



# Equality Outcomes Plan 2021-2023

**March 2021**

The Scottish Legal Aid Board

[www.slab.org.uk](http://www.slab.org.uk)

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Information about the Scottish Legal Aid Board is available on our website:  
[www.slab.org.uk/corporate-information](http://www.slab.org.uk/corporate-information)

## Introduction

The last six months have seen us managing the impact of a global health pandemic on our employees, our operations and those who depend on the services we deliver.

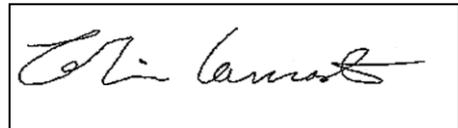
Covid-19 and our response to it has impacted on strategic priorities, as reflected in our recently published corporate plan 2020 - 2023, and the revision of our equality outcomes 2021-2023.

Our priorities over the coming period are to deliver a high quality and user focussed service; our equality work is a key part of being able to achieve this. We will continue to improve the accessibility of our services and transparency in relation to our own customer service standards and funding for communication support through the legal aid fund. We will also continue to improve how we gather and use customer equality data to inform the way that we design our services and assess the impact of the policies and procedures that govern our work.

During this period, the Board and the Executive's priorities have included the health and wellbeing of our people. As we look to the future shape of our organisation in the aftermath of Covid-19 we will focus on the health and wellbeing of our workforce who are key to the delivery of strategic objectives and a high quality legal aid system.



**Ray Macfarlane**  
Chair



**Colin Lancaster**  
Chief Executive

## Context for our equality outcomes

This plan sets out our equality outcomes for 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2023. The publication of corporate priorities and revised equality outcomes in April 2020 was delayed due to the impact of the global pandemic. Our usual three year reporting cycle has therefore been reduced to two years to ensure our equality work continues to be aligned with our corporate planning cycle.

In October 2020 we published our [Equality Outcomes Progress and Mainstreaming report](#) which ensured that we continue to meet our statutory reporting timeline. That report included:

- A final progress report against our equality outcomes 2017-2020
- an update on our work to mainstream equality into the way we work
- a summary of our employee equality information
- details of our gender pay gap and an updated equal pay statement.

## Our organisation

Our primary purpose is to manage access to legal aid funding by applying the rules set by the Parliament for assessing eligibility for legal aid and checking accounts submitted for payment by solicitors and advocates.

Legal aid funding pays for solicitors, advocates and other necessary services to help people resolve problems by negotiation or in a court or tribunal. The vast majority of services paid for through the Legal Aid Fund are delivered through the private sector (94.1%). The third sector and our own direct services<sup>1</sup> also deliver case by case services but on a much smaller scale. Finally, a small amount of funding provides direct grants for projects to deliver targeted legal services<sup>2</sup>. The Legal Aid Fund also finances the quality assurance schemes we manage.

Legal aid and wider justice system policy is the responsibility of the Scottish Government, and where legislative change is required, the Scottish Parliament. Inequality in access to legally aided services is something that we can not control and is not within our remit to directly change. The nature of the current legal aid legislation means that this judicare funding is unplanned and largely non-targeted. This feature of the current system means that resources for case by case services cannot be more purposely directed towards meeting any specific Scottish Government priority or the legal problems experienced by any specific equality groups. The pattern of requests for legal aid is determined by a combination of members of the public deciding whether to seek help and hundreds of predominantly small firms of solicitors in the private sector deciding whether or not to offer a particular kind of service, whether to act for a person if they ask for assistance and, if so, whether to do so on legal aid<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Our direct services include our Public Defence Solicitors' Office (PDSO), Civil Legal Assistance Office (CLAO) and Solicitor Contact Line (SCL).

<sup>2</sup> For more information about how the Legal Aid Fund was spent in 2019-20 please see our Annual Accounts at [www.slab.org.uk/corporate-information/publications/corporate-information/annual-reports/](http://www.slab.org.uk/corporate-information/publications/corporate-information/annual-reports/)

<sup>3</sup> For more information please see our Corporate Plan 2020-2023 at [www.slab.org.uk/corporate-information/publications/corporate-information/corporate-and-business-plans/](http://www.slab.org.uk/corporate-information/publications/corporate-information/corporate-and-business-plans/)

## Legal context

The Equality Act 2010 introduced the public sector equality duty which requires public authorities, in the exercise of their functions, to have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other prohibited conduct
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

In Scotland, the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) (Scotland) Regulations 2012 (and subsequent updates) support public authorities like the Scottish Legal Aid Board (SLAB) to meet the general duty.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC)<sup>4</sup> monitor and regulate compliance with the public sector equality duty and relevant regulations in Scotland.

## Our approach to developing equality outcomes for 2021-2023

With reference to good practice set out in the relevant EHRC guidance<sup>5</sup>, we have undertaken a series of steps as part of our process to revise our equality outcomes.

### Evidence review

We have undertaken a review of equality evidence including:

- our own evidence: what we have found through both internal and external stakeholder research<sup>6</sup> and survey work
- evidence relating to the justice sector in Scotland: a review of published reports and research, and priorities that continue to be identified through our work with justice partners
- evidence relevant to SLAB as a public service provider and employer in Scotland including a review of reports, research and frameworks published by the Scottish Government and the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC).

The key sources that have informed our outcomes are included in this report and wider references are included in Appendix A.

### External stakeholder engagement

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<sup>4</sup> [www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/advice-and-guidance/public-sector-equality-duty](http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/advice-and-guidance/public-sector-equality-duty)

<sup>5</sup> EHRC non-statutory guidance for listed public authorities in Scotland:

[www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/advice-and-guidance/guidance-scottish-public-authorities](http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/advice-and-guidance/guidance-scottish-public-authorities)

<sup>6</sup> Our research publications can be found at [www.slab.org.uk/corporate-information/publications/research-publications/](http://www.slab.org.uk/corporate-information/publications/research-publications/)

We commissioned the independent social research company, The Lines Between, to involve members of the public in the process of shaping our new outcomes. This work also raised issues that are important to the wider operation of the legal aid schemes and therefore our corporate plan.

The research used a qualitative approach to speak to people about two key scenarios; meeting a solicitor for the first time and receiving advice from a solicitor in a police station setting. Tailored discussions took place in October 2019 with 23 participants in total. The groups included in the research included people who identify as gay, lesbian and bisexual (LGB), people with experience of poor mental health, people with physical and/or learning disabilities and people from different minority ethnic backgrounds.

The report produced key findings and recommendations, alongside useful evidence for us to take into account in critically reviewing and developing both our equality outcomes and our corporate plan. The research report, [Public Involvement in Setting SLAB's Equality Outcomes](#), was published on our website in February 2020.

We contacted a range of justice partners and representative equality organisations to ask for:

- their views on the focus of SLAB's current equality outcomes
- to recommend any sources of evidence SLAB should consider when reviewing those outcomes
- their comment on SLAB's strategic objectives.

We received a small number of responses (five in total) however this engagement provided us with some valuable reflection and highlighted areas for further consideration in the development of our outcomes as follows:

- to consider workforce and leadership representation in line with national targets
- accessible services was supported as an outcome
- the wording and scope of the outcomes need to be improved so that the scope and end goal is clearer
- there was general support for our strategic objectives.

### Internal engagement

We initially engaged with Managers<sup>7</sup> about our equality priorities and the feedback from our research with external stakeholders at our Managers Away Day in February 2020.

Managers views about the focus of our 2017 equality outcomes and their views for new outcomes were gathered via a survey.

Managers told us they agreed with the overall comments we had received from the external research about our outcomes. They did not suggest new outcomes but offered the following feedback:

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<sup>7</sup> This includes Team Leaders, Assistant Managers, Managers or 'Heads of' departments and our Executive Team.

- our outcomes must be clear and use Plain English to ensure they are easily understood
- the overall themes of accessible communication, equality data gathering and employee knowledge on equality and diversity remain important going forward
- our outcomes should focus on customer service.

Due to the delay in revising our equality outcomes for publication in April 2020, we invited further feedback from Managers in February 2021 on our draft equality outcomes and the work that would support their delivery. Generally, people were positive about the outcomes in terms of their focus, how they are phrased and the work that will deliver them. Managers also felt that we had taken their previous feedback on board and could see these reflected in the revised outcomes. There were a few queries about the scope of the workstreams we identified to deliver the outcomes which we have taken into consideration.

### **Aligning with corporate priorities 2020-2023**

At the heart of the payment schemes we administer is the enabling and protection of civil, political, social and human rights. Equality and diversity is therefore a key principle for us in the delivery of our functions. In line with our focus on organisational and operational excellence, we recognise that we can do more in this area. We have recently been engaging with the Equalities and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) about how we approach our equalities work, specifically our impact assessment practice and the mainstreaming of equality.

As detailed in our [Corporate Plan 2020-2023](#), our strategic objectives will be delivered by a range of activities that mirror those in this report to deliver our equality outcomes. Our equality outcomes will therefore directly support our strategic objectives:

- we deliver a high quality user focussed service
- we embed ways of working across the organisation that enhance the quality, consistency and transparency of our decisions and delivery, and
- we engage with users and delivery partners across the legal aid and justice system to inform good design of our system and services<sup>8</sup>.

### **Wider staff communication about our equality outcomes**

Our new outcomes have been publicised to our workforce through our employee intranet.

Routine progress updates will be communicated across the organisation and employee involvement is built in to relevant workstreams as appropriate.

We introduce new employees to our equality work as part of our corporate induction programme. This ensures all employees know about our corporate equality priorities and how these relate to them and their job role. The induction session is delivered by our Corporate Policy Officer

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<sup>8</sup> Full information about our strategic objectives can be found in our [Corporate Plan 2020-2023](http://www.slab.org.uk/corporate-information/publications/corporate-information/corporate-and-business-plans/)

(Equalities) and provides an opportunity for employees to tell us what equality means to them and their views on the priorities SLAB is working towards.

## Our equality outcomes for 2021-2023

Our three equality outcomes for 2021-2023 will support our strategic priorities and the three aims of the general duty. We have provided a high level overview of the activity that helps us achieve these outcomes, what success will look like and how we will measure the impact on relevant equality groups.

1. **People with disabilities and people who speak languages other than English can access our services and funding of appropriate communication support with ease.**
2. **SLAB gathers and uses equality data to inform our policies and improve our services.**
3. **SLAB employees maintain good mental and physical health during the Covid-19 pandemic and recovery phase.**

### **Equality outcome 1**

**People with disabilities and people who speak languages other than English can access our services and funding of appropriate communication support with ease.**

**Relevant to the protected characteristics of Race and Disability.**

**Equality Duty deliverables: Advance equality of opportunity, eliminate discrimination.**

We have a responsibility to ensure that our services are accessible and that we support solicitors to provide an accessible service through our management of the legal aid fund where appropriate.

Evidence considered as part of informing this outcome focusses on the specific barriers and issues which people with disabilities and minority ethnic people can face in accessing services. The focus has been particularly on evidence which identifies communication needs for both groups and how these can be effectively addressed. Examples of evidence considered include:

- British Sign Language Interpreting in Scotland: A Landscape Review (2019)
- Communication Failure? Review of the accessibility of health information for blind and partially sighted people in Scotland: RNIB (2020)
- Criminal Justice Disability Project report
- A Fairer Scotland for Disabled People and Scotland's Race Equality Action Plan (and associated updates): Scottish Government.

## Workstream 1: GALA Project: Review of Taxation Standards and Accounts

<b>Evidence</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Between the Lines research with members of the public including people with disabilities and people from different minority ethnic backgrounds conducted for SLAB in 2019</li> <li>• Legal Aid Review tells us there is a desire for change</li> <li>• Significant gaps in guidance for solicitors to follow on what equalities related charges are allowable</li> <li>• Alignment to our corporate values by improving accountability and increasing transparency</li> <li>• Evidence and experience of employees in our Accounts Teams.</li> </ul>
<b>Who will benefit?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Legal Aid applicants</li> </ul>
<b>Activity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review policy and develop decision makers guidance and solicitor guidance for:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ the application of the taxation standard</li> <li>○ interpreting and translation</li> <li>○ costs and time associated with travel</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Set out policy, decision makers guidance and solicitor guidance for all other areas of accounts assessment</li> <li>• Equality impact assessment for accounts policies carried out.</li> </ul>
<b>Measures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To be determined by the equality impact assessment</li> <li>• Increase in Accounts satisfaction measures in solicitor micro-surveys.</li> </ul>
<b>Owner</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Director of Operations</li> <li>• Director of Corporate Services and Accounts.</li> </ul>
<b>Duration</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review and develop policy statements for all areas of accounts assessment by December 2021 (year one)</li> <li>• Develop decision makers guidance and solicitor guidance over period to October 2022 (year two).</li> </ul>

<b>Workstream 2: Implementation of a Customer Communication Needs policy</b> Linked to equality outcome 2, workstream 6: IS development of an applicant module	
<b>Evidence</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Civil Finance teams in their interactions with applicants/ members of the public</li> <li>• Mental Health Check survey and feedback from employees</li> <li>• Feedback from equality organisations during our external engagement process</li> <li>• Internal research conducted during 2017-2020 outcomes cycle and finding that we tend to respond to communication support needs on an ad hoc basis.</li> </ul>
<b>Who will benefit?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People involved in the legal aid process.</li> </ul>
<b>Activity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use the policy statement developed in our last outcomes cycle to inform a new customer communication needs policy</li> <li>• Develop and provide training on employee guidance to include how to ask customers about communication support needs and using the information to respond quickly and appropriately to those needs</li> <li>• Update letter templates to include wording that encourages people tell us if they need communication support</li> <li>• Set reporting procedures to monitor the customer communication needs policy.</li> </ul>
<b>Measures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Repetition of engagement with employees about capturing of communication support needs</li> <li>• No. of needs captured and analysis of responses SLAB provided</li> <li>• Monitoring of complaints.</li> </ul>
<b>Owner</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Director of Operations.</li> </ul>
<b>Duration</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implementation to go live in year two once relevant IS Development is complete (see workstream 6).</li> </ul>

### Workstream 3: Development and Implementation of a Corporate Customer Service Policy

<b>Evidence</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Civil Finance teams in their interactions with applicants/ members of the public</li> <li>• Mental Health Check survey and feedback from employees</li> <li>• Feedback from equality organisations during our external engagement process</li> <li>• Internal research conducted during 2017-2020 outcomes cycle and finding that we tend to respond to communication support needs on an ad hoc basis.</li> </ul>
<b>Who will benefit?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All external customers.</li> </ul>
<b>Activity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a corporate customer service policy based on research and current good practice</li> <li>• Identify additional guidance and supporting policies that are required to ensure the policy can be effectively implemented</li> <li>• Publish the policy including in suitable formats including BSL video with audio and subtitles, and easy read format.</li> </ul>
<b>Measures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Involvement of stakeholders in the development of the policy</li> <li>• Monitoring of complaints.</li> </ul>
<b>Owner</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Director of Strategic Development.</li> </ul>
<b>Duration</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Year one with implementation by April 2022 (year one).</li> </ul>

## Workstream 4: Review of template letters

<b>Evidence</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feedback from Civil Applicant survey 2016 that letters were too technical</li> <li>• Several sources of evidence we reviewed cited accessible communication as important</li> <li>• SLAB commissioned research on our draft letters during 2017-2020 outcomes cycle that has informed the development of this work to date.</li> </ul>
<b>Who will benefit?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People involved in the legal aid process.</li> </ul>
<b>Activity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing testing and launch of civil legal aid letters in stages</li> <li>• Staff briefing sessions to coincide with staged launch</li> <li>• Plan the review and launch letters across other aid types.</li> </ul>
<b>Measures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ad hoc feedback via operational teams from people who receive the letters</li> <li>• solicitor survey feedback.</li> </ul>
<b>Owner</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Director of Operations.</li> </ul>
<b>Duration</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Civil Legal Aid letters will continue launch during 2021-22 (year one)</li> <li>• Review and launch of letters for other legal aid types expected in year two subject to planning process.</li> </ul>

## Equality outcome 2:

SLAB gathers and uses equality data to inform our policies and improve our services

Relevant to the protected characteristics of Race, Sex, Disability and Age

Equality Duty deliverables: advance equality of opportunity, eliminate discrimination.

We have a strong history of collecting data through our research programme. However, collection of this data, where optional, through our administrative systems has not been very successful. We are aware that more systemic collection of data will help us to be responsive to our customers and will help us in our role to advise Scottish Ministers on the strategic development of an accessible and high quality legal aid system.

### Workstream 5: Gathering and use of applicant equality data

This data will be used at a high level to understand trends at a strategic level and to inform strategic policy development, for example as part of the equality impact assessment process.

<b>Evidence</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Our own experience of the limitations of current data in understanding the experiences of our customers throughout the legal aid process; includes the amount and quality of data collected across relevant protected characteristics, how the data can be reported on, and our communication about how we use the data</li><li>• EHRC Guidance - Evidence and the Public Sector Equality Duty.</li></ul>
<b>Who will benefit?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• People who go through the legal aid process.</li></ul>
<b>Activity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Engagement with the Law Society of Scotland and the profession on their role in gathering this data from clients</li><li>• Development and publication of guidance for customers on the equality data we gather and how we use it.</li></ul>
<b>Measures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Improved % disclosure across the relevant protected characteristics</li><li>• Ad hoc feedback from solicitors.</li></ul>
<b>Owner</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Director of Strategic Development.</li></ul>
<b>Duration</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Engagement with the Law Society of Scotland to begin late 2021 (year one)</li><li>• Development of guidance for customers will take place during year one</li><li>• Publication of guidance for customers will coincide with roll out of the applicant modeule which is planned for spring 2022 (year two).</li></ul>

**Workstream 6: IS Development to develop an applicant module to capture equality data**  
 This workstream is a key first step to deliver workstream 2 to implement a new customer communication needs policy and workstream 5 to gather and use applicant equality data.

<b>Evidence</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Civil Finance teams in their interactions with applicants/members of the public</li> <li>• Internal research conducted during 2017-2020 outcomes cycle which found we are not always aware what additional communication needs and reasonable adjustments might be needed to support customers. We currently handle this on an ad hoc basis.</li> </ul>
<b>Who will benefit?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Legal Aid Applicants</li> </ul>
<b>Activity</b>	Information Systems (IS) development of an applicant module to capture: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• legal aid applicant communication support needs</li> <li>• Revised equality monitoring questions for legal aid applicants</li> <li>• Set up reporting tools to ensure we can effectively use the data to be gathered via the module as per workstreams 2 and 5.</li> </ul>
<b>Measures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data can be captured and reported on as required.</li> </ul>
<b>Owner</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Director of Corporate Services and Accounts.</li> </ul>
<b>Duration</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development of an applicant module including monitoring questions and reporting tools is due to be complete by spring 2022 (year two).</li> </ul>

**Workstream 7: Improved identification, reporting and use of equality related complaints**

<b>Evidence</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Our own experience of the current limitations to how we log complaints</li> <li>• Recognition that this is a valuable source of evidence that we can better use in equality impact assessments.</li> </ul>
<b>Who will benefit?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• External customers including Legal Aid Applicants, Solicitors and members of the public.</li> </ul>
<b>Activity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review logging of complaints to improve identification of equality related complaints</li> <li>• Develop and review internal guidance and procedures to support the updated SPSO model complaints procedure and changes to logging process</li> <li>• Determine routine reporting.</li> </ul>
<b>Measures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evidenced use of data in relevant equality impact assessments</li> <li>• Reporting in place and evidenced.</li> </ul>
<b>Owner</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Director of Strategic Development.</li> </ul>
<b>Duration</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• By December 2021 (year one).</li> </ul>

<b>Workstream 8: Implementation of a new case management system for PDSO, CLAO and SCL<sup>9</sup> services and development of key equality measures.</b>	
<b>Evidence</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Our own experience of the limitations of current data in understanding the experiences of our customers throughout the legal aid process; includes the amount and quality of data collected across relevant protected characteristics, how the data can be reported on and our communication about how we use the data</li> <li>• EHRC Guidance - Evidence and the Public Sector Equality Duty.</li> </ul>
<b>Who will benefit?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clients and contacts of our PDSO, CLAO and SCL services.</li> </ul>
<b>Activity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete tender process for a new case management system</li> <li>• Implement policy for equality data capture</li> <li>• Direct services to develop relevant local procedures and guidance on collecting relevant data</li> <li>• Set up equality related reports and key indicators</li> <li>• Use data to inform business planning reviews.</li> </ul>
<b>Measures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evidenced use of data in relevant equality impact assessments</li> <li>• Reporting in place and evidenced</li> <li>• Improved % disclosure of relevant equality data.</li> </ul>
<b>Owner</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Director of Strategic Development</li> <li>• Director of PDSO</li> <li>• Head of Service CLAO</li> <li>• Manager of the Solicitor Contact Line.</li> </ul>
<b>Duration</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• By April 2022 (year one).</li> </ul>

<sup>9</sup> Our direct services include our Public Defence Solicitor Offices (PDSO), Civil Legal Assistance Offices (CLAO) and Solicitor Contact Line (SCL).

### Equality Outcome 3:

SLAB employees maintain good mental and physical health during the Covid-19 pandemic and recovery phase

Relevant to the protected characteristics of Age, Disability, Sex, Race and Pregnancy or Maternity (groups most affected by Covid-19)

Equality Duty deliverables: advance equality of opportunity, eliminate discrimination, foster good relations.

The Covid-19 pandemic has had a massive impact on the physical way we work due to the closure of our offices with any access for work purposes limited and closely monitored. The majority of our employees have been home working for a year which brings both benefits and risks for mental and physical wellbeing. Our priority for the near future is to maintain a physically and mentally healthy workforce with particular attention to our most vulnerable employees.

#### Workstream 9: Building capacity on equality in corporate services teams

<b>Evidence</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• NDPB and wider public sector discussion about Covid-19 response and the ability, knowledge capacity to deliver on high volume of corporate services equality impact assessments</li><li>• Workplan requires extensive engagement with key managers in corporate services to deliver work based policies and support.</li></ul>
<b>Who will benefit?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Employees.</li></ul>
<b>Activity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Work with external equality organisation to deliver knowledge sharing sessions to our corporate services Managers, Assistant Managers, Team Leaders and Directors on equality issues and how they relate to different teams within Corporate Services</li><li>• The priority equality groups will be those affected by Covid-19 with a particular focus on gender equality and ways to improve our gender pay gap as reported in our <a href="#">October 2020 Equality Mainstreaming and outcomes progress report</a>.</li></ul>
<b>Measures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Quality of equality impact assessments</li><li>• Gender pay gap - this will be a long term measure</li><li>• Feedback on EqIA work from external equality organisations.</li></ul>
<b>Owner</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Director of Strategic Development.</li></ul>
<b>Duration</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• May to December 2021 (year one).</li></ul>

<b>Workstream 10: Designing a New Working Environment - Covid-19 recovery</b>	
<b>Evidence</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mental Health Check Survey</li> <li>• Line manager evaluation from Mental Health Workshops</li> <li>• External Covid-19 reports (EHRC) and SG’s equality evidence finder updates about the impact of covid-19</li> <li>• Staff survey indicator that SLAB falls below the civil service average with regards employee perception that SLAB is committed to an inclusive workplace.</li> </ul>
<b>Who will benefit?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employees</li> </ul>
<b>Activity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Several strands of work are already in place in response to the global pandemic and to enable a safe continuation of homeworking and return to ‘normal’: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Staff wellbeing focusing on supporting good mental health across the workforce</li> <li>○ Employee Health and Safety (at home and in the office)</li> <li>○ Safety at external work sites (solicitors)</li> <li>○ Long term home working</li> <li>○ Additional policies (Return to Work, External Workplace policy)</li> <li>○ IT equipment and furniture.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Measures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improvement in staff survey indicator related to an inclusive workplace</li> <li>• Maintenance or improvement of wellbeing indicators in staff survey</li> <li>• Ongoing pulse surveys with equality groups captured to allow analysis</li> <li>• Take up of health and wellbeing initiatives and impact of these for individuals</li> <li>• Absence data by protected characteristic.</li> </ul>
<b>Owner</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Director of Corporate Services and Accounts</li> <li>• Director of Strategic Development (survey responsibilities).</li> </ul>
<b>Duration</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Years one and two.</li> </ul>

## Action in response to the Scottish Parliament's Inquiry into Race Equality, Employment and Skills

In November 2020 the Scottish Parliament's Equalities and Human Rights Committee published a report on its Race Equality, Employment and Skills inquiry. This Committee has asked each public authority to commit to take a minimum of three new actions to address their organisations specific issues along with associated timescales and reasons for those timescales.

Although the timing of the inquiry report and our strategic planning has not aligned, we are able to commit to three actions that we believe will help us to set more concrete outcomes in 2023. The actions we will take include:

- **We will review our recruitment procedures and practice against the Scottish Government's recruitment toolkit designed to support employers to better recruit more people from minority ethnic backgrounds and make the necessary changes.**

We have already committed to a review of our people related policies and our recruitment policy is a priority under that project. We will use the Scottish Government's toolkit to inform this review. Priority policies will be reviewed over an initial two year period and by early 2023.

- **Our review of our people related policies and setting of measures to better understand the equality impact of those policies will inform future action and outcomes to achieve race equality.**

This work will lead to improved measurement of the impact of our policies that we will use to inform future employee equality outcomes. We will deliver this through our equality impact assessment process which includes race equality. As noted above, priority policies will be reviewed over an initial two year period and by early 2023.

- **We will voluntarily record and publish their ethnicity pay gap and produce an action plan to deliver identified outcomes.**

We currently monitor our ethnicity pay gap and will publish this with our next equality outcomes report in April 2023. Alongside this we will identify outcomes we can take as appropriate.

SLAB is also involved with two cross-Justice working groups on race that report to the Justice Board which is chaired by the Scottish Government.

The first is the Cross Justice Working Group on Race and Workforce which is supporting learning within the Justice Sector and will set the direction of travel from March 2021.

The second is the Cross Justice System Working Group on Race Data and Evidence which aims to improve data collection and the analysis of this data in understanding the experience of different ethnic groups within the Justice system.

# Appendix A. List of evidence reviewed to support our equality outcomes 2021-2023

## External evidence

- Fairer Scotland for Disabled People: Scottish Government Recruitment and Retention Plan**
  - A Fairer Scotland for Disabled People: Employment Action Plan (2018)
  - A Fairer Scotland for Disabled People: Progress Report (2019)
  - Scottish Government - Mental Health Strategy Update (Nov 2019)
- Criminal Justice Disability Project report** (2018)
- Close the Gap working paper on gender pay gap statistics** (Jan 2020)
- Close the Gap: The Gender Penalty (2018)
- Close the Gap: Still Not Visible - research on Black and minority ethnic women's experiences of employment in Scotland** (2019)
- A Fairer Scotland for Women: Gender Pay Gap Action Plan** (2019)
- Communication Failure?** Review of the accessibility of health information for blind and partially sighted people in Scotland, RNIB (2020)
- British Sign Language Interpreting in Scotland: A landscape review** (2019)
- Legally disabled?** The career experiences of disabled people working in the legal profession, Cardiff University Business School (2019)
- Legal Needs of Individuals in England and Wales, Legal Services Board** (2020)
- Menopause and the workplace, Scottish Trades Union Congress** (2018)
- LGBT at Work, Stonewall Scotland** (2018)
- Pregnancy and maternity-related discrimination report, Equality and Human Rights Commission (2018)
- Reshaping Legal Services to Meet People's Needs: An analysis of Legal Capability, Legal Services Board** (2020)
- Is Scotland Fairer? Equality and Human Rights Commission (2018)
- Scotland's Independent Care Review: the Promise** (2020)
- Disability and 'hidden' impairments in the workplace, Welsh Trades Union Congress (2018)
- Developing staff disclosure, Equality Challenge Unit (2009)
- Doing Seniority Differently: a study of high flyers living with ill-health, injury or disability, Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation (2009)
- Opening up work: the views of people with disabilities and long-term health conditions, Equality and Human Rights Commission (2012)
- Taking the right approach to ethnicity pay gap reporting, PWC (2019)
- Race in the Workplace: the McGregor-Smith Review (2017)
- Perspectives on Disability Disclosure: The Importance of Employer Practices and Workplace Climate, Von Schrader (2013)
- First Minister's National Advisory Council on Women and Girls report (2019) Scottish Government 2020 response
- Stevenson review on mental health at work (2017)
- Independent Review on Legal Aid (2018)
- The Independent Review of Learning Disability and Autism in the Mental Health Act (2019)
- Speech Language and Communication Needs in Youth Justice: Understanding and addressing the impact, Centre for Youth and Criminal Justice (2018)
- Rethinking Legal Aid: an Independent Strategic Review** (2018)

Emerging evidence on COVID-19's impact on mental health and health inequalities, The Health Foundation (2020)  
COVID-19 mental health and wellbeing surveillance report, Public Health England (2021)

### Scottish Legal Aid Board specific evidence

#### Corporate Plan (2020)

Staff Survey(s) 2017 and 2019

Designing a New Workplace Environment staff surveys 2020 and 2021

Staff demographics extracted annually

Mental Health Check survey (2019)

Public involvement in setting SLAB's equality outcomes (2019)

Stakeholder research, including 2018 survey of criminal applicants, 2017 survey of Public Defence Solicitors' Office clients, 2019 survey of Civil Legal Assistance Office contacts and clients.