

CLAO client and contact surveys 2021

Background

Legal aid allows people who would not otherwise be able to afford it to get help for their legal problems. The Scottish Legal Aid Board (SLAB) is responsible for managing legal aid in Scotland. We manage the day to day running of legal aid through our assessment of large volumes of legal aid applications and assessing and paying accounts submitted by solicitors and advocates. The majority of legal aid solicitors in Scotland are in private practice; however, SLAB also provides a direct advice and representation service through a small network of publicly funded Civil Legal Assistance Offices (CLAO), criminal defence solicitors (PDSO) and a 24 hour Solicitor Contact Line which facilitates and delivers advice for suspects in police custody across Scotland.

CLAO provides support to two groups: clients and contacts. Clients are equivalent to clients of a private practice solicitor; they will receive the same types of advice and support with their civil legal case, including representation if this is needed.

Contacts are those who get in touch with the CLAO for assistance and do not go on to become a client. They may be signposted or referred to another service, or their contact may end for another reason. The reasons for CLAO not taking on a contact as a client include their not having a valid civil legal case. This survey covers both clients and contacts; however CLAO has greater opportunities for improving the experience of clients, due to depth of service provided to them.

Aims

The overarching aim of the research was to explore the experiences of CLAO clients and contacts when selecting and using the CLAO, and their satisfaction with elements of the service.

Methodology and sample

This work consisted of online and telephone surveys of contacts and clients who had used the CLAO recently. We used many of the same questions that we asked in the previous CLAO client and contact survey (2018). We also introduced new questions, to help explore changes since the start of the pandemic.

SLAB contracted IBP Strategy & Research to undertake the survey for us. The survey questions were translated from English into Polish, and a link to the Polish language survey was included in the online survey invitation. The survey was also offered in other languages, including British Sign Language. The survey fieldwork took place in November and December 2021. IBP contacted 1,793 people and had 436 responses, an overall response rate of 24%.

Most of those in the sample (84%) were CLAO contacts (similar to the 2018 sample). Client samples were evenly split between those with open cases and those with closed cases; however those with open cases were significantly more likely to respond to the survey. In line with 2018, the response rate from clients was higher than that from contacts.

Table 1: Sample size and response rates

	Contacts	Open clients	Closed clients
Sample: Number (% of overall sample)	1507 (84%)	145 (8%)	141 (8%)
Responses: Number (% of overall sample)	320 (73%)	77 (18%)	39 (9%)

Issues relating to housing (45% of respondents) and contact or other child-related family cases (22%) were the most common problems mentioned by clients (including ‘other’ responses where these could be reliably reclassified to one of the set responses¹). Contacts were most likely to approach CLAO with matters relating to family (33% of respondents had issues around contact or children and 18% in relation to divorce or separation).

The percentage of people mentioning housing as an issue is somewhat lower than in 2018, while family cases are mentioned more often. This is consistent with the Scottish Government’s approach to justice priorities during the pandemic as:

- Family cases, especially those involving children, were prioritised as “the ‘urgent and necessary’ civil business that will continue to be dealt with as part of our response to the Coronavirus”².
- Tenants were largely protected from eviction during the pandemic. This applied to private tenants as well as social or local authority tenants. Figures from the Scottish Housing Regulator show that court actions against tenants from Local Authority and registered social landlords fell from 10,431 in 2019/20 to 543 in 2020/21³.

Overall, respondents to the survey were most likely to have been in touch with CLAO’s Inverness office (44%). This is driven by contacts. Those taken on as clients were most likely to have received a service from the Edinburgh office (42%), followed by the Inverness office (32%).

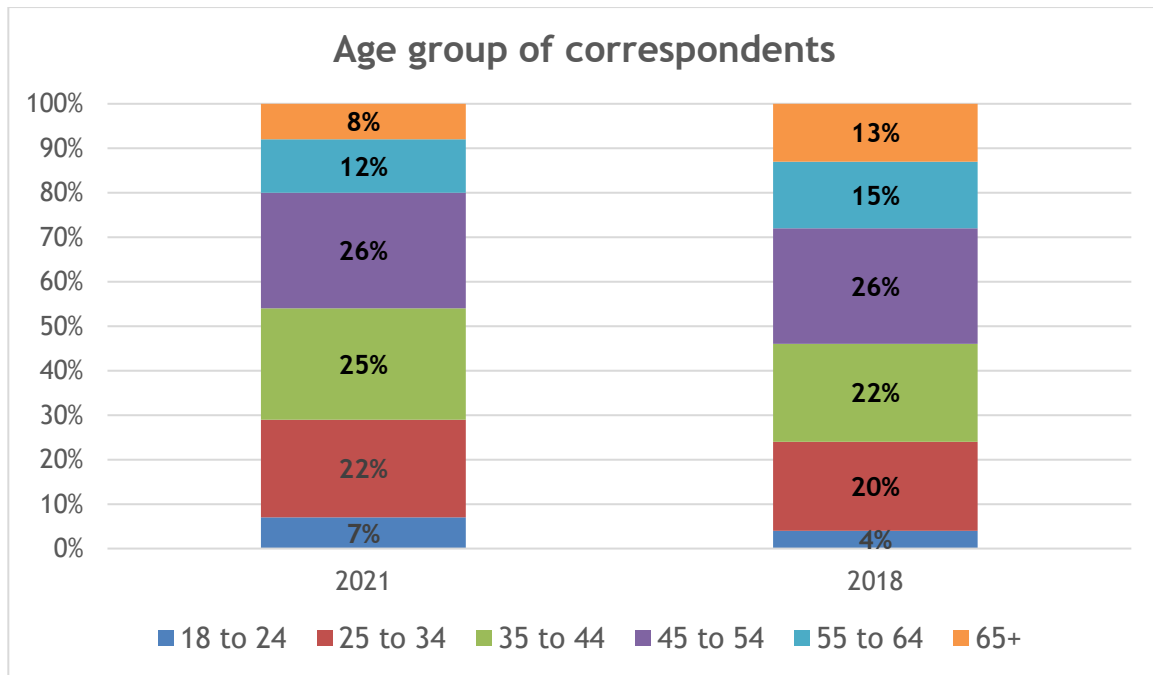
The majority of respondents were within the ‘35 to 54’ age group in both 2018 (48%) and 2021 (51%). However there is a statistically significant difference between the two years overall, with those in 2021 containing more in the younger age groups (18 to 44 years), and fewer aged 45 or over. This could reflect that cases related to family matters were prioritised within the civil justice system during the pandemic (meaning there will be relatively more of them and fewer of other types).

Most of the CLAO’s family cases during the pandemic related to children, solely or as an element of the case. This is consistent with the younger age group responding to this survey being due to the pandemic, rather than more permanent changes to CLAO’s client base. Clients were somewhat more likely than contacts to be aged 18-44 (60% of clients, compared with 52% of contacts).

¹ Not reflected in the Appendix.

² Civil Court Priorities coronavirus response 29.04.2020 - www.scotcourts.gov.uk/docs/default-source/default-document-library/urgent-civil-business---website-notice.pdf

³ Covid-19 Dashboard reports March 2021 (p3) and 2021-22 Q3 (p6), see - www.housingregulator.gov.scot/landlord-performance/national-reports/covid-19-dashboards



Respondents were slightly more likely to be White than in 2018 (94% compared with 91% in 2018). This is driven by contacts and may reflect the ethnicity of populations in and around Edinburgh (the most commonly contacted office in 2018), compared with those in and around Inverness (most commonly contacted in 2021). The 6% non-white respondents represented eight different ethno-geographic groups.

Respondents were almost identical to those in 2018 in relation to their sex. Almost two-thirds (62%) were female.

Comparisons with 2018 in relation to disability or other conditions are somewhat limited, since we asked different questions on disability in 2021 and 2018. The 2018 question asked respondents a yes/no question on whether they had a ‘long-standing illness, disability or infirmity’, plus a follow-up question on what this was. In 2021 we covered the same areas in a single question, including details of nine types of disability/condition in the answer options. We then asked all respondents whether their day to day activities were limited (due to their condition or other health related reasons, including old age).

Respondents in 2021 were far less likely to answer these questions than those in 2018 (over 20% did not answer in 2021, compared with 4% in 2018). In 2018, 45% said they had a ‘long-standing illness, disability or infirmity’. In 2021 this rose to 53% of those who responded. However in 2021, 41% of respondents⁴ (121 people) said they had a condition **and** that their day to day activities were limited⁵. This includes those who said their activities were limited ‘a little’.

In 2021, people with a condition were also more likely to report having more than one condition. In 2018 the average number of conditions was 1.4, slightly less than the 1.8 in 2021. In both 2021

⁴ Who answered both questions.

⁵ We used the two questions from Scotland’s Census 2022. Due to the way the questions were set out it is not possible to know whether day to day activities were limited due to their condition, or to something else.

and 2018 the most common health condition was a mental health disorder; 54% of all respondents with a condition in 2021, and 39% in 2018.

Looking at overall rating of the service received by CLAO for those with a disability/condition and limits on their day to day activities, shows that they are somewhat more likely than those with no condition and no limit on their day to day activities to rate the service poor or very poor. However this is not statistically significant.

Overall 15% of respondents in 2021 were care experienced, including currently care experienced. This is not significantly higher than the 2018 figure of 10%. However looking at clients, this figure is far higher (27% overall), driven by open case clients previously in care. This may be due to the nature of family cases prioritised within the justice system during the pandemic. Family cases in relation solely to children, or with a child element, will more often involve people who are care experienced. However these figures are driven by only a small number of responses.

Looking at client satisfaction with CLAO's service and the characteristics covered in the 'demographics' section showed no statistically significant differences between equality groups. However, there were significant differences in satisfaction for contacts on 'disability status' and by 'age group' ('18-44' compared with 45+).

Contacts with a disability were more likely to rate the service overall as 'poor or very poor'. Exploring the open responses to the question on 'difficulties accessing CLAO' shows that most disabled people did not specifically mention their disability as the barrier to access.

Contacts in the 18-44 age group were significantly more likely to rate CLAO's service as 'good or very good' than those aged 45+. This may be partly due to the case types that have been prioritised during the pandemic (family, especially involving children), and the younger group that these cases are most likely to be relevant to. This is discussed in the 'Methodology and sample' section above.

Summary of key findings

Most people were positive about all aspects of their service from CLAO, although satisfaction levels are often somewhat less than in 2018. Differences are likely due to the pandemic, including the fact that more complex cases have been prioritised.

For all case types, parties may have been more likely to settle out of court where they would not have done previously, meaning more complex cases went to court. In housing, evictions have been restricted, meaning that those taken to court may have been more likely to result in an eviction. The increase in the proportion of family cases may also be a factor. Compared with housing cases the outcome of the case is more likely to be a 'compromise' position, rather than 'win or lose'.

The relation to satisfaction is difficult to quantify however, since people were able to select multiple case types, and a significant proportion did not provide a usable response to this question, tables showing the responses to all the questions are provided in 'Appendix 1: Response tables'.

Figures and percentages provided in this paper relate to those who gave a valid response⁶, unless stated otherwise.

Accessing a solicitor

Telephone was the most common method for first contact with the Civil Legal Assistance Office (65%). Email was used by 13%, with a further 13% having another person contact the CLAO on their behalf (method not specified).

Clients were asked to select their single preferred method of contacting the CLAO. Telephone is by far the most preferred, with 75% selecting it. Nobody chose video-link; however at least one person mentioned all the other options, showing that they are all valued to some extent. The use of online and telephone methods for the survey may also have led to over representation of those who felt more comfortable with these methods in the survey. Comments to the open questions also addressed preferred contact methods. There were no sizeable differences in preference for either 'first' or 'preferred' contact methods by the demographic variables collected in the survey.

Overall 51% of respondents had contacted another solicitor before contacting the CLAO. Contacts were much more likely than clients to have contacted another solicitor before they contacted the civil legal assistance office (clients: 28%, contacts: 60%). Contacts were also more likely to have approached multiple solicitors before contacting CLAO. 58% of clients had only contacted one previous solicitor, for contacts this figure was 28%, with 39% having approached five or more.

Compared with 2018 figures, there is a statistically significant difference in the numbers of contacts approaching another solicitor first (43% in 2018 compared to 60% in 2021), but not in relation to clients (where the figures are almost identical to 2018). This may be due, at least partially, to contacts in the survey sample having contacted CLAO in a period when fewer advice agencies or private practice firms were open. It may also be due to the change in the types of case CLAO can take on. Since 2018, CLAO has focused on some specialist problem types; which agencies, and solicitor firms, who refer or signpost people will be aware of. Those aged 45 or above were somewhat less likely to have contacted a solicitor before contacting CLAO than those in younger age groups (18-44: 56%, 45+: 45%).

Over half of contacts (54%) said that the problem they had approached the CLAO for help with was not resolved. Despite the proportion of 'open case' clients responding, clients were considerably more likely to say that their problem was resolved (clients: 61%, contacts: 46%), as well as more likely to say it was 'fully resolved' (clients: 38%, contacts: 26%).

Satisfaction with CLAO

The majority of respondents thought the overall service they had from the CLAO was good. Perhaps unsurprisingly, clients were significantly more likely to be satisfied; overall, 84% of clients and 59% of contacts rated the service they had from the CLAO as 'good' (either 'very' or 'fairly'). Only 11 clients (10%) felt the overall service was 'poor' ('very' or 'fairly'), compared with 28% of contacts (77 people).

⁶ Did not answer 'prefer not to say', did not skip the question.

The survey did not ask people directly about why they felt the service was poor, however their suggestions for improvement are a likely indication of this. A key suggestion for improvement from this group related to more communication, including more efficient or more frequent communication, or better explanation (16 people).

Five people specifically mentioned the list of solicitors provided by CLAO, and that they had not been able to get support from the solicitors on it, with some people suggesting that the list should be regularly checked. Fourteen people mentioned wanting more help or support, which was unlikely to have been within CLAO's remit for their situation. Comments included "given me a lawyer", "find a solicitor that would help me", "advise me"; this could suggest confusion about what CLAO can and cannot provide in different circumstances.

Contact with CLAO

Both clients and contacts were asked a series of questions relating to their contact with the CLAO service. The majority of both clients and contacts were satisfied (very or fairly) on all of the satisfaction measures. Clients were consistently more satisfied than contacts across all of these questions. This was also the case in the previous survey, where we concluded "this may be as expected due to CLAO clients having more interaction with the CLAO service than contacts". For comparable questions, the 2021 results are very similar to those from 2018.

Client satisfaction levels with contact ranged from 84% (on two measures: "the number of times the CLAO contacted you to speak to you about your problem" and "the way the CLAO communicated with you; for example, by telephone or email"), up to 92% ("How long it took for the CLAO to respond to your initial enquiry").

Contacts were least satisfied with the number of times the CLAO contacted them to speak to them about their problem (52% satisfied, 26% dissatisfied), and most satisfied with the ease of contacting the CLAO (75% found it very easy or fairly easy, 16% very or fairly difficult). The difference in satisfaction between contacts and clients was greatest in relation to the following measures:

- number of times CLAO contacted you to speak to you about your problem (clients 84%, contacts 52%)
- CLAO's actions and that they did what they said they would do (clients 89%, contacts 58%)
- time it took CLAO to tell you that you would/would not be taken on as a client (clients 89%, contacts 58%).

Satisfaction with their CLAO solicitor

Clients were asked a series of thirteen questions related to activities provided by their solicitor. Despite the pandemic, over 75% of respondents were satisfied on each measure. Agreement overall with the statements ranged from 77% ("My solicitor completed tasks related to my case in the time they said they would") to 87% ("My solicitor made me feel that I could ask them questions" and "My solicitor explained things in a way I could understand").

On most of the measures, closed case clients were less likely to agree, and considerably more likely to select the 'neither' option, than open case clients. The difference may be partly due to priorities in the civil justice system during the pandemic, where family cases, especially those involving children, were prioritised. Closed case clients are more likely to have family cases, with open case clients more likely to have housing problems. Due to the nature of the outcomes,

which is more likely to be a ‘compromise’ position in family cases, especially involving children, the closed case group may be less satisfied with their outcome, compared with other case types such as housing.

Compared to a similar set of questions in 2018, overall agreement, and agreement by open case clients, was mostly lower (‘other office staff were helpful to me’ is the exception, with 78% agreement in both years). In 2018 agreement ranged from 78% to 97%, with agreement to 14 of the 17 measures in 2018 above 90%. Given that satisfaction with contact with CLAO was very similar to that in 2018, this suggests the experience of their solicitor has been less positive during the pandemic period. Depending on when the clients were being supported by CLAO this might be due to higher than normal staff absences and vacancies in 2018 and 2019, or to do with changes, delays and uncertainties in the civil justice system in 2020 and 2021, including court closures, which impacted on what solicitors were able to do for their clients.

Tables 2 and 3 below illustrate overall agreement, agreement by open and closed case clients (as noted above there was a consistent difference between these groups, with open clients consistently more satisfied than closed clients), and comparisons with 2018 where available.

Table 2: Satisfaction with solicitor (asked to clients only)

		Strongly agree or agree	Neither	Strongly disagree or disagree
My solicitor explained things in a way I could understand (94% in 2018)	All	87%	7%	5%
	Open	90%	7%	3%
	Closed	82%	8%	10%
I was kept informed of the progress of my case (85% in 2018)	All	81%	10%	9%
	Open	83%	8%	8%
	Closed	76%	13%	11%
My solicitor explained how legal aid works (92% in 2018)	All	86%	8%	5%
	Open	90%	6%	4%
	Closed	79%	13%	5%
My solicitor listened to what I had to say (94% in 2018)	All	86%	6%	7%
	Open	90%	6%	4%
	Closed	79%	8%	13%
My solicitor made me feel that I could ask them questions (97% in 2018)	All	87%	6%	7%
	Open	92%	4%	4%
	Closed	79%	8%	13%
It was easy to get hold of my solicitor (not asked in 2018)	All	83%	7%	10%
	Open	86%	6%	9%
	Closed	79%	8%	13%
My solicitor took enough time to deal with any questions I had about my case (94% in 2018)	All	80%	14%	6%
	Open	85%	11%	4%
	Closed	70%	19%	11%
	All	81%	14%	5%

		Strongly agree or agree	Neither	Strongly disagree or disagree
My solicitor was honest with me, even if it meant telling me things I didn't want to hear (96% in 2018)	Open	87%	10%	3%
	Closed	69%	23%	9%
My solicitor completed tasks related to my case in the time they said they would (91% in 2018)	All	77%	13%	10%
	Open	83%	7%	10%
	Closed	64%	25%	11%

Table 3: Agreement with service statements (asked to clients only)

		Strongly agree or agree	Neither	Strongly disagree or disagree
I felt my solicitor did everything they could for me (91% in 2018)	All	79%	10%	10%
	Open	84%	6%	10%
	Closed	69%	19%	8%
I was confident that my solicitor knew what they were doing (94% in 2018)	All	80%	12%	8%
	Open	86%	7%	7%
	Closed	67%	22%	11%
I felt confident that my solicitor kept things moving at the right pace (86% in 2018)	All	78%	11%	10%
	Open	85%	6%	10%
	Closed	66%	23%	11%
Other civil legal assistance office staff were helpful (78% in 2018)	All	78%	13%	9%
	Open	89%	3%	8%
	Closed	59%	29%	12%

Reflections on experience of using CLAO

The survey asked all respondents for comments about what the CLAO did particularly well and to make suggestions for improving the service. Clients were considerably more likely to comment on what they felt was done well (74% of clients) than to suggest improvements (19%). Contacts were slightly less likely to note what was done well (38%) than to suggest improvements (41%).

86 clients and 122 contacts provided comments on what they felt the CLAO did particularly well. The comments seem to cover all aspects of the service, from those related to outcomes (such as the action taken or information provided) to softer customer service supports (such as understanding and reassurance). An analysis of the comments suggests that key service elements are:

- **Communication and explanation:** “Quick at dealing with my case and any queries or questions”, “explained things at a level for me to understand”, “office was fantastic at keeping me updated and letting me know everything that was happening”, “excellent service, explained everything, really pleased with them”.
- **Efficiency and speed:** “Very fast with their communication”, “Taken case on within a couple days”, “quickly getting matter resolved”, “helped to get my house quickly, and really helped me”.
- **Action taken:** “now living in a nice house in a nice area. Would not be here if not for them”, “They gave the right information to me to move forward, very helpful”, “legal system confuses me and they answered all the questions I need to know”.

Suggestions for improvement were also wide ranging. In total 22 clients and 132 contacts responded to this question. Key themes in relation to this question are:

- **Communication:** This covered a range of communication issues. For instance, those relevant to general service or procedure: “Due to Covid-19, nobody answered the phone”, “If people go off sick they need to give case over to someone else”, “I think there should be a follow up call or email to make sure I got what I needed” and “the team seems too rushed, they do not seem to communicate as a team”.
- **More specific communication issues included timeliness:** “don't take weeks to get back to me”, “email response was very slow, so could be much quicker” and type of communication.
- Those who commented on type of communication often expressed a preference for telephone, “Rather than email, more telephone calls”, “Call me to speak”. One CLAO contact noted suffering from poor mental health, leading to difficulty communicating. They said: “there needs to be more support for individuals like myself that do not have the capacity to do this on their own... a telephone call... might have saved about six months of emails for a 30 minute chat”.
- **Information:** For contacts this was mostly about the accuracy of the sources of support they are provided with, in particular the list of solicitors they were given: “A better list of solicitors that are taking on cases”, “Better signposting to more legal companies”, “I contacted the solicitors on the list provided, but none of them did legal aid”.
- Clients mentioned a wider range of information related issues, “Keep me better informed about what is happening”, “They could have kept me more involved, felt they lost interest”.
- **Explanation:** a number of people, mainly contacts, felt they would have liked more information about legal aid, legal processes or terminology: “Could have explained how civil legal aid worked and that you can sometimes have to pay it back”, “Could have explained more fully how it all worked at initial stage”, “at the beginning I was told to give ‘instructions’ to my solicitors, but the thing is I had no idea what that meant”.

Overall, 58 people (13% of respondents) felt that something to do with their personal characteristics or situation made it more difficult for them to access CLAO services. The majority of these were contacts (49 people), although nine clients also thought this. 47 people described what it was about their personal characteristics or situation made it more difficult. There were a variety of different experiences, although only a few people went into detail.

The most common reasons were to do with communication difficulties (specifically mentioned by eight people). In total 22 people (just under half of those who described what made it difficult and 5% of all respondents) suggested a physical or mental health condition, neurodiversity or disability was a barrier for them. For example: “My autism means I take things literally and miss social cues. Problems expressing my problems or clarifying what they are”, “Suffer with severe depression and anxiety”.

Conclusions and next steps

The results overall are positive, suggesting that the service is generally meeting customers' requirements. The findings are also largely similar to those from 2018, suggesting that the pandemic has had a limited impact on experiences of using a CLAO solicitor.

The analysis of findings did not show any significant differences in overall satisfaction due to equalities characteristics for CLAO clients. Disabled and older CLAO contacts were more likely to be dissatisfied however. The CLAO have limited interactions with contacts, but we will consider how to ensure we meet the needs of all service users. For instance, research with visitors is planned for the shared CLAO and PDSO premises in Inverness. This includes ‘potential equalities issues associated with the physical office space’ as an area of research interest.

The findings from this research will be used more widely, in developing the next strategic plan for the Civil Legal Assistance Office.

Further information

SLAB’s research publications are available on our website at: www.slab.org.uk/corporate-information/publications/research-publications/.

If you would like further information about this research please contact SLAB’s Research Team at research@slab.org.uk.



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Appendix 1: Response tables

Clients

Q1: Which legal assistance office did you first contact?

	Number	Percent
Aberdeen	29	25%
Argyll and Bute	1	1%
Edinburgh	49	42%
Inverness	37	32%

Q2: How did you first contact the civil legal assistance office?

	Number	Percent	Valid percent
Telephone	82	71%	78%
Email	10	9%	10%
In person	0	0%	0%
Letter	0	0%	0%
Other	4	3%	4%
Someone else contacted the civil legal assistance office on my behalf	9	8%	9%
Don't remember	10	9%	
Not answered	1	1%	

Q3: What is your preferred way to contact the civil legal assistance office?

	Number	Percent	Valid percent
Telephone	86	74%	75%
Email	25	22%	22%
In person	1	1%	1%
Letter	1	1%	1%
Other	2	2%	2%

Q4: How satisfied were you with the following ways of contacting the civil legal assistance office?

	Very or fairly satisfied	Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied	Very or fairly dissatisfied	Have not used	Don't know/ no answer
Telephone	99 (85%)	9 (8%)	3 (3%)	3 (3%)	2 (2%)
Email	57 (59%)	4 (4%)	3 (3%)	18 (19%)	14 (14%)
Letter	20 (17%)	2 (2%)	4 (3%)	67 (58%)	23 (20%)
In person	6 (5%)	5 (4%)	3 (3%)	74 (64%)	28 (24%)
Videolink	8 (7%)	4 (3%)	3 (3%)	73 (63%)	28 (24%)

Q5: What were the main problems that made you seek help from the civil legal assistance office?
Please select all that apply.

	Number	Percent of responses	Percent of problems
Housing and homelessness	43	38%	31%
Family - contact and children	26	23%	19%
Debt, money and tax	12	11%	9%
Children's hearing/child protection/permanency	10	9%	7%
Family - divorce and separation	7	6%	5%
Family - domestic violence	5	4%	4%
Mental health and adults with incapacity	4	4%	3%
A criminal matter	3	3%	2%
Employment law	1	1%	1%
Death related matters	1	1%	1%
Immigration, asylum and nationality	0	0%	0%
Death related matters	1	1%	1%
Other (please say what)	27	24%	19%
Not answered	2	2%	

Q6: Did you contact another solicitor before you contacted the civil legal assistance office?

	Number	Percent	Valid percent
Yes	31	27%	28%
No	80	69%	72%
Don't Know	5	4%	
Not answered	0	0%	

Q6a: How many solicitors did you approach before you contacted the civil legal assistance office?

	Number	Percent
1	18	58%
2 to 4	8	26%
5 or more	5	16%
Not answered	0	0%

Q7: Is the problem you approached the civil legal assistance office for help with now resolved?

	Number	Percent	Valid percent
Yes, fully resolved	42	36%	38%
Yes, partially resolved	26	22%	23%
No, not resolved	44	38%	39%
Don't know	4	3%	
Not answered	0	0%	

Q8: Thinking about your contact with the civil legal assistance office, how satisfied or dissatisfied were you with the following:

Valid responses plus numbers responding don't know or not answering.

	Very or fairly satisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Very or fairly dissatisfied	Don't know	No answer
How long it took for the CLAO to respond to your initial enquiry	102 (92%)	5 (5%)	4 (4%)	0	5
How clearly the CLAO explained what would happen next	96 (87%)	8 (7%)	6 (5%)	0	6
How clearly the CLAO explained what they could or could not do to help you	99 (91%)	4 (4%)	6 (6%)	1	6
The time it took the CLAO to tell you that you would be taken on as a client	98 (89%)	5 (5%)	7 (6%)	0	6
The CLAO's actions, and that they do what they say they will do	97 (89%)	5 (5%)	7 (6%)	1	6
The number of times the CLAO has contacted you to speak to you about your problem	90 (84%)	9 (8%)	8 (7%)	2	7
The way the CLAO communicates with you; for example, by telephone or email	90 (84%)	8 (7%)	9 (8%)	2	7

Q9: How easy or difficult is it to contact the civil legal assistance office?

Valid responses plus numbers responding don't know or not answering.

Very or fairly easy	Neither easy nor difficult	Very or fairly difficult	Don't know	No answer
102 (92%)	5 (5%)	4 (4%)	0	5

Q10: How far do you agree or disagree with these statements about your civil legal assistance office solicitor?

Valid responses plus numbers responding don't know or not answering.

	Agree or strongly agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree or strongly disagree	Don't know	No answer
My solicitor cares about me and my case	93 (85%)	10 (9%)	7 (6%)	1	5
My solicitor understood my individual situation	92 (84%)	8 (7%)	10 (9%)	1	5
My solicitor made me feel at ease	94 (85%)	7 (6%)	9 (8%)	1	5
My solicitor treated me with respect	94 (85%)	9 (8%)	7 (6%)	1	5
I trusted my solicitor to act in my best interests	93 (85%)	7 (6%)	10 (9%)	1	5

Q11: How far do you agree or disagree with these statements about how your solicitor and the civil legal assistance office communicate with you?

Valid responses plus numbers responding don't know or not answering.

	Agree or strongly agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree or strongly disagree	Don't know	No answer
My solicitor explained things in a way I could understand	97 (87%)	8 (7%)	6 (5%)	1	4
I was kept informed of the progress of my case	89 (81%)	11 (10%)	10 (9%)	2	4
My solicitor explained how legal aid works	95 (86%)	9 (8%)	6 (5%)	1	5
My solicitor listened to what I had to say	94 (86%)	7 (6%)	8 (7%)	1	6
My solicitor made me feel that I could ask them questions	95 (86%)	6 (6%)	8 (7%)	2	5
It was easy to get hold of my solicitor	89 (83%)	7 (7%)	11 (10%)	4	5

Q12: How far do you agree or disagree with these statements about how your civil legal assistance office solicitor is dealing with your case?

Valid responses plus numbers responding don't know or not answering.

	Agree or strongly agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree or strongly disagree	Don't know	No answer
My solicitor took enough time to deal with any questions I had about my case	87 (80%)	15 (14%)	7 (6%)	1	6
My solicitor was honest with me, even if it meant telling me things I didn't want to hear	86 (81%)	15 (14%)	5 (5%)	2	8
My solicitor completed tasks related to my case in the time they said they would	83 (77%)	14 (13%)	11 (10%)	1	7
I felt my solicitor did everything they could for me	84 (79%)	11 (10%)	11 (10%)	3	7
I was confident that my solicitor knew what they were doing	86 (80%)	13 (12%)	9 (8%)	1	7
I felt confident that my solicitor kept things moving at the right pace	83 (78%)	12 (11%)	11 (10%)	2	8
Other civil legal assistance office staff were helpful	74 (78%)	12 (13%)	9 (9%)	13	8

Q13: Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied were you with the outcome of your case?
 Asked to closed case clients only

	Number	Percent	Valid percent
Very or fairly satisfied	25	64%	69%
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	5	13%	14%
Very or fairly dissatisfied	6	15%	17%
Don't know	3	8%	
Not answered	0	0%	

Q14: Overall, how would you rate the service you had from the civil legal assistance office?

	Number	Percent	Valid percent
Very or fairly good	93	80%	84%
Neither good nor poor	7	6%	6%
Very or fairly poor	11	9%	10%
Don't know	1	1%	
Not answered	4	3%	

Demographic section questions - clients

D1: What is your sex?

	Number	Percent	Valid percent
Male	74	64%	67%
Female	37	32%	33%
Prefer not to say	1	1%	
Not answered	4	3%	

D2: What age range are you in?

	Number	Percent	Valid percent
18 to 24	7	6%	6%
25 to 34	30	26%	28%
35 to 44	28	24%	26%
45 to 54	28	24%	26%
55 to 64	11	9%	10%
65+	5	4%	5%
Prefer not to say	3	3%	
Not answered	4	3%	

D3: Do you have any of the following, which have lasted, or are expected to last, at least 12 months? Tick all that apply.

	Number	Percent of respondents (N=116)	Percent of valid respondents (N=91)
Learning disability	4	3%	4%
Learning difficulty	0	0%	0%
Developmental disorder	1	1%	1%

Physical disability	12	10%	13%
Mental health condition (a condition that affects your emotional, physical, and mental wellbeing)	35	30%	38%
Long term illness, disease or condition	23	20%	25%
Deafness or partial hearing loss	1	1%	1%
Blindness or partial sight loss	3	3%	3%
Full or partial loss of voice or difficulty speaking	0	0%	0%
Other condition	3	3%	3%
No condition	38	33%	42%
Prefer not to say	19	16%	
Not answered	6	5%	

D4: Are your day-to-day activities limited because of a health problem or disability which has lasted, or is expected to last, at least 12 months? Please include problems related to old age.

	Number	Percent	Valid percent
Yes, limited a lot	38	33%	36%
Yes, limited a little	24	21%	23%
No	43	37%	41%
Prefer not to say	7	6%	
Not answered	4	3%	

D5: What is your ethnic group? Please tick one box only⁷

	Number	Percent	Valid percent
White - Scottish	83	72%	78%
White - Other British	11	9%	10%
African, Scottish African or British African	4	3%	4%
White - Any Other	2	2%	2%
White - Polish	1	1%	1%
Asian, Scottish Asian or British Asian - Pakistani, Scottish Pakistani or British Pakistani	1	1%	1%
Asian, Scottish Asian or British Asian - Indian, Scottish Indian or British Indian	1	1%	1%
Asian, Scottish Asian or British Asian - Bangladeshi, Scottish Bangladeshi or British Bangladeshi	1	1%	1%
Asian, Scottish Asian or British Asian - Chinese, Scottish Chinese or British Chinese	1	1%	1%

⁷ Answer options not selected by any respondents are not included in the table. This question, and the answer options, used the wording from the ethnicity question in Scotland's Census 2022.

Other Ethnic Group Other (please select and write in below if you want)	1	1%	1%
Prefer not to say	6	5%	
Not answered	4	3%	

D6: We would like to know whether you are currently, or ever have been, 'looked after' by a Local Authority, including continuing care to age 21. Which of the following applies to you?

	Number	Percent	Valid percent
Currently 'looked after' by a Local Authority	7	6%	9%
Have previously been 'looked after' by a Local Authority	14	12%	18%
Never been 'looked after' by a Local Authority	57	49%	73%
Prefer not to say	25	22%	
Not answered	13	11%	

D7: Do you think anything about your situation or personal characteristics made it more difficult for you to access CLAO services?

	Number	Percent	Valid percent
Yes	9	8%	9%
No	96	83%	91%
Don't know	6	5%	
Not answered	5	4%	

Contacts

Q1: Which legal assistance office did you first contact?

	Number	Percent
Aberdeen	104	33%
Argyll and Bute	5	2%
Edinburgh	54	17%
Inverness	157	49%

Q2: How did you first contact the civil legal assistance office?

	Number	Percent	Valid percent
Telephone	201	63%	66%
Email	45	14%	15%
Letter	4	1%	1%
In person	6	2%	2%
Other	4	1%	1%
Someone else contacted the civil legal assistance office on my behalf	44	14%	14%
Don't remember	10	3%	
Not answered	6	2%	

Q3: What were the main problems that made you seek help from the civil legal assistance office?
Please select all that apply.

	Number	Percent of responses	Percent of problems
Family - contact and children	104	33%	28%
Family - divorce and separation	57	18%	15%
Housing and homelessness	34	11%	9%
A criminal matter	21	7%	6%
Children's hearing / child protection / permanency	20	6%	5%
Debt, money and tax	17	5%	5%
Family - domestic violence	14	4%	4%
Mental health and adults with incapacity	12	4%	3%
Employment law	8	3%	2%
Immigration, asylum and nationality	4	1%	1%
Death related matters	3	1%	1%
Other (please say what)	80	25%	21%
Not answered	9	3%	

Q4: Did you contact another solicitor before you contacted the civil legal assistance office?

	Number	Percent	Valid percent
Yes	171	53%	60%
No	113	35%	40%
Don't know	32	10%	
Not answered	4	1%	

Q4a: How many solicitors did you approach before you contacted the civil legal assistance office?

	Number	Percent	Valid percent
1	48	28%	28%
2 to 4	56	33%	33%
5 or more	66	39%	39%
Not answered	1	1%	

Q5: Did you contact an advice agency before you contacted the civil legal assistance office?

	Number	Percent	Valid percent
Yes	117	37%	42%
No	162	51%	58%
Don't know	36	11%	
Not answered	5	2%	

Q5a: Which agencies did you approach before you contacted the civil legal assistance office?
Please select all that apply.

	Number	Percent	Valid percent
Citizens Advice Bureau	98	84%	84%
Law Centre	18	15%	15%

Shelter Scotland	11	9%	9%
Money Advice Service	3	3%	3%
Other	18	15%	15%
Not answered	1	1%	84%

Q6: What happened after you contacted the civil legal assistance office?

	Number	Percent	Valid percent
The civil legal assistance office put me in touch with a solicitor	82	26%	32%
The civil legal assistance office gave me information about services which might be able to help me	80	25%	31%
Communication stopped between me and the civil legal assistance office	19	6%	7%
The civil legal assistance office put me in touch with an advice service (for example, Citizens Advice)	13	4%	5%
I didn't follow up my initial enquiry with the civil legal assistance office	7	2%	3%
Other (please give details below)	59	18%	23%
Don't know/Don't remember	48	15%	
Not answered	12	4%	

Q7: Is the problem you approached the civil legal assistance office for help with now resolved?

	Number	Percent	Valid percent
Yes, fully resolved	81	25%	26%
Yes, partially resolved	59	18%	19%
No, not resolved	167	52%	54%
Don't know	10	3%	
Not answered	3	1%	

Q8: Thinking about your contact with the civil legal assistance office, how satisfied or dissatisfied were you with the following:

Valid responses plus numbers responding don't know or not answering.

	Very or fairly satisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Very or fairly dissatisfied	Don't know	No answer
How long it took for the CLAO to respond to your initial enquiry	192 (71%)	33 (12%)	47 (17%)	7	41
How clearly the CLAO explained what would happen next	161 (64%)	39 (15%)	53 (21%)	14	53
How clearly the CLAO explained what they could or could not do to help you	165 (63%)	39 (15%)	60 (23%)	12	44

The time it took the CLAO to tell you that you would be taken on as a client	129 (58%)	52 (23%)	42 (19%)	36	61
The CLAO's actions, and that they do what they say they will do	132 (58%)	47 (21%)	49 (21%)	30	62
The number of times the CLAO has contacted you to speak to you about your problem	126 (52%)	53 (22%)	64 (26%)	24	53
The way the CLAO communicates with you; for example, by telephone or email	154 (62%)	50 (20%)	45 (18%)	21	50

Q9: How easy or difficult is it to contact the civil legal assistance office?

Valid responses plus numbers responding don't know or not answering.

Very or fairly easy	Neither easy nor difficult	Very or fairly difficult	Don't know	No answer
204 (75%)	25 (9%)	43 (16%)	10	38

Q10: Overall, how would you rate the service you had from the civil legal assistance office?

	Number	Percent	Valid percent
Very or fairly good	162	51%	59%
Neither good nor poor	34	11%	12%
Very or fairly poor	77	25%	28%
Don't know	12	4%	
Not answered	35	11%	

Demographic section questions - contacts

D1: What is your sex?

	Number	Percent	Valid percent
Male	163	51%	58%
Female	117	37%	42%
Prefer not to say	7	2%	
Not answered	32	10%	

D2: What age range are you in?

	Number	Percent	Valid percent
18 to 24	20	6%	7%
25 to 34	56	18%	20%
35 to 44	69	22%	25%
45 to 54	70	22%	25%
55 to 64	36	11%	13%
65+	24	8%	9%
Prefer not to say	13	4%	
Not answered	32	10%	

D3: Do you have any of the following, which have lasted, or are expected to last, at least 12 months? Tick all that apply.

	Number	Percent of respondents (N=320)	Percent of valid respondents (N=222)
Learning disability	63	20%	28%
Learning difficulty	56	18%	25%
Developmental disorder	32	10%	14%
Physical disability	17	5%	8%
Mental health condition (a condition that affects your emotional, physical, and mental wellbeing)	14	4%	6%
Long term illness, disease or condition	11	3%	5%
Deafness or partial hearing loss	9	3%	4%
Blindness or partial sight loss	3	1%	1%
Full or partial loss of voice or difficulty speaking	0	0%	0%
Other condition	8	3%	4%
No condition	108	34%	49%
Prefer not to say	55	17%	
Not answered	43	13%	

D4: Are your day-to-day activities limited because of a health problem or disability which has lasted, or is expected to last, at least 12 months? Please include problems related to old age.

	Number	Percent	Valid percent
Yes, limited a lot	61	19%	26%
Yes, limited a little	48	15%	20%
No	126	39%	54%
Prefer not to say	46	14%	
Not answered	39	12%	

D5: What is your ethnic group?⁸

	Number	%	Valid %
White - Scottish	195	61%	72%
White - Other British	42	13%	16%
White - Polish	10	3%	4%
White - Any Other	8	3%	3%
African, Scottish African or British African	3	1%	1%
Asian, Scottish Asian or British Asian - Indian, Scottish Indian or British Indian	3	1%	1%
Other Ethnic Group - Other	3	1%	1%
White - Irish	2	1%	1%

⁸ Answer options not selected by any respondents are not included in the table. This question, and the answer options, used the wording from the ethnicity question in Scotland's Census 2022.

Asian, Scottish Asian or British Asian - Chinese, Scottish Chinese or British Chinese	1	0%	0%
Caribbean or Black	1	0%	0%
Other Ethnic Group - Arab, Scottish Arab or British Arab	1	0%	0%
Prefer not to say	18	6%	
Not answered	33	10%	

D6: We would like to know whether you are currently, or ever have been, 'looked after' by a Local Authority, including continuing care to age 21. Which of the following applies to you?

	Number	Percent	Valid percent
Currently 'looked after' by a Local Authority	5	2%	2%
Have previously been 'looked after' by a Local Authority	20	6%	9%
Never been 'looked after' by a Local Authority	200	63%	89%
Prefer not to say	48	15%	
Not answered	47	15%	

D7: Do you think anything about your situation or personal characteristics made it more difficult for you to access CLAO services?

	Number	Percent	Valid percent
Yes	49	15%	21%
No	189	59%	79%
Don't know	46	14%	
Not answered	36	11%	