

VIA EMAIL



Scottish Legal Aid Board

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www.slab.org.uk

Reference Number: FOI2025/00147

2 September 2025

**REQUEST FOR INFORMATION
THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION (SCOTLAND) ACT 2002**

Dear

Thank-you for your email received on 7 August.

You requested the following information:

1. The number of asylum seekers and refugees who are currently in receipt of any form of criminal legal aid in Scotland.
2. A breakdown of the most prevalent categories of criminal offences for which asylum seekers and refugees are receiving legal aid.
3. The total cost of criminal legal aid granted to asylum seekers and refugees in the most recent full financial year available (or an estimate if final figures are not yet available).
4. If possible, I would also request data showing the annual cost trend for the past five years regarding criminal legal aid expenditure on asylum seekers and refugees.

The answers to your questions are as follows.

1. I can provide you with information on the number of asylum seekers and refugees who were granted criminal legal aid in Scotland in 2024-25. In total there were 694 grants of criminal legal aid for people who were thought to be asylum seekers or refugees¹, in 2024-25.
2. The most prevalent categories were:

Drugs – 24% of cases
Assault – 17% of cases
Other – 10% of cases

The category Other includes a wide variety of matters such as Attempting to pervert the course of justice, Abduction, Human trafficking and Parole Board cases.

3. The total cost of criminal legal aid paid, in 2024-25, on cases granted for persons designated as asylum seekers/refugees/persons of no status was £948,000 inc VAT.
4. The annual cost trend, for criminal legal aid for asylum seekers/refugees/persons of no status for the past 5 years is as follows:

Financial year	Total cost inc VAT
2020/21	£261,000
2021/22	£409,000
2022/23	£543,000
2023/24	£695,000
2024/25	£948,000

Please note: Solemn legal aid (for the most serious crimes) constitutes between 66% and 79% of the total cost of criminal legal aid in these figures. Solemn legal aid was also the most affected by the lockdown periods. These disrupted and delayed many cases. In more recent years the criminal justice system has been increasing the number of these cases progressing through the system. Accordingly we have seen a displacement in costs from the lockdown years 20/21 and 21/22 to the more recent years.

Your right to request a review of decision

If you are dissatisfied with the way in which we have handled your request for information, you may ask us to review our decision. A request that we review our decision should be made in writing within 40 working days of the date of this letter or, if we have not responded to your request, within 40 days of the date by which we should have responded (that would normally be 20 days after receiving your request).

We will review our decision and tell you the outcome within 20 working days of receiving your request.

¹ The term illegal immigrant or persons of no status are also used - persons so designated were included in these figures.

If, having done so, you remain dissatisfied, you may ask the Scottish Information Commissioner to review our decision.

You must submit your request in writing to the Commissioner within 6 months of first receiving notice about the matter you are complaining about.

The Commissioner will not deal with an application unless SLAB's review process has been used and exhausted – in other words, until you have asked us to review our decision and you are not satisfied with our response or have not received a response within 20 working days of your request.

The Commissioner's contact details are:

The Scottish Information Commissioner
Kinburn Castle
Doubledykes Road
St Andrews
Fife
KY16 9DS

Telephone: 01334 464610

Website: www.foi.scot

E-mail: enquiries@foi.scot

For details on how to appeal please go to their website www.foi.scot/contactus