



# SLAB Operational Performance Overview Reports (SOPOR): Q1 April-June 2018

The stats below relate to our operational performance in April, May and June 2018.

## Description of the performance measures in SOPOR

This three month report period has been compared with the same three month period the year previously to provide a benchmark. Comparing against a year ago removes seasonal effects. Information in the report is grouped by operational area and type of measure.

The top half reports on the key legal aid applications areas: Civil; Summary Criminal; Solemn Criminal and Children's. The bottom half reports on accounts areas.

### Note on civil reporting:

In civil we are reporting on all legal aid case types except Adults with Incapacity cases. These are very high in volume and we take decisions on these in a much shorter timescale because the statutory tests are more straightforward. These are not included to avoid a disproportionate impact on performance statistics.

## APPLICATIONS

	CIVIL		CRIMINAL - SUMMARY		CRIMINAL - SOLEMN		CHILDREN'S	
Calendar days	2018 /19	2017/ 18	2018/ 19	2017 /18	2018/1 9	2017 /18	2018 /19	2017/ 18
First decision avg duration	70	72	9.5	8.7	4.9	5.0	9.2	7.5
First decision % granted	63%	59%	80%	78%	86%	86%	76%	79%
First decision - % requiring further work	18%	20%	15%	15%	8%	10%	11%	7%

## **GUIDE TO APPLICATION INFORMATION IN THE SOPOR REPORTS**

### **First Decision Average Duration**

The key duration shown for applications is the average time, in calendar days, from the receipt of a main legal aid application by SLAB, to when we take the first decision on it. This duration includes all weekends and holidays. It also includes any period where we are waiting for a response because we are asking the solicitor, or applicant, for more information to help us take the decision.

This indicator measures both the workflow performance of SLAB but also the degree to which solicitors and applicants are managing to provide all necessary information for decisions to be taken.

Indication of how well performing: LOWER is better.

### **First Decision - % Granted**

The first decision on a legal aid application can be one of three main types: grant; refuse; or not consider due to lack of information. The first decision granted measure is the number of grants as a percentage of the total number of first decisions in the period.

This indicator measures the effectiveness with which SLAB is facilitating solicitors to make appropriate and complete applications - i.e. getting it right first time.

Indication of how well performing: HIGHER is better.

### **First Decision - % Requiring Further Work**

The requiring further work measure is the number of cases requiring further work as a percentage of the total number of first decisions in the period.

Further work (FW) means any work on a case after the first decision has been taken. For example if a case is refused at first instance and then a review is submitted - assessing the review is treated as further work. Similarly if we ask for more information in determining a case to start and this is not received we will “not consider” the case. At this stage a solicitor can respond and supply more information which we will then look at - again this is considered as further work.

This indicator measures a number of different key elements of the process:

- the effectiveness with which SLAB is getting correct applications in the first instance;
- that SLAB is making correct decisions;
- the effectiveness with which SLAB is communicating those decisions.

Poor performance in any of those areas could result in an increase in this ratio.

Indication of how well performing: LOWER is better.

## Applications: Solicitor satisfaction & accuracy

	CIVIL		CRIMINAL		CHILDREN'S	
	2018/19	2017/18	2018/19	2017/18	2018/19	2017/18
<b>Solicitor satisfaction</b>	63%		80%		68%	
<b>Accuracy (4 only)</b>	98%	95%	99%	91%	98%	86%

### GUIDE TO SOLICITOR SATISFACTION & ACCURACY

We have trialled a new approach to surveying solicitors about their satisfaction with our service. Solicitors were asked to indicate their satisfaction using a 5-point scale. The percent satisfied score reported here is the percent of solicitors who responded either Fairly Satisfied (4) or Very Satisfied (5) on the scale.

The satisfaction question was targeted separately on a 3-month rolling basis at solicitors carrying out Civil work, Criminal work and Children's work. Within each area one question was asked regarding the applications service and one question was asked regarding the accounts service.

In the first month we asked the application question and the accounts question of solicitors who had made any civil applications in the past 3 months. In the second month we did the same for criminal and in the third month we did the same for childrens. Then in the fourth month we went back to civil and repeated the approach.

We developed this approach to minimise the level of repeat questioning any individual solicitor might receive in one month. We also provided the option for solicitors to respond with open comments in a free-text box.

The initial results of these surveys were described in a [news item](#) in October 2018.

#### Accuracy

This is being measured by the Independent Checking & Quality Unit (ICQU) team through sampling of cases in both the applications and accounts areas. Scoring Accuracy has been given a range of 1 to 4.

- 1 = Fundamental error - an error caused an incorrect decision to be taken;
- 2 = Non-fundamental error - an error was found but this did not result in an incorrect decision;
- 3 = Issue - a correct decision was taken but some of the justification was inaccurate ;
- 4 = Correct decision taken with the correct justification

The percentage figure reported is the percent of measurements that are scored 4, i.e. Correct. This is a more discriminating figure compared with the previous implementation of Accuracy when only errors affecting decision, i.e. 1s, were reported as incorrect.

# ACCOUNTS

	CIVIL		CRIMINAL		CHILDREN'S	
Average calendar days to bank	2018/19	2017/18	2018/19	2017/18	2018/19	2017/18
- Initial assessments	22	26	10	15	15	20
- Negotiations	57	59	35	53	33	21
- Combined	28	30	11	17	18	20
Initial assessments % paid in full	61%	63%	89%	86%	50%	58%
Ratio of negotiations to initial assessments	20%	14%	5%	5%	22%	11%

## GUIDE TO ACCOUNTS INFORMATION IN THE SOPOR REPORTS

### Average calendar days to bank

The **Initial Assessments** duration is a measure of the time from registration of the account to the date payment is received into the solicitor's bank account. It includes any period where we have asked and are waiting for more information from the solicitor to help us assess the account.

The **Negotiation** duration is the same measure but for accounts that are follow-up accounts to negotiate over sums that we have deducted - known as abatements - from initial accounts.

The **Combined** duration is the total average duration for all accounts - i.e. both Initial Assessments and Negotiation accounts combined together.

Indication of how well performing: LOWER is better.

### Initial Assessment - % paid in full

The paid in full measure is the percentage of accounts that we are able to pay the full amount solicitors are claiming, i.e. without abating them.

‘Abatement’ describes the process by which the amount paid by SLAB includes one or more deductions from the amount claimed by a solicitor. This can occur for many different reasons. Subsequent negotiations with firms can result in part or all of the sum abated being reinstated, often because we are provided with further information that allows us to be satisfied that a claim is valid or reasonable. This can be additional information (such as vouching) to support a claim, or an explanation to justify a particular activity which had appeared to us on the face of it to be unnecessary, unreasonable or uneconomical.

SLAB is required to protect the Legal Aid Fund from unjustified expenditure; however this needs to be undertaken in a manner that is seen to be fair, transparent and done in a consistent and efficient manner.

Ultimately we will be using the information on what we finally pay against, the original lodged amount and the initial payment to understand how we can ensure more could be paid at the first instance.

Indication of how well performing: HIGHER is better.

### Negotiations as a % of Initial Assessments

This measure shows the number of negotiation accounts paid as a percentage of the number of first instance accounts paid in a period.

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### Accounts: solicitor satisfaction & accuracy

	CIVIL		CRIMINAL		CHILDREN'S	
	2018/19	2017/18	2018/19	2017/18	2018/19	2017/18
<b>Solicitor satisfaction</b>	48%		72%		59%	
<b>Accuracy (4 only)</b>	95%	88%	98%	90%	92%	75%

## GUIDE TO ACCOUNTS: SOLICITOR SATISFACTION & ACCURACY

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**For more information**, please contact Cathrin Innes, Projects Manager - [innesca@slab.org.uk](mailto:innesca@slab.org.uk)