

Scottish Legal Aid Board

Public Defence Solicitor Office Client Satisfaction Survey 2017

Final Report August 2017





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Background and objectives

Background

This report presents the findings from the 2017 Public Defence Solicitors' Office (PDSO) client satisfaction survey, undertaken by Progressive Partnership on behalf of the Scottish Legal Aid Board (SLAB).

The PDSO is a national team of publicly funded, specialist criminal defence lawyers that provides advice and representation to people accused in relation to criminal offences who are eligible for legal aid in Scotland. SLAB employs 23 solicitors in a network of seven PDSO offices across the country.

The PDSO is committed to carrying out client satisfaction surveys in order to gather information about the outcomes of the service they provide and measure the impact of their service on clients. Previous surveys were undertaken in 2008 and 2011.

Research aims and objectives

The overarching aim of the project was to gain an insight into how satisfied PDSO clients are with the service and information they received from the PDSO throughout the duration of their case.

Specific objectives were to:

- Measure client satisfaction with the overall service they received from PDSO at key stages in their case
- Measure client satisfaction with the advice and information they received from the PDSO and gather views on the clarity of that information
- Seek clients views on how the service could be developed further

The results of the survey will inform the PDSO and SLAB of clients' experiences of using the PDSO's services, and identify areas where service delivery can be developed or improved. Results will also be relevant to SLAB's other research projects and will be used to feed back into the wider stakeholder engagement programme.



Method and sample

A postal self-completion survey was sent to 1,170¹ PDSO clients who had used the service within the last year. The fieldwork was conducted between 22 May and 30 June 2017, using a two-stage process (an initial mail out and then a reminder mailing to those who had not yet responded).

A web link was also provided in the covering letter for any respondents who preferred to complete the survey online, and a freephone number was provided in case respondents wished to complete a survey over the phone. However, very few surveys were completed using these methods (two online, none by phone).

Polish language translations were sent to 55 respondents, large print questionnaires to two, and emails to three.

The questionnaire was largely based on previous waves of the survey with some additions made by SLAB. Progressive also recommended improvements to the rating scales in 2017 to ensure that they were more balanced between positive and negative options.

Sample

Table 1 outlines the sample and response rate – 105 completed surveys were returned, and a 10.1% response rate was achieved. This response rate is good for a postal survey of this nature, although lower than 2011 (19%) and more similar to 2008 (12%).

Table 1: Survey response rate

	No.
Total sample database	1,175
Duplicate cases	2
Non-English speakers	3
Returned to sender	128
Total deliverable surveys	1,045
Total completed	105
Response rate	10.1%

Confidence levels

An overall sample size of 105 from a population of 1,045 provides a dataset with a margin of error of between $\pm 1.81\%$ and $\pm 9.07\%$, calculated at the 95% confidence level (market research industry standard). This means that, for example, where 50% of the sample gave a certain answer, there is a 95% chance that the true value lies between 40.93% and 59.07% ($\pm 9.07\%$).

¹ The total sample was 1,175 but 2 cases were duplicates and 3 were known to be non-English speakers.



Limitations

It should be borne in mind that the overall sample size was relatively small and so findings are indicative only. Sub-group sample sizes also mean that detailed analysis was not possible – results were compared looking at age group, gender and the number of times respondents had used the PDSO, but no significant differences emerged between groups due to the very small based numbers.

Please note that not all base sizes add up to the total sample base of 105, as respondents did not always complete all questions.

Sample profile

Table 2 provides a breakdown of the sample profile.

Table 2: Sample profile

Gender	No.	%	Age	No.	%
Male	77	74%	18-24	5	5%
Female	27	26%	25-34	17	16%
Base	104	100%	35-44	20	19%
Sexual identity	No.	%	45-54	34	32%
Heterosexual / straight	96	93%	55-64	18	17%
Gay / lesbian	3	3%	65+	11	10%
Bisexual	1	1%	Base	105	100%
Other	1	1%	Health problem/disability that	No.	%
			limits daily activity		
Prefer not to say	2	2%	Yes	45	44%
Base	103	100%	No	47	46%
Ethnic group	No.	%	Prefer not to say	11	11%
White	98	93%	Base	103	100%
Mixed/multiple ethnic groups	1	1%	'Looked after' status	No.	%
Asian/Asian Scottish/British	-	-	Currently	4	4%
African, Caribbean or Black	3	3%	Previously	8	8%
Other ethnic group	3	3%	Never	79	83%
Prefer not to say	-	-	Prefer not to say	4	4%
Base	105	100%	Base	95	100%

As shown in Table 2, three quarters of respondents were male (74%) and a quarter (26%) were female. Females were slightly over-represented in the sample, as they made up 18% of the sample database.

There was a spread of ages included in the sample, with most falling in the middle age groups (51% were aged between 35 and 54). Respondents were predominantly white (93%) and heterosexual (93%).

The majority had not been in the care system (83%), although roughly one in ten were currently or had previously been 'looked after' by a local authority – this is higher than the proportion among the population as a whole (around 1.5%).



The sample was fairly evenly split in relation to health status: 44% said they had a health problem or disability which limits their daily activities; 46% said they did not. This is significantly higher than the population as a whole, where the proportion with an illness or disability that limits their daily activities is 20%².

PDSO office used

Respondents were most likely to have used the Edinburgh, Glasgow or Inverness offices (see Table 3). This is reflective of the sample database - i.e. the achieved sample is representative of the respondent profile by PDSO office.

Table 3: PDSO office used

PDSO office used	% respondents	% in PDSO database
Edinburgh	32%	31%
Glasgow	21%	22%
Inverness	16%	17%
Ayr	11%	8%
Falkirk	10%	10%
Dundee	8%	11%
Kirkwall	2%	1%
Don't know/can't remember	1%	-
Base	101	1,175

² The 2011 Census reports that 20% of the population has a long-term illness or disability that limits their dayto-day activities – <u>http://www.scotlandscensus.gov.uk/news/census-2011-release-3f-detailed-characteristics-health-scotland</u>

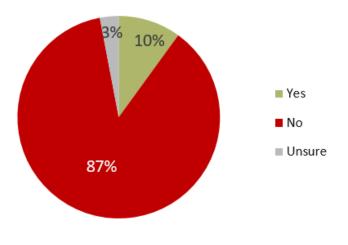


Main findings

Use of the PDSO

Although all respondents had used the PDSO in the last year, only one in ten (10%) said they had any cases currently ongoing with the PDSO, while the majority (87%) did not (see Chart 1).

Chart 1: Do you have any cases currently ongoing with the PDSO?



Base (all): 105

Just under two thirds of respondents had used the PDSO just once; while around a fifth (19%) had used it twice and 16% had used it three or more times (see Chart 2).

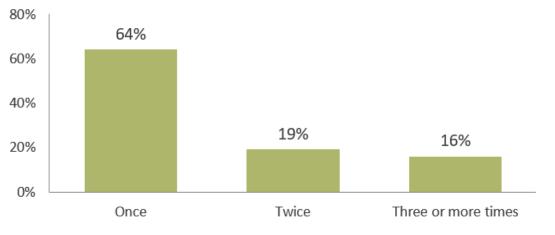


Chart 1: How many times have you used the PDSO?

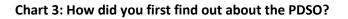
Base (all): 104

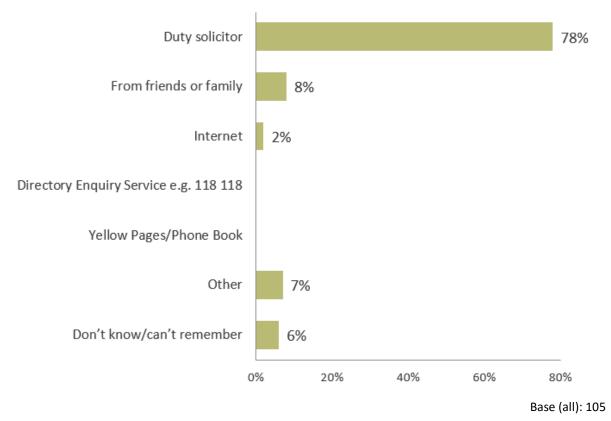
Of those who had used it three or more times, respondents tended to say they had used the service three times (three respondents), although two had used the service four times, and one respondent each said they had used the PDSO five or six times.



Awareness of the PDSO

Respondents had most commonly found out about the PDSO through a duty solicitor³ (78% – see Chart 3). Relatively few mentioned any other information source.





Five respondents gave 'other' responses:

- In court (2)
- Citizens Advice (1)
- Hospital (1)
- They (police) could not contact mine (1).

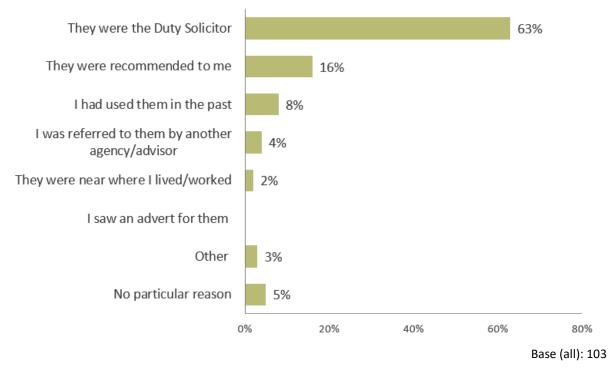
Reasons for choosing the PDSO

Most respondents had chosen the PDSO to represent them because they were the Duty Solicitor (63%), although 16% mentioned that they had received a recommendation and 8% said they chose the PDSO because they had used them in the past – see Chart 4.

³ Court or police duty solicitor.



Chart 4: Why did you choose the PDSO to represent you?



Three respondents gave 'other' responses to this question, as follows:

- Mr X was my solicitor previously (1)
- No-one told me I could use another solicitor (1)
- Conversation in Polish (1).

Overall service

Ratings of the overall service received from the PDSO were very high (see Chart 4). The most common response, made by 63% of respondents, was that the service was 'very good' – and a further 21% said it was 'good'. Very few gave a rating of 'poor' (2%) or 'very poor' (5%). The overall mean score was 4.36 out of 5 (where 1 = very poor and 5 = very good).

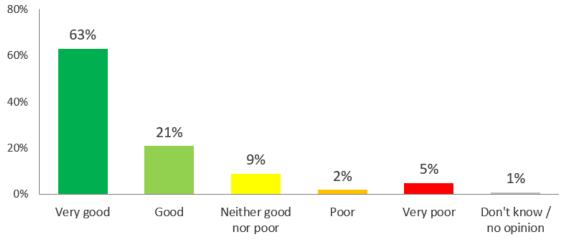


Chart 4: In your opinion was the overall service you received from the PDSO ...?



Ratings of the PDSO

As well as providing an overall rating of the service, respondents were asked to rate various aspects of their PDSO lawyer's service – see Chart 5. The highest ratings were given for:

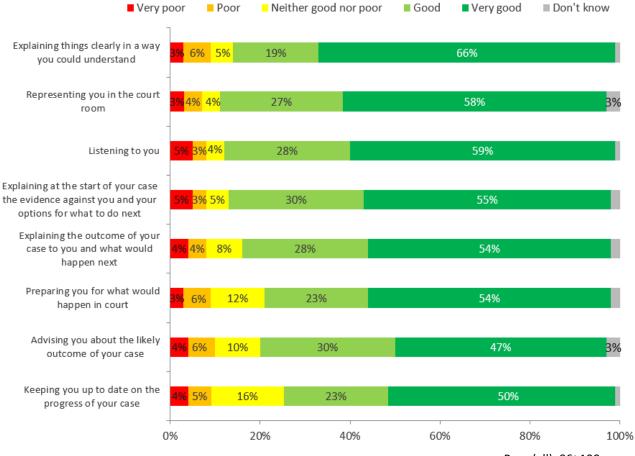
- Explaining things clearly
- Representing you in the court room
- Listening to you.

The lowest ratings were received for:

- Keeping you up to date with progress
- Advising you about the likely outcome
- Preparing you for what would happen in court.

However, ratings were generally high for all aspects with only a very small proportion giving ratings of 'poor' or 'very poor' for any of these elements of service.

Chart 5: How good do you think your PDSO lawyer was at...?



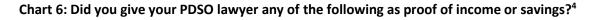
Base (all): 96~100

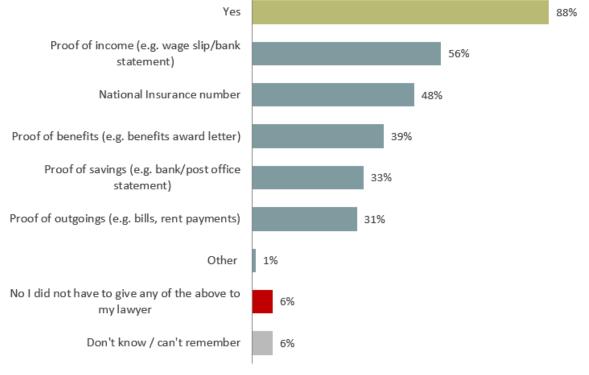


Proof of income or savings

Overall, 88% said they had to provide some proof of income or savings to their PDSO lawyer; 6% said they did not and 6% could not remember (see Chart 6).

The most commonly mentioned documents required were proof of income (mentioned by 56%) and a National Insurance number (48%).





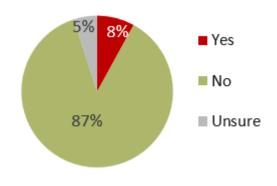
Base (all) 101

Although most respondents (87%) who needed to provide proof of income/savings said they did not have any problems getting hold of the relevant documents, a small minority did experience difficulties doing this (8%) – see Chart 7.

⁴ Please note this was a multi-code question – people could list more than one type of proof of income/savings. The 'yes', 'no' and 'don't know' options were single coded and other options were multi-coded.



Chart 7: Did you have any problems getting hold of the relevant documents to give to your PDSO lawyer?



Base (all who provided documents): 87

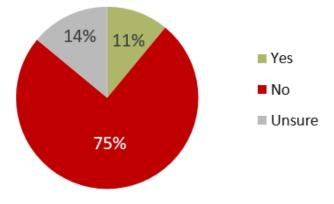
The problems mentioned by the minority of respondents who experienced difficulties were:

- Difficulty getting Post Office statement via phone communication. Someone wrote on my behalf (1)
- Proof of benefit (1)
- E pay slips, couldn't access bank slips for whole year (1).

Contact with SLAB

Three quarters of respondents (75%) said they had not had contact with SLAB about their case, while just 11% said that they had (although 14% were unsure) – see Chart 8.

Chart 8: Did you have any direct contact with the Scottish Legal Aid Board (SLAB) about your criminal case?



Base (all): 99

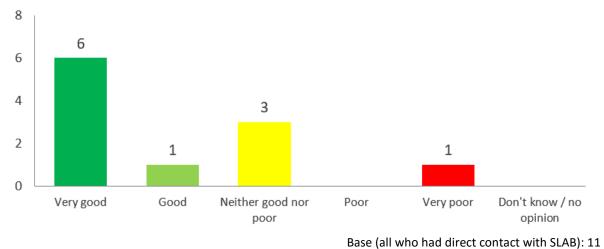
The reasons for having contact with SLAB tended to be unique to individual respondents. These included:

- "Had to prove the small amount of money my son had was because of his learning and personal needs".
- "I was too slow to provide supplemental information... Also changed from SO to WSA lawyers, so had to repeat appn process".
- "Had to have direct contact with someone as I am 90% deaf".
- "Felt I needed financial help and still do!"



As only a small proportion of respondents had had direct contact with SLAB, only 11 respondents were able to rate the service received (see Chart 9), with 7 of these rating the service as being 'very good' or 'good'.

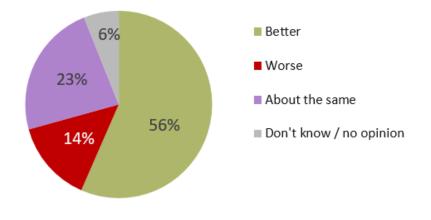
Chart 9: If you had contact with the Scottish Legal Aid Board, in your opinion was the overall service you received...? (*NB absolutes numbers shown rather than percentages due to small base sizes*)



Outcome of the case

As shown in Chart 10, just over half (56%) said that the outcome of their case was better than they expected, while 23% said the outcome was about the same as they expected. However, 14% were disappointed with the outcome, saying it was worse than they had expected.





Base (all): 98

Respondents who said the outcome was better or worse than expected were asked the reasons for this. Only a small number gave reasons why the outcome was worse than expected. These tended to relate to being found guilty or received a harsher sentence than expected. The main categories of response given by the 48 respondents who commented on why the outcome was better are outlined in Table 4 - the key reasons being that their sentence was not as bad as expected, or that the case/charges had been dropped.

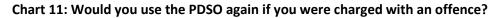


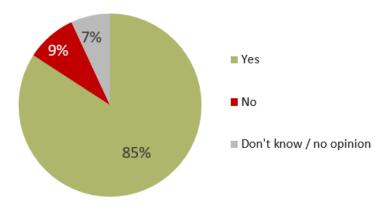
Reasons outcome was better	No.
Sentence received was not as bad as expected	15
Case/charges were dropped	12
Expected the worst/bad outcome	8
Solicitor was good	6
Found not guilty	4
There was no evidence against me	1
No comment	1
Other	5
Base (all who commented)	48

Using the PDSO again

Reflecting the high service ratings given, most respondents (85%) said they would use the PDSO again if they were charged with an offence (see Chart 11).

Respondents who reported that the outcome of their case was better than they had expected (94%) or about the same as they expected (91%) were more likely than those who said the outcome was worse than expected (43% - 6 respondents) to say they would use the PDSO again.





Base (all): 104

Suggested improvements

When asked whether they would like to see any changes in the services provided by the PDSO, 59 respondents provided any comment – with 27 of these saying no changes were required and 11 giving positive feedback.

The main categories of comment provided are outlined in Table 5. Very few suggestions were made by more than a very small number of respondents – the most common being:

- Having one dedicated solicitor / the same solicitor throughout the process
- Better communication
- Better attitude/more compassion from solicitors.



Table 5: Are there any changes you would like to see to improve the services provided by the PDSO?

Suggested changes	No.
No change required / NA	27
Positive comment about service/lawyer	11
Have one dedicated solicitor for each client	4
Better communication	3
Better attitude/compassion	3
Listen to clients more	2
Explain evidence / sentences more clearly	2
Specific complaints about solicitors	2
Professionalism	1
Quicker decisions re legal aid	1
More time spent with clients	1
More solicitors	1
Other	2
Don't know	2
Base (all who commented)	59

Comments included feedback such as:

- *"I cannot fault this service, they were most helpful when I needed proper representation. And did it well".*
- "No the service I received was brilliant. My lawyer was amazing she explained everything to me from the start. She was fully committed to me and represented me in the best possible way. If i was ever to be charged with an offence again which I won't I would ask for [her] to be my lawyer. I had full trust in her and the system to prove I was innocent".
- "No the service was very good".
- "Everything should stay on this high level of service".
- "Knowing who would represent from the court of first instance (if possible) to who you would be dealing with at the trial".
- "More information regarding sentence meanings and stop sending stand in solicitors as they don't know your case".
- "More communication, updates, listening not just looking at police records".
- *"For a first time offender felt it rather daunting so more compassion".*
- *"Long time for waiting on decision whether a solicitor will be granted, too high requirements regarding granting legal aid".*



Accessibility and equality

Finally, respondents were asked whether anything to do with their personal situation had made it more difficult for them to access PDSO services. Only a small number of respondents provided a relevant comment. These tended to focus on the respondent's age and/or a health issue or disability, for example:

- "I don't feel my mental health was fully considered or allowances made for (chronic depression or ASD)".
- "MS and UTI made me very confused poor short term memory, hallucinating. Cannot thank enough the PDSO for their help and advice she was wonderful and she took over and sentenced me out".
- "Yes hearing is always a difficulty as I can't hear over phone and had problems in courtroom also. It wasn't so much a PDSO problem but mine".



Conclusions and recommendations

Overview

The 2017 PDSO Client Satisfaction Survey achieved a good response rate of 10.1%. The achieved sample was also reflective of the sample database in terms of PDSO office used.

Summary of findings

Around two thirds of respondents had used the PDSO just once, while around a third had used it twice or more. For most respondents, awareness and use of the PDSO was driven by the fact that the PDSO lawyer was the duty solicitor.

Ratings of the service overall, and of individual aspects of the PDSO lawyers' service, were high – 83% gave a 'good' or 'very good' rating overall and just 7% gave a rating of 'poor' or 'very poor'. The aspects of service given the highest ratings were: explaining things clearly; representing clients in the court room; and listening to clients.

Reflecting these satisfaction levels, 85% said they would use the PDSO again if charged with an offence.

Very few respondents said they had direct contact with SLAB, but of the 11 people giving a rating, six said the service was 'very good' and one said it was 'good'.

When asked if there were changes they would like to see to the PDSO's services, very few provided suggestions – and several used the opportunity to provide positive feedback rather than making suggestions for improvements. The most common suggestions were: having one dedicated solicitor / the same solicitor throughout the process; better communication; and better attitude/more compassion from solicitors.

Recommendations

The survey results indicate high levels of satisfaction among PDSO clients, which suggest that very little improvement to service is required. The only thing mentioned by a minority of respondents would be better communications and one lawyer dedicated to the case throughout the process.



Technical appendix

Method

Quantitative

- The data was collected by postal self-completion survey.
- The target group for this research study was PDSO clients.
- The sampling frame used for this study was provided by SLAB.
- The final achieved sample size was 105.
- Fieldwork was undertaken between 22nd May and 30th June 2017.
- All persons on the sampling frame were invited to participate in the study. Respondents to
 paper and internet self-completion studies are self-selecting and complete the survey
 without the assistance of a trained interviewer. This means that Progressive cannot strictly
 control sampling and in some cases, this can lead to findings skewed towards the views of
 those motivated to respond to the survey.
- The overall response rate to the survey was 10.1%. This response rate is typical for a survey of this kind.

Data processing and analysis

- The overall sample size of 105 provides a dataset with a margin of error of between ±1.81% and ±9.07%, calculated at the 95% confidence level (market research industry standard).
- Our data processing department undertakes a number of quality checks on the data to ensure its validity and integrity.
- For paper questionnaires these checks include:
 - All questionnaires are checked manually for completeness and sense.
 - Data is entered into our analysis package, SNAP, which includes facilities for the verification of punched data (e.g. double data entry). A minimum of 5% verification of punched data is undertaken.
 - Where a self-completion survey is returned anonymously there is not any
 opportunity for validation. However all questionnaires returned undergo rigorous
 editing and quality checks and any thought to be invalid are removed from further
 processing.
- A computer edit of the data carried out prior to analysis involves both range and inter-field checks. Any further inconsistencies identified at this stage are investigated by reference back to the raw data on the questionnaire.
- Where 'other' type questions are used, the responses to these are checked against the parent question for possible up-coding.
- Responses to open-ended questions will normally be spell and sense checked. Where required these responses may be grouped using a code-frame which can be used in analysis.
- A SNAP programme set up with the aim of providing the client with useable and comprehensive data. Crossbreaks are discussed with the client in order to ensure that all information needs are met.
- All research projects undertaken by Progressive comply fully with the requirements of ISO 20252.



Survey questionnaire

THE PUBLIC DEFENCE SOLICITORS' OFFICE (PDSO) CLIENT SURVEY 2017

Q1 Do you have any cases currently ongoing with the PDSO? Please tick one box only		
Yes	□1	
No	□2	
Unsure	□3	

If you have used the PDSO for more than one case, please answer these questions thinking about your **most recently closed case**.

Q2 How many times have you used the PDSO? Please tick one box only		
Once	□1	
Twice	□2	
Three or more times	□3	
	please write in number of times:	

Q3 How did you first find out about the PDSO? Ple	ease tick one box only
Duty Solicitor	
Police	
From friends or family	
Internet	
Yellow Pages/Phone Book	□5
Directory Enquiry Service e.g. 118 118	
Other	□7
	please write in:
Don't know/can't remember	

Q4 Why did you choose the PDSO to represent you? Please tick one box only		
They were the Duty Solicitor		
I had used them in the past	□2	
They were near where I lived/worked	□3	
They were recommended to me	□4	
I was referred to them by another agency/advisor	□5	
I saw an advert for them	□6	
No particular reason		
Other		
	please write in:	

Q5 Which PDSO office did you use? (If you have used more than one, please refer to the office used for your
most recently closed case). Please tick one box only.AyrIDundeeIEdinburghIFalkirkI



Glasgow	□5
Inverness	□6
Kirkwall	□7
Don't know/can't remember	

Q6 In your opinion was the overall service you received from the PDSO Please tick one box only						
Very Good	Good	Neither good nor poor	Poor	Very poor	Don't knov opinion	v/no
□1	□2	□3	□4	□5	□6	

Q7 How good do you think your PDSO	lawyer(s) v	was at:				
Please tick one box per row	1	1			1	T
	Very Good	Good	Neither good nor poor	Poor	Very poor	Don't know/no opinion
a) Listening to you	Π1	□2	□3	□4	□5	□6
b) Explaining things clearly in a way you could understand	□1	□2	□3	□4	□5	□6
c) Explaining at the start of your case the evidence against you and your options for what to do next	01	□2	□3	□4	□5	□6
d) Keeping you up to date on the progress of your case	□1	□2	□3	□4	□5	□6
e) Preparing you for what would happen in court	□1	□2	□3	□4	□5	□6
f) Advising you about the likely outcome of your case	□1	□2	□3	□4	□5	□6
g) Representing you in the court room	□1	□2	□3	□4	□5	□6
h) Explaining the outcome of your case to you and what would happen next	Π1	□2	□3	□4	□5	□6

Q8 Did you give your PDSO lawyer any of the following as proof of income or savings?	
Yes, please tick all that apply below:	□1
 Proof of benefits (e.g. benefits award letter) 	□2
 Proof of income (e.g. wage slip/bank statement) 	□3
 Proof of savings (e.g. bank statement/post office statement) 	□4
 Proof of outgoings (e.g. bills, rent payments) 	□5
 National Insurance number 	□6
 Other, please write in: 	□7
No I did not have to give any of the above to my lawyer (please go to Q9)	
Don't know/can't remember (please go to Q9)	



Q8A Did you have any problems getting hold of the relevant documents, such as a payslip or a bank statement, to give to your PDSO lawyer? Please tick one box only				
Yes, I had problems getting the documents	□1			
Please use the space below to tell us a bit more about the problems you had:				
No, I did not have any problems	□2			
Don't know/can't remember	□3			

Q9 Did you have any direct contact with the Scottish Legal Aid Board (SLAB) about your crimina		
case? Please tick one box only		
No (please go to Q10)	□1	
Yes (please write in below the reason why you needed to have direct contact with the Board):	□2	
Don't know/can't remember (please go to Q10)	□3	

Q9A If you had contact with the Scottish Legal Aid Board, in your opinion, was the overall service you received Please tick one box only					
Very Good	Good	Neither good nor poor	Poor	Very poor	Don't know/can't remember
D 1	□2	□3	□4	□5	□6

Q10 Was the outcome of your case better, worse or about the same as you expect	ted? Please tick one
box only	
Better	□1
Worse	□2
About the same (please go to Q12)	□3
Don't know/no opinion (please go to Q12)	□4
Q11 Why was the outcome better or worse than you expected? Please write in the	e box below:

Q12 Would you use the PDSO again if you were charged with an offence? Please tick one box only				
Yes				
No	□2 Please tell us why:			



Don't know	

Q13 Are there any changes you would like to see to improve the services provided by the PDSO? Please write in below

We would now like to ask you some questions about yourself. This is so that we can find out if different groups of people have different views or experiences of the PDSO from others.

Q14 Are you? Please tick one box only		
Male		
Female	□2	
Would prefer not to say	□3	

Q15 What age range are you in?	
18-24	\square_1
25-34	
35-44	
45-54	\square_4
55-64	
65+	\square_6
Prefer not to say	□7

Q16 Do you have a long-stand	ding illness, health problem or disability that limits your daily activ	vity or the
kind of work that you do? Ple	ase tick one box only	
Yes	Please describe your disability in the space below if you want to:	
No		
Would prefer not to say		
Q17 What is your ethnic group	p?	
Prefer not to say		\square_1
A. WHITE		
Scottish		
Other British		
Irish		\square_4
Gypsy/Traveller		



Polish	\square_6
Any other white ethnic group (tick and write in)	
B. MIXED OR MULTIPLE ETHNIC GROUPS	
Any mixed or multiple ethnic groups (tick and write in)	\square_8
C. ASIAN, ASIAN SCOTTISH OR ASIAN BRITISH	
Pakistani, Pakistani Scottish or Pakistani British	D 9
Indian, Indian Scottish or Indian British	
Bangladeshi, Bangladeshi Scottish or Bangladeshi British	
Chinese, Chinese Scottish or Chinese British	
Other (tick and write in)	
D. AFRICAN, CARIBBEAN OR BLACK	
African, African Scottish or African British	
Caribbean, Caribbean Scottish, or Caribbean British	
Black, Black Scottish or Black British	
Other (tick and write in)	
E. OTHER ETHNIC GROUP	
Arab	
Other (tick and write in)	□19

Q18 Which of the following options best describes how you think of your sexual identity?				
Heterosexual/Straight	\square_1	Bisexual	□₃	
Gay/Lesbian		Other	\square_4	
		Prefer not to say	□5	

Q19 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 box only)			
Currently 'looked after' by a Local Authority	\square_1		
Have previously been 'looked after' by a Local Authority	\square_2		
Never been 'looked after' by a Local Authority	□3		
Prefer not to say	\square_4		

Q20 If anything to do with your age, gender, disability, sexuality, ethnicity or care status made it more difficult to access PDSO services, please tell us more in the space below?

It was not more difficult to access PDSO services	□1
Prefer not to say	



Thank you very much for completing the survey.

Please return this survey by Wednesday 7th June using the freepost envelope provided.

