Equality Outcomes Plan 2023-26

Year one progress report

June 2024

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:
www.slab.org.uk/accessibility-statement.

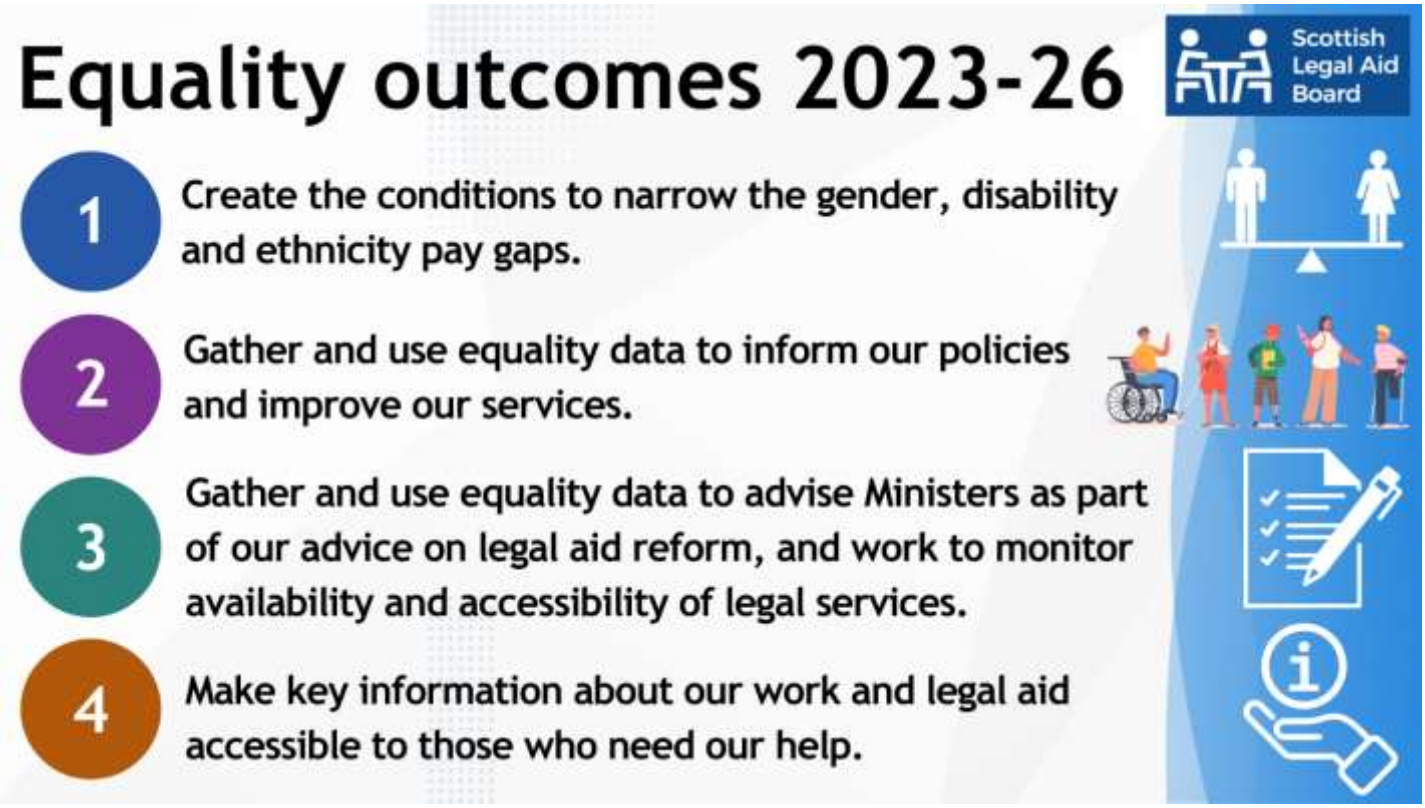
Information about the Scottish Legal Aid Board is available on our website:
www.slab.org.uk/corporate-information.

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 current set of equality outcomes were developed and published in 2023 and focus on narrowing pay gaps, improving our equality data gathering to inform policies and improve services, as well as advise Ministers on legal aid reform, and making key information on legal aid fully accessible.

To achieve these outcomes, we developed a plan with 10 workstreams, each with an identified owner and a timeline.

What follows is a summary of the work we have accomplished in the first year (2023-24) of the Equality Outcomes Plan.

Equality outcome 1: Create the conditions to narrow the gender, disability and ethnicity pay gaps.	
Relevant to the protected characteristics of:	Sex, Disability, Race
Equality Duty deliverables:	• Advance equality of opportunity • Eliminate discrimination

What we have achieved so far

Workstream 1: Job Evaluation and Grading Pay Review - Complete

We carried out a full pay and grading review. The model was approved for implementation by the Scottish Government as of 1 April 2024. This ensures that we have a fair and equitable system to compare roles of equal value, and that the assessment is robust and consistently applied.

We reviewed and benchmarked our salary scale to guarantee pay cohesion. The model has now been implemented and results have been shared with the workforce.

Workstream 2: Development of a workforce planning framework - In progress

Objective: Our aim is to develop a workforce planning framework that will set out how we will seek to ensure that we have a workforce of the right size and with the right skills to enable us to deliver our corporate objectives.

Progress: We designed a workforce planning methodology, with a plan to develop a corporate workforce plan in the 2024-25 financial year.

Equality outcome 2: Gather and use equality data to inform our policies and improve our services.	
Relevant to the protected characteristics of:	All protected characteristics
Equality Duty deliverables:	• Advance equality of opportunity • Eliminate discrimination

What we have achieved so far

Workstream 3: Gathering and use of applicant equality data - In progress

Objective: Gathering, supporting, and promoting equalities data analysis. This includes:

- reviewing the percentage of disclosure across the relevant protected characteristics and devising communications or engagement as needed to improve disclosure
- analysing our Operational Performance Overview Reporting by relevant protected characteristics

Progress: We have completed a first draft of the national statistics on ethnicity and disability, which is due to undergo quality assurance. We have also developed templates for Client Legal Services to report on their data.

Workstream 4: Gathering and use of client equality data for Client Legal Services – In progress

Year 1 Objective:

- Reviewing percentage of disclosure across the relevant protected characteristics - Complete
- Developing reports and using data on customer demographics and needs in Equality Impact Assessments for Client Legal Services – In Progress, to be continued in Years 2 and 3.

Progress: We have produced a report for the 2023-24 financial year with equality data from Client Legal Services applicants.

Following this, quarterly reports will be produced for the Client Legal Services leadership team and a full year report will be produced at each year's end. All data and information will be shared with the Equalities team and used for the development of Equalities Impact Assessments.

Workstream 5: Gathering and use of staff equality data – In progress

Objective: Enabling capture of equalities data at recruitment stage.

Progress: We have recruited a product manager and are looking to roll this out in the financial year 2024-25.

Workstream 6: Structured plan to identify improvements in coverage of equality information available to SLAB – In progress

Objective: Identify priority groups and topics where research work will aid our understanding of any difference in experience and create a plan to improve coverage of equality information.

Progress: We developed a plan to review gaps in our research, which includes an assessment of equality groups and engagement with managers in 2024-25. A structured plan will be in place for the corporate plan 2026-29.

Equality outcome 3:

Gather and use equality data to advise Ministers as part of our advice on legal aid reform, and work to monitor availability and accessibility of legal services

Relevant to the protected characteristics of:	All protected characteristics
Equality Duty deliverables:	• Advance equality of opportunity • Eliminate discrimination

What we have achieved so far

Workstream 7: Advice to Ministers on legal aid reform or improvement includes relevant equalities assessments as appropriate – In progress

Objective: Provide Scottish Government with advice on preferred options for reform by carrying out equality impact assessments.

Progress: Our advice to Scottish Government on legal aid reform has included full equalities impact assessments, for example on standardised discretionary allowances.
Next steps: We will submit detailed advice on our proposals for legal aid reform once our suggestions have been approved for consultation with stakeholders.

Workstream 8: Undertake analysis to better understand the availability and accessibility of legally aided services for equality groups - Year 2

This workstream is scheduled for 2024-25.

Equality outcome 4: Make key information about our work and legal aid accessible to those who need our help	
Relevant to the protected characteristics of:	Age, Disability
Equality Duty deliverables:	• Advance equality of opportunity • Eliminate discrimination

What we have achieved so far

Workstream 9: Engage external stakeholders to review and develop information materials - In progress

Objective: Engage with external stakeholders to understand their needs and review publicly available legal aid information.

Progress: We developed content for accessible information on legal aid and met with external stakeholders for their feedback. This content consists of a video with voiceover and subtitles, a British Sign Language video, and a leaflet that all communicate the same information. We met with stakeholders who had helped us design the 2023-26 Equality Outcomes to listen to their views. The feedback was positive with a few suggestions to further simplify the language used.

Next steps: We will develop a video and a leaflet with information on legal aid. The content will consider the feedback we received, and we will aim to make it as accessible as possible. The content will be published by March 2026.

Workstream 10: Review of Principal Sums and Collections Letters - Year 2 and 3

This workstream is scheduled for 2024-25.