



Business Plan 2025-26

The Scottish Legal Aid Board

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Information about the Scottish Legal Aid Board is available on our website: [Corporate information - Scottish Legal Aid Board](#).

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Introduction

This report sets out our Business Plan for 2025-26 and our third year of activity under our [Corporate Plan 2023-26](#).

Our four corporate objectives in the plan fall into two complementary but distinct pairs. The first objective focuses on ensuring high quality administration of the current legal aid system. This focus on high quality is mirrored in our delivery of our client legal services and targeted funding programmes.

A reformed legal aid system could deliver better outcomes, in a range of different ways. However, our emphasis on the quality of our core delivery functions remains under the current legislative arrangements and aims to make the most of what the current system offers.

The second pair of objectives are focused in the main on the future. We are investing in our staff to assist in shaping tomorrow's legal aid system. By developing our leaders and managers and embedding workforce planning, we will be better placed not only to manage the budgetary challenges ahead but also to have the right people, with the right skills, to confidently and expertly shape and deliver the significant change to our functions that reform could bring.

Our organisation

The Scottish Legal Aid Board (SLAB) was set up in 1987 to manage legal aid in Scotland.

As a Non-Departmental Public Body of the Scottish Government, our main purpose is to manage and improve publicly funded legal assistance, and to advise Scottish Ministers on its strategic development for the benefit of society.

The Scottish Government is responsible for the overall direction of legal aid policy.

We employ around 380 staff. We are structured around four Directorates with just over 160 of our staff involved in the assessment of legal aid applications and the payment of solicitor and advocate accounts.

Our financial settlement

The Legal Aid Fund

Unlike most other expenditure in the public sector, expenditure on the Legal Aid Fund, which covers the cost of legal aid grants, is uncapped. This means that any cases that meet the statutory tests will be funded by Scottish Government. However, the primary purpose of this uncapped expenditure is to ensure that applicants for legal aid are not prevented from accessing assistance due to a lack of funds. For budgeting purposes, the Scottish Government sets a budgeting provision, with any shortfall between the budget provision and actual expenditure to be made available through a transfer of funds at the end of the financial year.

This budget funds the provision of legal aid in Scotland. It also funds our network of SLAB employed solicitors, including the Civil Legal Assistance Office and the Public Defence Solicitors' Office networks, and a range of grant-funded services.

Scottish Government Budget Provision	2025-26
Legal Aid Fund	£155.5 million

Administrative Funding

This budget covers the staffing, administration, and capital costs of SLAB.

It also covers costs relating to various matters including researching and analysing the operation of legal aid, as well as the trends and impact on the wider justice system. This budget is fixed.

The Scottish Government's core budget in 2025-26 has been set at £16.2 million.

Our priority activity in 2025-26

Our business plan activity supports our corporate objectives.

We have provided a high-level overview of the activity that helps us work towards our objectives.

Strategic Objective 1: Our timely, clear and consistent decisions on legal aid applications and accounts deliver a positive customer experience.

Customer Insight Strategy

Focus	We are developing and implementing a strategy to capture both structured and unstructured customer feedback to inform future business process change, operational benchmark setting and legal aid policy change.
Who will benefit?	Customers, our staff.
Activity	Engagement with staff across SLAB, launch of strategy, action planning.
Measures of success	Strategy finalised. New customer feedback capture, analysis and reporting processes designed and implemented.
Owner	Director of Operations.
Delivery	2025-26.

Solicitor training and support

Focus	We aim to improve the consistency and quality of solicitor training delivery across the organisation. This will include methods of delivery, the experience of solicitors, the materials that are used and the ways in which we assess the effectiveness of this work.
Who will benefit?	Customers, our staff.
Activity	Engagement with staff across SLAB, engagement with solicitors, launch of products.
Measures of success	Training hub launched. Fewer interactions with firms on applications and accounts. Positive feedback from solicitors.
Owner	Director of Operations.
Delivery	2025-26.

Strategic Objective 2: Our client legal services and targeted funding deliver high quality and accessible information, advice and representation.

Delivery models to respond to contextual changes

Focus	We will identify internal and external events which may impact on service delivery or provide opportunities to enhance our services.
Who will benefit?	Customers, our staff.
Activity	Collaboration and consultation with stakeholders, policy analysis.
Measures of success	Scenarios developed to inform future service delivery. Options appraisals for enhancing our holistic approach.
Owner	Director of Client Legal Services.
Delivery	2025-26.

Strategic Objective 3: We support our people to develop the skills and ways of working needed to deliver our mission, both now and in the future.

Staff performance management

Focus	We will develop and implement a new staff performance management framework in line with a revised policy on performance management and supported by a management training programme.
Who will benefit?	Customers, our staff.
Activity	Benchmarking against other organisations, consultation with staff, policy development, policy, and framework launch.
Measures of success	Performance management framework agreed with Board. Managers trained. Performance reviews completed. Staff survey completed.
Owner	Director of Corporate Services & Accounts.
Delivery	2025-26.

Trauma informed organisation

Focus	We will assess the benefits of becoming a trauma informed organisation and how to get there. Being trauma informed means being able to recognise when someone may be affected by trauma, collaboratively adjusting how we work to take this into account and responding in a way that supports recovery, does no harm, and recognises and supports people's resilience.
Who will benefit?	Customers, our staff.
Activity	Research, consultation with staff, policy development. Training development.
Measures of success	Corporate position confirmed and training programme in place.
Owner	Director of Corporate Services & Accounts.
Delivery	2025-26.

Strategic Objective 4: Our advice to Ministers supports their decision-making on the future of legal aid and SLAB.

Corporate Plan

Focus	We will develop and approve a new Corporate Plan for 2026-29. This will include a review of the business planning process, alignment of contributory strategies and a review of our Corporate Values.
Who will benefit?	Customers.
Activity	Consultation with staff, our Board, and stakeholders.
Measures of success	Corporate Plan approved by the Board.
Owner	Chair.
Delivery	2025-26.

Legal aid reform

Focus	We will assist Scottish Government with its legal aid reform programme. This will include development of a Scottish Government package of regulatory change and development of proposals for future primary legislation.
Who will benefit?	Customers, stakeholders, our staff.
Activity	Policy and regulation development, consultation with stakeholders.
Measures of success	Advice and support delivered to Scottish Government.
Owner	Director of Strategic Development.
Delivery	2025-26.

Performance indicators

To assess performance in applications we use the following key indicators:

- Time to take the first decision (First decision average duration)
- The percentage of applications we can grant first time (First decision % granted)
- The level of rework that is required (% First decision with subsequent further work).

The equivalent indicators in accounts are:

- Time to pay an initial account (Average calendar days to bank)
- The percentage of accounts we pay in full (% paid in full)
- The level of negotiation that is required (Ratio of negotiations to initial assessments).

We also measure the accuracy of the decisions we take and the accounts we assess, as well as monitor solicitor satisfaction through a series of micro-surveys.

Our reporting on the indicators we use can be found in the SOPOR (SLAB Operational Performance Overview Report). The SOPOR is [published quarterly on our website](#) after it is reported to the Board.