



Equality Outcomes Plan 2021-23

Final progress update

June 2023

The Scottish Legal Aid Board

www.slab.org.uk

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Contacts

For more information about our equalities work please contact our Equalities team:
equalities@slab.org.uk

For information on accessing this report in an alternative format please contact our Communications team:
communications@slab.org.uk



To ensure our websites comply with accessibility requirements and regulations we undertake regular scanning to identify any issues.

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

Context for our equality outcomes

As a public body, we are legally required under the Equality Act (2010) to consider equality in our day-to-day business. We are required to demonstrate that we pay due regard to the three aims of the public sector equality duty (PSED):

- 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.

Every three years we publish a set of Equality Outcomes that help us fulfil our duties. These outcomes are developed based on evidence, including literature review, consultation with internal and external stakeholders, and our leadership team.

Our previous set of [equality outcomes](#) were developed and published in 2021 and focused on:

- 1) Ensuring our services are accessible to people with disabilities and people who speak languages other than English, and funding of appropriate communication support,
- 2) Gathering and using equality data to inform our policies and improve our services,
- 3) Ensuring all employees maintain good mental and physical health during the Covid-19 pandemic and recovery phase.

In order for us to achieve these outcomes we developed a plan with 10 workstreams, an identified owner and a timeline. What follows is a summary of the work we have accomplished to meet our equality outcomes.

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:

Disability, Race

Equality Duty deliverables:

advance equality of opportunity,
eliminate discrimination

Equality outcome 1



GALA project: We've reviewed our taxation standards and accounts



- Established an interpreting and translation policy, as well as a policy statement on costs and time associated with travel
- Intention is to improve access to legal aid for all customers including those with extra needs.

We've implemented a customer communication needs policy



- Developed training and guidance for staff to ask customers about any communication needs to help us respond quickly and provide information/service appropriately
- Updated our letters to encourage customers to tell us about any communication needs
- Intention is to help people with disabilities and people who speak languages other than English to access our service.

We've developed a corporate customer service policy



- Reflects our commitment to providing the best possible service to our customer, solicitors and others we work with
- Intention is to link to our corporate values and help us attain high standards with regards to communication, performance, how we interact with others and how we expect others to treat us.

We've reviewed our template letters



- Ensures that they meet a high standard with regards to customer service.



We have completed several workstreams which contribute to the achievement of our first outcome. In addition, we have developed decision makers' guidance and solicitors' guidance for all areas of accounts assessment. The policies are accompanied by equality impact assessments to ensure we meet the aims of the public sector equality duty.

Our application form, which is available on our legal aid online system, encourages solicitors to inform us about any communication needs their client may have so we can support them. We can provide language translations of letters or emails, we can engage interpreters, or provide communication in different formats and through a variety of different channels to meet our customers' communication needs.

Equality outcome 2:

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

Relevant to the protected characteristics of:

Age, Disability, Race, Sex

Equality Duty deliverables:

advance equality of opportunity,
eliminate discrimination

Equality outcome 2



Gathering and using applicant equality data



- Engaged with the profession to encourage gathering equality data from applicants which helps us understand the needs of our customers and shape our policies to improve our service.

Developed an applicant module to capture equality data



- Functions as a reporting tool to help us effectively use equality data gathered and inform our work.

Improved identification, reporting and use of equality related complaints



- Reporting equality related complaints helps us identify issues or impacts specifically related to equality circumstances, which helps us to improve our service for all customers.

Implemented a new case management system for client legal services and developed key equality measures



- Improving the collection of equality data.



We overhauled the way we gather equality data from legal aid applicants and for direct clients of our solicitor services.

We developed an applicant module in Legal Aid Online, implemented a new case management system for Client Legal Services¹ which captures applicant equality data and any communication needs of the applicants in line with our corporate policy.

We have provided guidance to explain why the collection of equalities data is important to us and how we are going to use it. Understanding our customers' needs helps us improve our service.

This work is going to be progressed further in our new [Equality Outcomes plan 2023-26](#).

¹ Our corporate structure and the teams in Client Legal Services and Corporate Services can be found on our website: www.slab.org.uk/corporate-information/our-people/senior-management

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, Pregnancy and Maternity, Race, Sex
(groups most affected by Covid-19)

Equality Duty deliverables:

advance equality of opportunity,
eliminate discrimination,
foster good relations

Equality outcome 3



Building capacity on equality in corporate services teams



- Raising awareness and sharing knowledge related to equality issues within the corporate services area
- Priority equality groups were those affected by Covid-19, with a particular focus on gender equality and ways to improve the gender pay gap.

Designing a New Working Environment: Covid-19 recovery



- Our response to the global pandemic and our aim to support staff mental and physical health by enabling a safe continuation of homeworking and return to an office environment.



We implemented several strands of work to support our employees' mental and physical health. Staff completed health and safety assessments for both home and office working, and we provided employees with IT equipment and furniture to ensure a safe work environment that suits people's needs.

Equality played an integral part in designing our new work environment. We want our staff to be able to choose whether they prefer to work from home or in the office. Therefore we provide pool laptops and specialised equipment to those who need it. Helpdesk staff are available to anyone who requires assistance, and our HR wellbeing posts inform and support staff whenever they require it.

More information

If you would like any additional information about our progress, please contact the equalities team at equalities@slab.org.uk.

We have published our new [equality outcomes for 2023-2026](#).