you were provided with by SLAB	1	2	3	4	5	6	0
e)	The efficiency of SLAB staff	1	2	3	4	5	6	0
f)	The helpfulness and politeness of SLAB staff	1	2	3	4	5	6	0

Q25. At any point did you contact SLAB via the general helpdesk phone number? (Please tick one only)

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	No	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	Don't know/Can't remember	<input type="checkbox"/> 0
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Q26. On a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is 'very dissatisfied' and 5 is 'very satisfied', how difficult or easy did you find it to get put through to the right team or person? (Please circle one number only)

Very Difficult 1 2 3 4 5 Very difficult
OR TICK Don't Know/Can't Remember 0

Q27. Did you use SLAB's website before or during your experience of legal aid?

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	GO TO Q28
No	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	GO TO Q29
Don't know/Can't remember	<input type="checkbox"/> 0	

Q28. On a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is 'very dissatisfied' and 5 is 'very satisfied', how difficult or easy was it to find what you wanted on the website? (Please circle one number only)

Very Difficult 1 2 3 4 5 Very Easy
OR TICK Don't Know/Can't Remember 0

Q29. Is there anything else you would like to tell us about your most recent experience of the civil legal aid process?

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Q30. Do you have any suggestions on how to improve the civil legal aid process?

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If you require more room for your answers at Q29 and/or Q30, please use the back page of the survey.

E. DEMOGRAPHICS

And finally, we would like to ask a few questions about you, and whether there is anything that has made it more difficult for you to access legal aid. We are asking these questions so that we can find out if different groups of people have different views or experiences from other groups.

Q31. Would you mind telling us what is your ethnic group? Choose ONE section from A to E, then tick ONE box which best describes your ethnic group or background.

Prefer not to say	<input type="checkbox"/> 0
A. WHITE	
Scottish	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
Other British	<input type="checkbox"/> 2
Irish	<input type="checkbox"/> 3
Gypsy/Traveller	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
Polish	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Any other white ethnic group (tick and write in)	<input type="checkbox"/> 6
B. MIXED OR MULTIPLE ETHNIC GROUPS	
Any mixed or multiple ethnic groups (tick and write in)	<input type="checkbox"/> 7
C. ASIAN, ASIAN SCOTTISH OR ASIAN BRITISH	
Pakistani, Pakistani Scottish or Pakistani British	<input type="checkbox"/> 8
Indian, Indian Scottish or Indian British	<input type="checkbox"/> 9
Bangladeshi, Bangladeshi Scottish or Bangladeshi British	<input type="checkbox"/> 10
Chinese, Chinese Scottish or Chinese British	<input type="checkbox"/> 11
Other (tick and write in)	<input type="checkbox"/> 12
D. AFRICAN, CARIBBEAN OR BLACK	
African, African Scottish or African British	<input type="checkbox"/> 13
Caribbean, Caribbean Scottish, or Caribbean British	<input type="checkbox"/> 14
Black, Black Scottish or Black British	<input type="checkbox"/> 15
Other (tick and write in)	<input type="checkbox"/> 16
E. OTHER ETHNIC GROUP	
Arab	<input type="checkbox"/> 17
Other (tick and write in)	<input type="checkbox"/> 18

Q32. Do you have a long-standing illness, health problem or disability that limits your daily activity or the kind of work that you do? (Please tick one only)

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	GO TO Q33
No	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	GO TO Q34
Prefer not to say	<input type="checkbox"/> 0	

Q33. How would you describe your disability? (Please tick as many as apply)

Hearing impairment	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
Visual impairment (not corrected by spectacles or contact lenses)	<input type="checkbox"/> 2
Speech impairment	<input type="checkbox"/> 3
Physical co-ordination difficulties (includes problems of manual dexterity and of muscular control e.g. incontinence, epilepsy)	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
Reduced physical capacity (includes debilitating pain and lack of strength, breath, energy or stamina e.g. from asthma, angina or diabetes)	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Severe disfigurement	<input type="checkbox"/> 6
Learning Disabilities	<input type="checkbox"/> 7
Mental illness	<input type="checkbox"/> 8
Other (<i>tick and write in</i>)	<input type="checkbox"/> 9
.....	
Prefer not to say	<input type="checkbox"/> 0

Q34. We would like to know whether you are currently, or ever have been, 'looked after' by a Local Authority. By this we mean: subject to a supervision order with no condition of residence; with foster carers or prospective adopters, in a residential care home, in a residential school or a secure unit. Which of the following applies to you? (Please tick one only)

Currently 'looked after' by a Local Authority	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
Have previously been 'looked after' by a Local Authority	<input type="checkbox"/> 2
Never been 'looked after' by a Local Authority	<input type="checkbox"/> 3
Prefer not to say	<input type="checkbox"/> 0

Q35. What religion, religious denomination or body do you belong to, if any? (Please tick one only)

None	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	Jewish	<input type="checkbox"/> 7
Church of Scotland	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	Pagan	<input type="checkbox"/> 8
Roman Catholic	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	Sikh	<input type="checkbox"/> 9
Other Christian	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	Hindu	<input type="checkbox"/> 10
Muslim	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	Other (<i>tick and write in</i>)	<input type="checkbox"/> 11
Buddhist	<input type="checkbox"/> 6	
		
		Prefer not to say	<input type="checkbox"/> 0

Q36. Is your gender identity the same as the gender you were assigned at birth?
(Please tick one only)

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>	Prefer not to say	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Q37. Which of the following options best describes how you think of your sexual identity? *(Please tick one only)*

Heterosexual/Straight	<input type="checkbox"/>	Bisexual	<input type="checkbox"/>
Gay/Lesbian	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other	<input type="checkbox"/>
		Prefer not to say	<input type="checkbox"/>

Q38. Did anything to do with any of the options listed below make it more difficult to access legal aid? *(Please tick as many as apply)*

No	<input type="checkbox"/>	Religious Beliefs	<input type="checkbox"/>
Disability	<input type="checkbox"/>	Gender	<input type="checkbox"/>
Age	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sexual Identity	<input type="checkbox"/>
Gender	<input type="checkbox"/>	Care Status	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ethnicity	<input type="checkbox"/>	Prefer not to say	<input type="checkbox"/>

Q39. If you ticked any of the options in Q38, in what ways did any of these make it more difficult for you to access legal aid? Please tell us why.

	<input type="checkbox"/>
Prefer not to say	<input type="checkbox"/>

END

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME.
 PLEASE RETURN YOUR COMPLETED QUESTIONNAIRE USING THE REPLY-PAID
 ENVELOPE PROVIDED. NO STAMP IS REQUIRED.**

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Q1. Did you contact the Scottish Legal Aid Board (SLAB), use their website and/or the Civil Legal Aid Office (CLAO) to help you find a solicitor? (Please tick as many as apply)

Yes, I contacted SLAB by telephone	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	GO TO Q2
Yes, I used the SLAB website	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	
Yes, I used the Civil Legal Aid Office (CLAO)	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	
No	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	GO TO Q3

Q2. On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is 'very unhelpful' and 5 is 'very helpful', how helpful or unhelpful was SLAB, the SLAB website and/or the CLAO in identifying suitable solicitors? (Please circle one number only)

Very Unhelpful 1 2 3 4 5 Very Helpful
OR TICK Can't Remember 0

Q3. On a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is 'very difficult' and 5 is 'very easy', how difficult or easy was it for you to find a legal aid solicitor? (Please circle one number only)

Very Difficult 1 2 3 4 5 Very Easy
OR TICK Can't Remember 0

Q4. Do you remember being given an information booklet about legal aid by your solicitor? (Please tick one only)

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	GO TO Q5
No	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	GO TO SECTION B
Don't know/Can't remember	<input type="checkbox"/> 0	

Q5. On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is 'very unhelpful' and 5 is 'very helpful', how helpful or unhelpful did you find this booklet? (Please circle one number only)

Very Unhelpful 1 2 3 4 5 Very Helpful
OR TICK Can't Remember/N/A 0
OR TICK Did not read it 6

B. THE LEGAL AID APPLICATION PROCESS

Q6. Would you prefer an online or a paper based application form/process? (Please tick one only)

Online	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
Paper	<input type="checkbox"/> 2
Don't know/No preference	<input type="checkbox"/> 0

Q7. Did you fill in the civil legal aid financial form? (Please tick one only)

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	GO TO Q8
No (the solicitor did it)	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	GO TO Q9
Don't know/Can't remember	<input type="checkbox"/> 0	

Q8. On a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is 'very difficult' and 5 is 'very easy', how difficult or easy did you find the civil legal aid financial form to fill in? (Please circle one number only)

Very Difficult 1 2 3 4 5 Very Easy
OR TICK Can't Remember 0

Q9. Did you have to provide SLAB with evidence to support your financial form (e.g. bank statements, wage slips, benefits award letters, details of savings, etc.)? (Please tick one only)

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	GO TO Q10
No	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	GO TO Q12
Don't know/Can't remember	<input type="checkbox"/> 0	

Q10. On a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is 'very difficult' and 5 is 'very easy', how difficult or easy was this for you to provide? (Please circle one number only)

Very Difficult 1 2 3 4 5 Very Easy
OR TICK Can't Remember 0

Q11. If you had difficulties filling in the financial form or providing evidence of finances, please describe these below.

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Q12. Did you have contact with SLAB during the application and assessment process (this includes SLAB contacting you, or you contacting them)? (Please tick one only)

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	GO TO Q13
No	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	GO TO Q15
Don't know/Can't remember	<input type="checkbox"/> 0	

Q13. In which of the following ways did SLAB contact you or you contact SLAB?

(Please tick as many as apply)

By Letter	<input type="checkbox"/>	By Text	<input type="checkbox"/>
By Telephone	<input type="checkbox"/>	Via my solicitor	<input type="checkbox"/>
By Email	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other, please specify	<input type="checkbox"/>
		

Q14. On a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is 'very dissatisfied' and 5 is 'very satisfied', how satisfied or dissatisfied were you with the various elements outlined below: *(Please circle)*

		Very Dissatisfied				Very Satisfied	N/A or Can't Remember
a)	The length of time it took to get an answer	1	2	3	4	5	0
b)	That things were explained in a way you could understand	1	2	3	4	5	0
c)	The response answered your questions	1	2	3	4	5	0
d)	The helpfulness and politeness of the staff you had contact with	1	2	3	4	5	0

Q15. Overall, on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is 'very dissatisfied' and 5 is 'very satisfied', how satisfied or dissatisfied were you with the contact you had with SLAB at application and assessment stage? *(Please circle one number only)*

Very Dissatisfied 1 2 3 4 5 Very Satisfied
 OR TICK Can't Remember ₀
 OR TICK N/A, did not have contact ₉

Q16. Would you have preferred any other method of contact with SLAB? *(Please tick one only)*

Yes, please specify	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
.....			

C. OVERALL EXPERIENCE OF SLAB SERVICES IN RELATION TO CIVIL LEGAL AID

Q17. Is there anything that you would like to have been told, or told earlier, about legal aid? *(Please tick one only)*

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	GO TO Q18
No	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	GO TO Q19

Q18. What would you have liked to have been told, or told earlier, about legal aid?

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Q19. Thinking about your most recent experience of the overall civil legal aid process, on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is ‘very dissatisfied’ and 5 is ‘very satisfied’, how satisfied or dissatisfied were you with the following? *(Please circle)*

		Very Dissatisfied				Very Satisfied	Don't Know	N/A
a)	Your overall experience of the legal aid process, regardless of whether there has been an outcome yet or whether that outcome was good or bad.	1	2	3	4	5	6	0
b)	How easy it was to understand what you needed to do to apply for legal aid	1	2	3	4	5	6	0
c)	The time taken to get legal aid in place	1	2	3	4	5	6	0
d)	The information you were provided with by SLAB	1	2	3	4	5	6	0
e)	The efficiency of SLAB staff	1	2	3	4	5	6	0
f)	The helpfulness and politeness of SLAB staff	1	2	3	4	5	6	0

Q20. At any point did you contact SLAB via the general helpdesk phone number? *(Please tick one only)*

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	No	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	Don't know/Can't remember	<input type="checkbox"/> ₀
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Q21. On a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is 'very dissatisfied' and 5 is 'very satisfied', how difficult or easy did you find it to get put through to the right team or person?
(Please circle one number only)

Very Difficult 1 2 3 4 5 Very difficult
OR TICK Don't Know/Can't Remember 0

Q22. Did you use SLAB's website before or during your experience of legal aid?

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	GO TO Q23
No	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	GO TO Q24
Don't know/Can't remember	<input type="checkbox"/> 0	

Q23. On a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is 'very dissatisfied' and 5 is 'very satisfied', how difficult or easy was it to find what you wanted on the website? *(Please circle one number only)*

Very Difficult 1 2 3 4 5 Very Easy
OR TICK Don't Know/Can't Remember 0

Q24. Is there anything else you would like to tell us about your most recent experience of the civil legal aid process?

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Q25. Do you have any suggestions on how to improve the civil legal aid process?

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D. DEMOGRAPHICS

And finally, we would like to ask a few questions about you, and whether there is anything that has made it more difficult for you to access legal aid. We are asking these questions so that we can find out if different groups of people have different views or experiences from other groups.

Q26. Would you mind telling us what is your ethnic group? Choose ONE section from A to E, then tick ONE box which best describes your ethnic group or background.

Prefer not to say	<input type="checkbox"/> 0
A. WHITE	
Scottish	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
Other British	<input type="checkbox"/> 2
Irish	<input type="checkbox"/> 3
Gypsy/Traveller	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
Polish	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Any other white ethnic group (tick and write in)	<input type="checkbox"/> 6
B. MIXED OR MULTIPLE ETHNIC GROUPS	
Any mixed or multiple ethnic groups (tick and write in)	<input type="checkbox"/> 7
C. ASIAN, ASIAN SCOTTISH OR ASIAN BRITISH	
Pakistani, Pakistani Scottish or Pakistani British	<input type="checkbox"/> 8
Indian, Indian Scottish or Indian British	<input type="checkbox"/> 9
Bangladeshi, Bangladeshi Scottish or Bangladeshi British	<input type="checkbox"/> 10
Chinese, Chinese Scottish or Chinese British	<input type="checkbox"/> 11
Other (tick and write in)	<input type="checkbox"/> 12
D. AFRICAN, CARIBBEAN OR BLACK	
African, African Scottish or African British	<input type="checkbox"/> 13
Caribbean, Caribbean Scottish, or Caribbean British	<input type="checkbox"/> 14
Black, Black Scottish or Black British	<input type="checkbox"/> 15
Other (tick and write in)	<input type="checkbox"/> 16
E. OTHER ETHNIC GROUP	
Arab	<input type="checkbox"/> 17
Other (tick and write in)	<input type="checkbox"/> 18

Q27. Do you have a long-standing illness, health problem or disability that limits your daily activity or the kind of work that you do? (Please tick one only)

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	GO TO Q28
No	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	GO TO Q29
Prefer not to say	<input type="checkbox"/> 0	

Q28. How would you describe your disability? (Please tick as many as apply)

Hearing impairment	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
Visual impairment (not corrected by spectacles or contact lenses)	<input type="checkbox"/> 2
Speech impairment	<input type="checkbox"/> 3
Physical co-ordination difficulties (includes problems of manual dexterity and of muscular control e.g. incontinence, epilepsy)	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
Reduced physical capacity (includes debilitating pain and lack of strength, breath, energy or stamina e.g. from asthma, angina or diabetes)	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Severe disfigurement	<input type="checkbox"/> 6
Learning Disabilities	<input type="checkbox"/> 7
Mental illness	<input type="checkbox"/> 8
Other (<i>tick and write in</i>)	<input type="checkbox"/> 9
.....	
Prefer not to say	<input type="checkbox"/> 0

Q29. We would like to know whether you are currently, or ever have been, 'looked after' by a Local Authority. By this we mean: subject to a supervision order with no condition of residence; with foster carers or prospective adopters, in a residential care home, in a residential school or a secure unit. Which of the following applies to you? (Please tick one only)

Currently 'looked after' by a Local Authority	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
Have previously been 'looked after' by a Local Authority	<input type="checkbox"/> 2
Never been 'looked after' by a Local Authority	<input type="checkbox"/> 3
Prefer not to say	<input type="checkbox"/> 0

Q30. What religion, religious denomination or body do you belong to, if any? (Please tick one only)

None	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	Jewish	<input type="checkbox"/> 7
Church of Scotland	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	Pagan	<input type="checkbox"/> 8
Roman Catholic	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	Sikh	<input type="checkbox"/> 9
Other Christian	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	Hindu	<input type="checkbox"/> 10
Muslim	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	Other (<i>tick and write in</i>)	<input type="checkbox"/> 11
Buddhist	<input type="checkbox"/> 6	
		
		Prefer not to say	<input type="checkbox"/> 0

Q31. Is your gender identity the same as the gender you were assigned at birth?
(Please tick one only)

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>	Prefer not to say	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Q32. Which of the following options best describes how you think of your sexual identity? *(Please tick one only)*

Heterosexual/Straight	<input type="checkbox"/>	Bisexual	<input type="checkbox"/>
Gay/Lesbian	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other	<input type="checkbox"/>
Prefer not to say			<input type="checkbox"/>

Q33. Did anything to do with any of the options listed below make it more difficult to access legal aid? *(Please tick as many as apply)*

No	<input type="checkbox"/>	Religious Beliefs	<input type="checkbox"/>
Disability	<input type="checkbox"/>	Gender	<input type="checkbox"/>
Age	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sexual Identity	<input type="checkbox"/>
Gender	<input type="checkbox"/>	Care Status	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ethnicity	<input type="checkbox"/>	Prefer not to say	<input type="checkbox"/>

Q34. If you ticked any of the options in Q33, in what ways did any of these make it more difficult for you to access legal aid? Please tell us why.

	<input type="checkbox"/>
Prefer not to say	<input type="checkbox"/>

END

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME.
 PLEASE RETURN YOUR COMPLETED QUESTIONNAIRE USING THE REPLY-PAID
 ENVELOPE PROVIDED. NO STAMP IS REQUIRED.**

A. FINDING A SOLICITOR

Q1. Did you contact the Scottish Legal Aid Board (SLAB), use their website and/or the Civil Legal Aid Office (CLAO) to help you find a solicitor? (Please tick as many as apply)

Yes, I contacted SLAB by telephone	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	GO TO Q2
Yes, I used the SLAB website	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	
Yes, I used the Civil Legal Aid Office (CLAO)	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃	
No	<input type="checkbox"/> ₄	GO TO Q3

Q2. On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is 'very unhelpful' and 5 is 'very helpful', how helpful or unhelpful was SLAB, the SLAB website and/or the CLAO in identifying suitable solicitors? (Please circle one number only)

Very Unhelpful 1 2 3 4 5 Very Helpful
OR TICK Can't Remember ₀

Q3. On a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is 'very difficult' and 5 is 'very easy', how difficult or easy was it for you to find a legal aid solicitor? (Please circle one number only)

Very Difficult 1 2 3 4 5 Very Easy
OR TICK Can't Remember ₀

Q4. Do you remember being given an information booklet about legal aid by your solicitor? (Please tick one only)

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	GO TO Q5
No	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	GO TO SECTION B
Don't know/Can't remember	<input type="checkbox"/> ₀	

Q5. On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is 'very unhelpful' and 5 is 'very helpful', how helpful or unhelpful did you find this booklet? (Please circle one number only)

Very Unhelpful 1 2 3 4 5 Very Helpful
OR TICK Can't Remember/N/A ₀
OR TICK Did not read it ₆

B. THE LEGAL AID APPLICATION PROCESS

Q6. Would you prefer an online or a paper based application form/process? (Please tick one only)

Online	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁
Paper	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂
Don't know/No preference	<input type="checkbox"/> ₀

Q7. Did you fill in the civil legal aid financial form? (Please tick one only)

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	GO TO Q8
No (the solicitor did it)	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	GO TO Q9
Don't know/Can't remember	<input type="checkbox"/> ₀	

Q8. On a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is 'very difficult' and 5 is 'very easy', how difficult or easy did you find the civil legal aid financial form to fill in? (Please circle one number only)

Very Difficult 1 2 3 4 5 Very Easy
OR TICK Can't Remember 0

Q9. Did you have to provide SLAB with evidence to support your financial form (e.g. bank statements, wage slips, benefits award letters, details of savings, etc.)? (Please tick one only)

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	GO TO Q10
No	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	GO TO Q12
Don't know/Can't remember	<input type="checkbox"/> 0	

Q10. On a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is 'very difficult' and 5 is 'very easy', how difficult or easy was this for you to provide? (Please circle one number only)

Very Difficult 1 2 3 4 5 Very Easy
OR TICK Can't Remember 0

Q11. If you had difficulties filling in the financial form or providing evidence of finances, please describe these below.

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Q12. Did you have contact with SLAB during the application and assessment process (this includes SLAB contacting you, or you contacting them)? (Please tick one only)

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	GO TO Q13
No	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	GO TO Q15
Don't know/Can't remember	<input type="checkbox"/> 0	

Q13. In which of the following ways did SLAB contact you or you contact SLAB? (Please tick as many as apply)

By Letter	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	By Text	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
By Telephone	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	Via my solicitor	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
By Email	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	Other, please specify	<input type="checkbox"/> 6
		

Q14. On a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is 'very dissatisfied' and 5 is 'very satisfied', how satisfied or dissatisfied were you with the various elements outlined below: (Please circle)

		Very Dissatisfied				Very Satisfied	N/A or Can't Remember
a)	The length of time it took to get an answer	1	2	3	4	5	0
b)	That things were explained in a way you could understand	1	2	3	4	5	0
c)	The response answered your questions	1	2	3	4	5	0
d)	The helpfulness and politeness of the staff you had contact with	1	2	3	4	5	0

Q15. Overall, on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is 'very dissatisfied' and 5 is 'very satisfied', how satisfied or dissatisfied were you with the contact you had with SLAB at application and assessment stage? (Please circle one number only)

Very Dissatisfied 1 2 3 4 5 Very Satisfied
OR TICK Can't Remember ₀
OR TICK N/A, did not have contact ₉

Q16. Would you have preferred any other method of contact with SLAB? (Please tick one only)

Yes, please specify	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	No	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂
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C. LEGAL AID CONTRIBUTIONS

We understand from SLAB records that you have been asked to pay something towards the costs of your legal aid from the start of the case. These payments are called contributions. This is nothing to do with anything you might have to pay at the end of the case. This section will ask a few questions about this process.

Q17. Before SLAB wrote to you about the contribution, did you know that this could happen in your case? (Please tick one only)

Yes, I knew about the potential for a contribution before I applied for legal aid	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁
Yes, I was told about potential for a contribution during or after the application process	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂
No, I was not aware of the potential for a contribution in my case until SLAB wrote to me	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃
Don't know/Can't remember	<input type="checkbox"/> ₀

Q18. On a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is 'very unclear' and 5 is 'very clear', how clear and easy to understand was the letter from SLAB about your contributions? (Please circle one number only)

Very Unclear 1 2 3 4 5 Very Clear
OR TICK Don't Know/Can't Remember _0

Q19. On a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is 'very dissatisfied' and 5 is 'very satisfied', how satisfied or dissatisfied were you with the range of payment options available to allow you to make contributions? (Please circle one number only)

Very Dissatisfied 1 2 3 4 5 Very Satisfied
OR TICK Don't Know/Can't Remember _0

Q20. Did you have any contact with SLAB staff to discuss the contributions, at any point? (Please tick one only)

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> _1	GO TO Q21
No	<input type="checkbox"/> _2	GO TO
Don't know/Can't remember	<input type="checkbox"/> _0	SECTION D

Q21. In relation to the contact you had with SLAB staff regarding contributions, overall, on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is 'very dissatisfied' and 5 is 'very satisfied', how satisfied or dissatisfied were you with the various elements outlined below: (Please circle)

		Very Dissatisfied				Very Satisfied	N/A or Can't Remember
a)	The length of time it took to get an answer	1	2	3	4	5	0
b)	That things were explained in a way you could understand	1	2	3	4	5	0
c)	The response answered your questions	1	2	3	4	5	0
d)	The helpfulness and politeness of the staff you had contact with	1	2	3	4	5	0

D. OVERALL EXPERIENCE OF SLAB SERVICES IN RELATION TO CIVIL LEGAL AID

Q22. Is there anything that you would like to have been told, or told earlier, about legal aid? (Please tick one only)

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	GO TO Q23
No	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	GO TO Q24

Q23. What would you have liked to have been told, or told earlier, about legal aid?

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Q24. Thinking about your most recent experience of the overall civil legal aid process, on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is 'very dissatisfied' and 5 is 'very satisfied', how satisfied or dissatisfied were you with the following? (Please circle)

		Very Dissatisfied				Very Satisfied	Don't Know	N/A
a)	Your overall experience of the legal aid process, regardless of whether there has been an outcome yet or whether that outcome was good or bad.	1	2	3	4	5	6	0
b)	How easy it was to understand what you needed to do to apply for legal aid	1	2	3	4	5	6	0
c)	The time taken to get legal aid in place	1	2	3	4	5	6	0
d)	The information you were provided with by SLAB	1	2	3	4	5	6	0
e)	The efficiency of SLAB staff	1	2	3	4	5	6	0
f)	The helpfulness and politeness of SLAB staff	1	2	3	4	5	6	0

Q25. At any point did you contact SLAB via the general helpdesk phone number? (Please tick one only)

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	No	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	Don't know/Can't remember	<input type="checkbox"/> ₀
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Q26. On a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is 'very dissatisfied' and 5 is 'very satisfied', how difficult or easy did you find it to get put through to the right team or person? (Please circle one number only)

Very Difficult 1 2 3 4 5 Very difficult
OR TICK Don't Know/Can't Remember ₀

Q27. Did you use SLAB’s website before or during your experience of legal aid?

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	GO TO Q28
No	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	GO TO Q29
Don’t know/Can’t remember	<input type="checkbox"/> 0	

Q28. On a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is ‘very dissatisfied’ and 5 is ‘very satisfied’, how difficult or easy was it to find what you wanted on the website? (Please circle one number only)

Very Difficult 1 2 3 4 5 Very Easy
OR TICK Don’t Know/Can’t Remember 0

Q29. Is there anything else you would like to tell us about your most recent experience of the civil legal aid process?

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Q30. Do you have any suggestions on how to improve the civil legal aid process?

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If you require more room for your answers at Q29 and/or Q30, please use the back page of the survey.

E. DEMOGRAPHICS

And finally, we would like to ask a few questions about you, and whether there is anything that has made it more difficult for you to access legal aid. We are asking these questions so that we can find out if different groups of people have different views or experiences from other groups.

Q31. Would you mind telling us what is your ethnic group? Choose ONE section from A to E, then tick ONE box which best describes your ethnic group or background.

Prefer not to say	<input type="checkbox"/> 0
A. WHITE	
Scottish	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
Other British	<input type="checkbox"/> 2
Irish	<input type="checkbox"/> 3
Gypsy/Traveller	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
Polish	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Any other white ethnic group (tick and write in)	<input type="checkbox"/> 6
B. MIXED OR MULTIPLE ETHNIC GROUPS	
Any mixed or multiple ethnic groups (tick and write in)	<input type="checkbox"/> 7
C. ASIAN, ASIAN SCOTTISH OR ASIAN BRITISH	
Pakistani, Pakistani Scottish or Pakistani British	<input type="checkbox"/> 8
Indian, Indian Scottish or Indian British	<input type="checkbox"/> 9
Bangladeshi, Bangladeshi Scottish or Bangladeshi British	<input type="checkbox"/> 10
Chinese, Chinese Scottish or Chinese British	<input type="checkbox"/> 11
Other (tick and write in)	<input type="checkbox"/> 12
D. AFRICAN, CARIBBEAN OR BLACK	
African, African Scottish or African British	<input type="checkbox"/> 13
Caribbean, Caribbean Scottish, or Caribbean British	<input type="checkbox"/> 14
Black, Black Scottish or Black British	<input type="checkbox"/> 15
Other (tick and write in)	<input type="checkbox"/> 16
E. OTHER ETHNIC GROUP	
Arab	<input type="checkbox"/> 17
Other (tick and write in)	<input type="checkbox"/> 18

Q32. Do you have a long-standing illness, health problem or disability that limits your daily activity or the kind of work that you do? (Please tick one only)

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	GO TO Q33
No	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	GO TO Q34
Prefer not to say	<input type="checkbox"/> 0	

Q33. How would you describe your disability? (Please tick as many as apply)

Hearing impairment	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
Visual impairment (not corrected by spectacles or contact lenses)	<input type="checkbox"/> 2
Speech impairment	<input type="checkbox"/> 3
Physical co-ordination difficulties (includes problems of manual dexterity and of muscular control e.g. incontinence, epilepsy)	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
Reduced physical capacity (includes debilitating pain and lack of strength, breath, energy or stamina e.g. from asthma, angina or diabetes)	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Severe disfigurement	<input type="checkbox"/> 6
Learning Disabilities	<input type="checkbox"/> 7
Mental illness	<input type="checkbox"/> 8
Other (<i>tick and write in</i>)	<input type="checkbox"/> 9
.....	
Prefer not to say	<input type="checkbox"/> 0

Q34. We would like to know whether you are currently, or ever have been, 'looked after' by a Local Authority. By this we mean: subject to a supervision order with no condition of residence; with foster carers or prospective adopters, in a residential care home, in a residential school or a secure unit. Which of the following applies to you? (Please tick one only)

Currently 'looked after' by a Local Authority	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
Have previously been 'looked after' by a Local Authority	<input type="checkbox"/> 2
Never been 'looked after' by a Local Authority	<input type="checkbox"/> 3
Prefer not to say	<input type="checkbox"/> 0

Q35. What religion, religious denomination or body do you belong to, if any? (Please tick one only)

None	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	Jewish	<input type="checkbox"/> 7
Church of Scotland	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	Pagan	<input type="checkbox"/> 8
Roman Catholic	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	Sikh	<input type="checkbox"/> 9
Other Christian	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	Hindu	<input type="checkbox"/> 10
Muslim	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	Other (<i>tick and write in</i>)	<input type="checkbox"/> 11
Buddhist	<input type="checkbox"/> 6	
		
		Prefer not to say	<input type="checkbox"/> 0

Q36. Is your gender identity the same as the gender you were assigned at birth?
(Please tick one only)

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>	Prefer not to say	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Q37. Which of the following options best describes how you think of your sexual identity? *(Please tick one only)*

Heterosexual/Straight	<input type="checkbox"/>	Bisexual	<input type="checkbox"/>
Gay/Lesbian	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other	<input type="checkbox"/>
Prefer not to say			<input type="checkbox"/>

Q38. Did anything to do with any of the options listed below make it more difficult to access legal aid? *(Please tick as many as apply)*

No	<input type="checkbox"/>	Religious Beliefs	<input type="checkbox"/>
Disability	<input type="checkbox"/>	Gender	<input type="checkbox"/>
Age	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sexual Identity	<input type="checkbox"/>
Gender	<input type="checkbox"/>	Care Status	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ethnicity	<input type="checkbox"/>	Prefer not to say	<input type="checkbox"/>

Q39. If you ticked any of the options in Q38, in what ways did any of these make it more difficult for you to access legal aid? Please tell us why.

	<input type="checkbox"/>
Prefer not to say	<input type="checkbox"/>

END

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME.
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The SYSTRA logo is rendered in a bold, red, sans-serif font. The letters are thick and blocky, with a slight shadow effect that gives it a three-dimensional appearance. The 'S' and 'Y' are particularly prominent due to their size and the way they connect to the other letters.