

Patterns of Civil Supply: Overview of local findings

July 2009

Background

As part of its remit to improve civil legal assistance and access to justice, the Board monitors the level of supply of [civil legal assistance](#). This includes legal aid, advice and assistance and ABWOR (Assistance By Way Of Representation) related to civil matters. This work on civil supply builds upon a [review of the Board's civil legal aid application data](#), carried out in 2006, by including more spatial analysis of the initial application data at a local level.

Aims and Objectives

The aim of the project was to identify areas that may pose access to justice concerns through analysis of the Board's application data.

There were a number of objectives:

- Provide a current picture of civil legal assistance provision
- Describe recent trends in the supply of civil legal assistance
- Develop potential explanations for patterns of supply
- Identify areas (geography, area of law, applicant group) for potential action research.

This research briefing addresses the first two objectives at the local level; the local authority research briefings address these for council areas. The second set of objectives will be addressed in the policy briefing.

Methodology

The Board's data from 2001/02 to 2008/09 was collated, and extensive work on assigning geographic information to outlets and applicants was undertaken. Mappable location data was available for more than 99% of outlets (firms or firm branches submitting at least one application or grant in any given year). For applicants, location data was produced for 94% of advice and assistance cases and 97% of civil legal aid cases. We assigned cases to areas of law matching those used in the [advice sector survey](#). The project was carried out in-house and overseen by a Steering Group drawn from across the organisation.

Analysis was conducted by comparing applicant addresses with outlet location and breaking down the data to 15 areas of law for advice and assistance, or 10 areas for legal aid, at a local authority level. Comparing the change in the volume of applications based on where applicants are located (applicant based change) to the volume based on where the outlet is located (outlet based change), helps to identify whether a reduction in outlet activity in any given area reflects a reduction in access for people living in that area or those from further afield.

Spatial data produced for the project includes the straight line distance between applicant and outlet location, as well as the proportion of help received from outlets located in the same 'local area' as applicants. A 'local area' is defined by council boundaries in urban regions and by travel to work areas in rural councils. Travel to work areas break up rural regions into smaller areas.

Summary of Findings

In 2008/09, 672 outlets submitted at least one **civil legal aid** application, with 17,738 applications nationally. The overall number of applications has increased by 4% between 2004/05 and 2008/09, but there are **differences in trend** at the local authority level. Aberdeen City has experienced an applicant based decline of -33% between 2004/05 and 2008/09, compared to a rise in the Orkney Islands of 65% over the same period.

Overall for civil legal aid, 23% of **outlets were located** in Glasgow council area, and they accounted for 23% of all applications in 2008/09. Edinburgh had 7% of outlets located in the council area, accounting for 8% of all applications. **Applicants based** in these two areas had 26% of applications submitted on their behalf. The combined population of the two council areas is around 20% of the national figure. The lowest level of **applications per capita**, in 2008/09, was in the Shetland Islands (0.001 per person), whilst Glasgow had the highest level - which was more than 5 times the rate in Shetland.

The overall Scottish **average distance** between an applicant for civil legal aid and the associated outlet was 14 km in 2008/09. The average distance for councils was 12 km, for all applications. People were closest to the outlet giving them help in Glasgow (6 km), and furthest away when living in the Shetland Islands (325 km). Most people received help from an outlet **within their local area** in Aberdeen City (92%), whilst fewest people from East Renfrewshire were given assistance by an outlet within the local area (16%).

In 2008/09, 782 outlets made at least one **grant of civil advice and assistance**, with 93,813 grants in total. The number of grants has declined over the period from 2004/05 to 2008/09, by -27%. However, there are **differences in trend** at the local authority level. The Shetland Islands have

experienced an applicant based decline of -50% over that time, whilst the Orkney Islands have recorded an increase of 16%.

Overall for civil advice and assistance, 23% of outlets were located in Glasgow council area, with the city's outlets accounting for 35% of grants in 2008/09. Edinburgh had just fewer than 7% of outlets located in its area, accounting for 5% of all grants made. **Applicants based** in these two areas had nearly 34% of all grants made on their behalf. The combined population of the areas is around 20% of the national figure. The lowest level of **grants per capita**, in 2008/09, was in the Shetland Islands (0.002 per person), whilst Glasgow had the highest level - which was 23 times the rate in Shetland.

The overall Scottish **average distance** between a recipient of advice and assistance and the associated outlet was 12 km in 2008/09. The average distance for councils was 12 km. People were closest to the outlet giving them help in Glasgow (5 km), and furthest away when living in the Shetland Islands (381 km). Most people received help from an outlet **within their local area** in Glasgow (94%), whilst fewest people from East Renfrewshire were given assistance by an outlet within their local area (20%).

Further information

Supply data will be refreshed and reported to the Board every six months, in order to help monitor civil supply at both the national and local level.

This research briefing and other national and local results can be accessed by clicking on the relevant links on our website

http://www.slab.org.uk/about_us/research . If you would like further information about this project please contact John Osborne, Policy Development Officer tel 0131 226 7061 or email OsborneJo@slab.org.uk .

