



LawWorks Clinics Network Report

Analysis of clinic activity between
January 2025 – December 2025

June 2026

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Introduction

As we reflect on 2025, I am inspired by the determination and commitment shown by everyone involved in the LawWorks Clinics Network. The findings in this report make clear that clinics across England and Wales play an essential role in helping people navigate legal issues that are often complex, urgent, and deeply personal. Demand on the network has grown once again, and the response from the clinics network has been remarkable.

In 2025, clinics saw a significant rise in demand for free legal advice, driven by ongoing financial pressures, rising housing costs, and the shortage of legal aid provision. Many people seeking support were facing multiple, overlapping challenges, and issues relating to employment, housing, family matters, and debt frequently intersected, placing additional strain on both clients and advisers. Despite these pressures, more than 81,000 people received advice, information, or support from clinics, an extraordinary achievement and a testament to the dedication of coordinators, volunteers, and partner organisations across the network.

I want to particularly acknowledge the thousands of volunteers who make this work possible. Their generosity, whether through professional expertise or coordination and administrative support, remains the backbone of the network. This year, clinics highlighted the increasing complexity of the issues they are helping clients to navigate, the challenges of supporting people who present later in the course of their legal problems, and ongoing difficulties in recruiting volunteers in specialist areas such as housing and immigration law. These insights underline how important it is that we continue to support and strengthen the people at the heart of this work.

The data shared this year represents one of the most comprehensive pictures we have ever published, and we are immensely grateful to the 283 clinics that contributed their time and care to this process, often while managing unprecedented service demands and limited resources. Your input helps us understand the changing landscape of legal need and enables LawWorks to advocate more effectively for improved access to justice.

Looking ahead, demand for free legal advice is unlikely to diminish, and clinics will remain a vital lifeline for thousands of people each year. LawWorks is committed to standing alongside our network, strengthening partnerships, championing the value of pro bono work, and ensuring clinics have the support they need to thrive.

Thank you for your continued dedication to advancing access to justice.



Rebecca Wilkinson

Chief Executive

How we collected the data

Each year, LawWorks coordinates a data collection process across the Clinics Network to build a clear picture of clinic activity and client need. The 2025 report draws on information reflecting clinic operations and demand for services throughout the year. The annual survey remains a core tool in helping us understand how pro bono services are delivered across England and Wales, and in demonstrating the continued importance of accessible legal support within communities.

The questionnaire captures a broad range of information, combining quantitative measures with opportunities for clinics to share reflections and emerging issues. Clinics are asked to report on enquiry numbers, clients supported, areas of law addressed, volunteering capacity, and client demographics. Clinics can also highlight notable shifts in demand, case complexity, and the stage at which clients typically seek help, helping us better understand pressures across the wider advice sector.

As in previous years, we recognise that gathering detailed data can be challenging. Clinics operate with limited resources, and demographic information can be particularly difficult to collect where services are delivered remotely or where clients choose not to disclose personal information. Despite these constraints, clinics across the network continue to provide thoughtful and carefully compiled data.

For this reporting cycle, we received submissions from 283 clinics, representing 89% of clinics on the network. This high response rate provides a strong foundation for analysis and allows year-on-year comparisons to be made with greater confidence.

We are extremely grateful to every clinic that contributed their data. We recognise the time, commitment, and care that goes into completing the annual survey, particularly at a time when services remain under considerable pressure. LawWorks remains committed to ensuring that our data requests are purposeful, proportionate, and aligned with what clinics find useful to record and review.

Growing demand across the clinics network

Demand for free legal advice continued to rise across England and Wales in 2025. Many individuals faced ongoing financial pressures following the cost-of-living crisis, including rising housing costs, increasing debt, and strain on household incomes.

These challenges often gave rise to legal issues relating to housing, welfare benefits, employment, and family matters. The persistence of these economic pressures is reflected in feedback from one clinic:

“A high proportion of clients are experiencing financial hardship, mental health difficulties, or unstable housing situations. Many require additional support beyond legal advice, including collaboration with specialist debt charities, welfare advisers, and safeguarding services.”

At the same time, access to publicly funded legal advice remained limited. Large parts of England and Wales continue to be described as “legal aid deserts”. Recent analysis by the Law Society found that 85% of people lack a local welfare benefits legal aid provider, around 63% lack an immigration and asylum provider, and approximately 44% lack a housing legal aid provider within their local authority area.

Clinics consistently highlighted the impact of this shortage:

“Lack of legal aid providers locally who will take on private law cases subject to means and merits testing.”

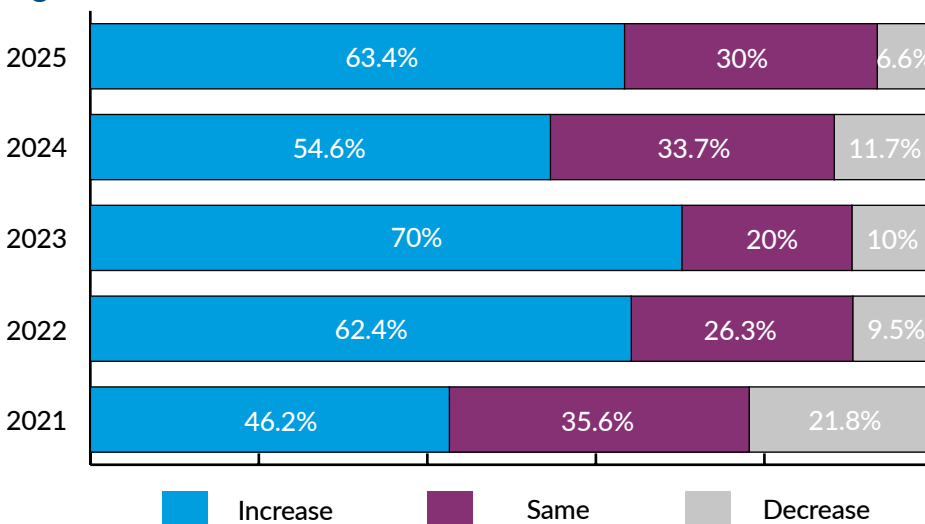
“Lots of people entitled to legal aid (i.e. matter in scope and financially eligible) are unable to find a supplier.”

“Over 50% of calls to our immigration and asylum advice line are in categories within the scope of legal aid, which confirms a lack of providers with capacity to take on these cases.”

Against this backdrop, pro bono legal advice clinics continue to play a vital role in helping individuals understand their rights and access early legal support.

Figure 1 below shows that in 2025, 63.4% of clinics in the LawWorks Clinics Network experienced an increase in demand for their services. 30.1% reported no change and 6.6% reported a decrease. The 63% of clinics reporting an increase in demand in 2025 is a significant increase on the 54.6% of clinics that reported an increase in demand in 2024.

Figure 1: Levels of demand



Feedback from clinics consistently pointed to increasing demand for their services:

“We continue to see high demand and on occasion have had to close to new enquires so that we can catch up with the back log.”

“Noticeable increase in number of enquiries received - necessary to close our waiting list on occasion.”

“The ever-increasing demand for the service is an ongoing challenge. We have limited capacity.”

“We have seen a noticeable rise in demand, particularly in relation to energy debt, council tax arrears, consumer fraud, and small claims disputes.”

“We are experiencing increased and continuous demand for assistance across all areas, with a significant number of individuals already involved in court proceedings. Overall enquiries rose 19.1%.”

Figure 3: Map of clinics on the LawWorks Clinics Network in England & Wales



The LawWorks Clinics Network in 2025

A growing network of clinics

In 2025, LawWorks maintained its focus on strengthening and expanding its network of independent pro bono legal advice clinics across England and Wales, increasing the number of registered clinics from 313 in 2024 to 317.

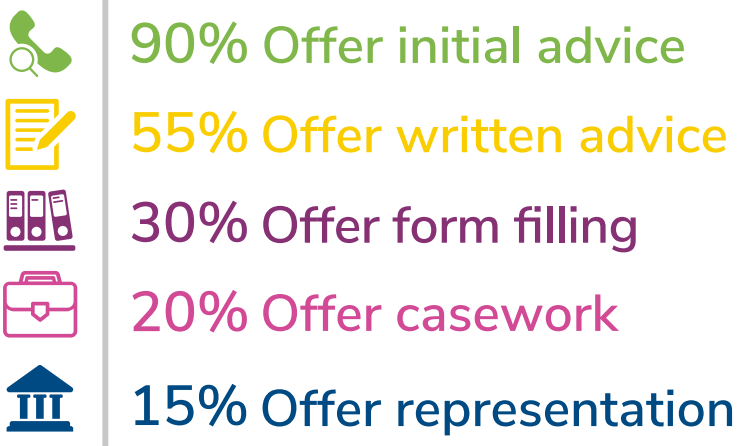
Delivering advice: in-person, online & hybrid

49% of responding clinics operated a hybrid model in 2025, while 35% of clinics operated fully remotely. These figures are similar to the 2024 figures (54% hybrid & 38% fully remote). This indicates that some form of online provision is now standard practice across the majority of clinics on the LawWorks Clinics Network. The continued prevalence of hybrid delivery in particular reflects a deliberate effort to balance accessibility and inclusion. Remote elements enable clinics to reach clients who may be geographically isolated, have caring responsibilities, or are otherwise unable to travel. At the same time, maintaining an in-person option ensures that individuals who face digital exclusion or lack confidence with technology are not disadvantaged (explored later in this report). This blended approach allows clinics to respond more flexibly to the diverse needs of the communities they serve.

Types of legal support offered

The type of service of provision across the LawWorks Clinics Network has remained broadly consistent with previous years, with initial legal advice continuing to be the most widely available form of support. Full representation remains the least commonly offered service, and overall figures show little change from 2024. Crucially, even where initial advice does not fully resolve a client's issue, it provides an essential foundation by clarifying rights, identifying next steps, and helping individuals understand whether legal aid may be available.

Figure 2: Type of legal support offered



These numbers do not add up to 100% as some clinics offer more than one type of service.

Regional distribution of clinics

The map on the previous page illustrates the geographic distribution of clinics within the LawWorks Clinics Network across England and Wales. While the network provides strong coverage in many areas, several regions - including North Wales, the South West of England, and a number of rural communities - remain underserved, with few or no registered pro bono clinics. Addressing these gaps continues to be a strategic priority for LawWorks. Notably, the 2025 map shows an increase in the number of clinics operating in the South West compared with 2024, indicating positive progress.

It is also important to recognise that the map does not reflect the contribution of online pro bono services, which operate without fixed geographic boundaries. As highlighted earlier in this report, these remote services significantly expand access to free legal advice, particularly for individuals living in rural, isolated, or otherwise underserved areas.

As in previous years, over half of all clinics on the LawWorks Clinics Network in 2025 were based in university law schools (53%). However, the number of university-based clinics fell to 168 in 2025, down from 181 in 2024. The financial and resource constraints affecting university clinics during 2025 are discussed later in this report.

By contrast, the clinic setting that saw the greatest growth was other non-profit organisations, which increased from 59 clinics in 2024 to 80 in 2025.

Regionally, clinic growth has been most pronounced in the Southwest and Wales, with both regions seeing the number of clinics registered on the LawWorks Clinics Network increase from 18 in 2024 to 25 in 2025.

Figure 4: Number of clinics by region and setting

	Court based	Law Centre	Law Firm	Law School	Local Citizens Advice	Other	Other non-profit	Total
East		1	1	7	4	1	4	18
East Midlands			4	13	3	1	1	22
Greater London	1	11	8	46	5	3	44	118
North East		1		7		1	1	10
North West			2	18			5	25
South East			4	14			3	21
South West		1	7	11		1	5	25
Wales	1		3	7			14	25
West Midlands	1		1	27		3	2	34
Yorkshire				18			1	19
Total	3	14	30	168	12	10	80	317

Volunteers powering clinics across the network

The strength and impact of clinics within the LawWorks Clinics Network are driven by the people behind them. Volunteers from across the legal profession, including students, trainees, paralegals, solicitors, barristers, and administrative professionals, generously contribute their time, expertise, and insight to help ensure access to free legal assistance for those who might otherwise go without.



LawWorks continues to promote and strengthen pro bono participation by equipping volunteers and clinic coordinators with training, resources, and ongoing support. It also works to develop sustainable partnerships between law firms, in-house legal teams, universities, and advice organisations, helping to expand both the capacity and reach of the clinics network.

Volunteers across the network

The 270 clinics that provided data on volunteer numbers in 2025 reported a total of 15,674 volunteers, representing a sizeable increase from 13,138 in 2024. Notably, this growth slightly outpaced the rise in enquiries, highlighting the important role that increased volunteer capacity has played in enabling clinics to respond to growing demand.

In 2025 we began collecting data on the organisations volunteering with, and supporting, clinics across the network. This showed legal professionals from 295 law firms, 13 in-house legal teams, and 29 barristers' chambers contributed their time to clinic work during the year, demonstrating the breadth of engagement across the legal sector.

Figure 5: Number of volunteers by region and setting

	Court based	Law Centre	Law Firm	Law School	Local Citizens Advice	Other	Other non-profit	Total
East		81		430	45		105	661
East Midlands			23	887	5		19	934
Greater London	153	157	349	4,145	294	53	1,633	6,784
North East		16		579				595
North West			5	1,673			330	2,008
South East				1,276			42	1,318
South West		84	29	966			44	1,123
Wales			7	386			79	472
West Midlands			3	563		83		649
Yorkshire				1,130				1,130
Total	153	338	416	12,035	344	136	2,252	15,674

The number of volunteers represents data from 270 out of 317 clinics.

Challenges in sustaining pro bono capacity

Whilst the overall number of volunteers is significant, it includes all volunteer roles and does not reflect the availability of specific types of expertise. Feedback from clinics indicates that the recruitment and retention of qualified solicitor volunteers willing to support clinics on a regular basis, particularly in certain areas of law, remained a significant challenge in 2025.

Clinic feedback highlights these pressures:

"We do not have enough lawyer volunteers. We have had to reduce our sessions from weekly to once every two weeks."

"Difficulty in recruitment of solicitor volunteers who are willing to give regular time to the clinic."

"Challenge to recruit qualified volunteers. Qualified volunteers reluctant to advise on matters outside their expertise."

"Service demand has again increased, as it does every year. At the same time, solicitors who volunteer with us are becoming increasingly busy in their working day, which limits the number of volunteer slots they can offer us. Or, they decide to step away from volunteering. We then have had challenges recruiting solicitors as they do not have the time to commit to a volunteer role."

"Lack of support from local law firms due to availability/workloads."

"It is difficult to find people able to advise on social welfare issues, especially housing. Clients usually need more help than we can give - most volunteers only have time to give initial advice and cannot take on casework on top of their day jobs."

"Reduced number of legal volunteers in some areas of law (Immigration; Property; Family; Employment)."

"Providing access to housing law - we get overwhelmed by requests and find it hard to obtain lawyers who can advise on housing law."

Regionally, the North West experienced the largest percentage increase in volunteer numbers in 2025, rising by 46% from 1,372 in 2024. In contrast, the West Midlands recorded the largest percentage decrease, falling from 729 volunteers in 2024 to 649 in 2025.

Reporting volunteer numbers with accuracy can be challenging for clinics due to a variety of factors. The comments below highlight the key reasons identified in the 2025 survey:

"The calendar year 2025 straddles two academic years (2024-2025 and 2025-2026), therefore the number of students included in the above figure is not representative of the numbers engaged in the clinic at any one time."

"Our student volunteer numbers fluctuate throughout the year, we typically have intakes at various intervals within the academic year."

"This does not include volunteers in law firms doing back up work."

"This number is an estimate as the physical office space was closed for a number of months and lots of volunteers dropped in and out over the year."

Clinic activity and impact

In 2025, the 283 clinics on the LawWorks Clinics Network that returned data received over 106,000 enquiries and helped over 81,000. These figures powerfully illustrate the scale of impact and the crucial role that pro bono advice clinics play in advancing access to justice. LawWorks hopes this report will both highlight that impact and celebrate the invaluable contribution of these clinics.

It is important to note that these statistics do not present a fully comprehensive picture. Variations and outliers within the datasets may influence the overall figures.

Demand for advice

The significant increase in demand for services provided by clinics on the LawWorks Clinics Network in 2025 is reflected in the 106,391 enquiries received, compared to 90,551 in 2024.

Feedback, from clinics suggests that this figure is likely to underestimate the true level of demand. Variations in data recording practices, alongside capacity constraints, mean that not all enquiries are captured:

“Records are not kept for enquiries where appointments are not made.”

“We are unable to accurately track all enquiries via telephone or email.”

“Due to staffing constraints we could not log all enquiries that did not result in assistance consistently throughout the year, therefore the data does not represent total no. of enquiries to Clinic for the full year period unfortunately.”

“The number of enquiries do not include all email enquiries as these are not recorded in a formal manner. In addition, some enquiries were internal where advice was offered but again not recorded.”

“The funding for our part time coordinators ended in 2024 which has meant that we were unable to record the total number of enquiries for 2025 and have only been able to record the number of clients we have seen.”

Advice, information and referrals

Whilst clinics within the network are unable to provide legal advice to every individual who approaches them, they continue to demonstrate a strong commitment to supporting clients wherever possible whether by offering information, practical guidance, or referring individuals to appropriate alternative services. In 2025, clinics across the LawWorks Clinics Network assisted 81,743 people through legal advice, information, or referrals, representing a substantial increase from the 61,956 individuals supported by responding clinics in 2024.

Despite this significant effort, not all those seeking support can be assisted. In 2025, clinics reported that they were unable to help 25,759 individuals. It is important to recognise that this figure reflects a range of factors, many of which are outside the direct control of clinics. These include:

- clients not attending scheduled appointments or failing to respond to follow-up contact
- individuals no longer requiring assistance by the time they are contacted, for example because their issue has been resolved or they have obtained help elsewhere

Figure 6: Enquiries and how they are dealt with



- enquiries falling outside the clinic's areas of expertise
- limited capacity to meet demand, particularly in the context of financial pressures and resource constraints (explored further later in this report)
- restricted operating periods, particularly for university-based clinics

Figure 7: Enquiries & total number of people helped per clinic setting

	Enquiries	Provided advice	Given information or referred
Court-based	400	301	60
Law Centre	9,208	2,905	5,035
Law firm	5,157	2,843	673
Law school /college	39,400	10,661	19,906
Local Citizens Advice	13,077	4,400	810
Non-Profit (Other)	38,231	25,961	7,542
Other	918	310	336
Total	106,391	47,381	34,362

Feedback from clinics highlights the complexity behind these figures:

“The people not assisted all did not attend a planned interview and did not respond to attempts to rearrange the interviews.”

“The majority of the people we could not assist or signpost/refer to another agency was because of lack of documents/evidence and not responding to our calls or emails when we tried to follow up with them.”

“The enquirers that could not be assisted consisted of those who no longer needed advice or didn’t attend their phone appointment.”

“Many were not in scope of any of our clinics and were signposted at an early stage.”

“The figures for ‘could not be assisted’ includes enquirers who failed to reply to calls or emails when we tried to contact them to offer help, and those who withdrew their request, either because they found help elsewhere or resolved their issue.”

“Of those we couldn’t help, 157 were because we were so overbooked we had no ability to assist.”

“During the reporting year, we continued to receive enquiries in areas of law which we do not service at the clinic.”

Figure 8: Enquiries and total number of people helped by region

	Enquiries	Provided advice	Given information or referred
East	10,816	4,490	2,376
East Midlands	6,388	1,851	3,021
Greater London	59,829	31,835	15,474
North East	1,999	370	666
North West	8,205	2,842	3,682
South East	4,665	1,405	2,208
South West	4,964	1,269	2,230
Wales	3,067	1,486	1,257
West Midlands	3,296	1,005	1,247
Yorkshire & Humber	3,162	828	2,201
Total	106,391	47,381	34,362

Despite these challenges, 2025 represents a particularly strong year for clinics across the network. Demand for services continued to grow significantly, and clinics responded by supporting substantially more individuals than in the previous year.

In total, clinics received 106,391 enquiries in 2025, compared to 90,551 in 2024 which represents a 17.5% increase. Of these, 81,743 people were assisted in 2025 - an increase of over 19,000 compared to 61,956 in 2024. At the same time, the number of individuals who could not be assisted reduced (25,759 in 2025 compared to 23,747 in 2024), meaning a higher proportion of those seeking help were able to access support (76.8% of people were helped in 2025 compared to 68.4% in 2024).

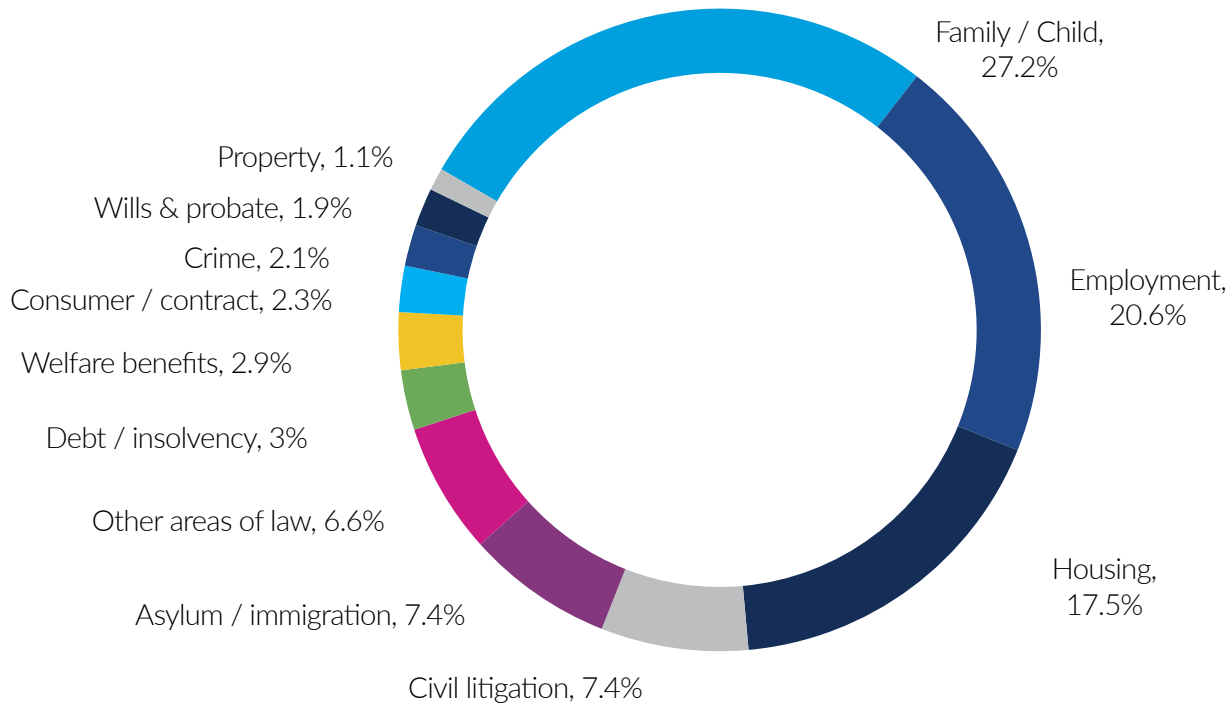
Legal issues clients need help with

Clients access pro bono clinics seeking assistance with a variety of legal matters, most frequently related to social welfare and family law. The scope of each clinic’s services is shaped by several factors, including the expertise of volunteer staff and supervisors, the distinct legal demands of the local population, and the clinic’s strategic priorities. Whilst some clinics operate under a generalist framework, providing advice across a wide spectrum of legal areas, others adopt a specialist focus, delivering more targeted support in one or two areas of law.

Remaining consistent over the past seven years, family law was the most advised area across the LawWorks Clinics Network in 2025, accounting for 27.2% of all cases, followed by employment law at 20.6%. Together, these two areas made up almost half of all cases (47.8%). However, the number of family law cases fell sharply in 2025, dropping by 10% from 18,720 cases (37%) in 2024 to 15,390 cases (27.2%).

In contrast, housing law saw a significant increase, rising from 8.9% (4,512 cases) in 2024 to 17.5% (9,882 cases) in 2025. Civil litigation cases decreased from 12.1% in 2024 to 7.4% in 2025, while asylum and immigration cases increased from 5.9% to 7.4% over the same period.

Figure 9: Advice provided by area of law



Other areas of law includes: business / charity services, civil liberties, community care, competition law, data protection, education, environment, intellectual property, personal injury, SEND / ALN, and Windrush.

Understanding clinic clients and emerging trends

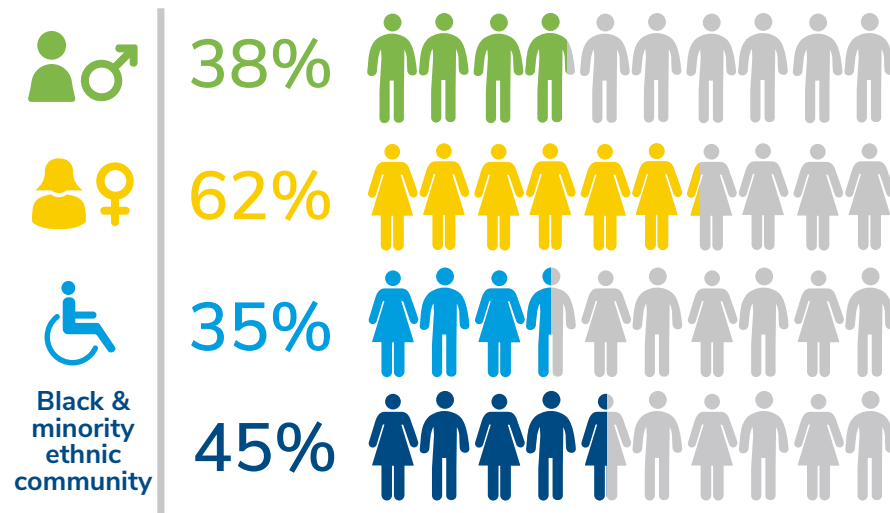
Who clinics are supporting

As part of our annual data collection, LawWorks asks clinics to provide demographic information about the clients they support. This information is vital for understanding the reach and impact of pro bono legal services delivered across the network. It also helps assess how effectively these services are accessed by individuals from communities with protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010.

As in previous years, in 2025 clinics continued to face challenges in collecting comprehensive demographic data. These challenges stem from a range of factors, including some clinics not gathering this information at all, others collecting it only from clients who receive legal advice, and situations in which clients choose not to disclose their details.

Disability remained the least reported category, with 50% of clinics providing this information; however, this represents an increase from 43% in 2024. Ethnicity was the second least reported category in 2025, with 58% of clinics submitting data, a slight rise from 56% in 2024. Age continued to be the second most reported category at 63%, almost identical to 2024. Gender remained the most reported category at 76%, increasing from 69% in 2024.

Figure 10: Client demographics



Feedback from clinics highlights the practical difficulties in gathering demographic information, with response rates often very low:

“Very few clients choose to complete our E&D questionnaire, so are not able to provide a clear representation.”

“Some clients declined to complete the equality and diversity questionnaire.”

“This information is based on the 25 responses we received, which represents only a small sample of our clients. Therefore, it may not fully reflect all individuals referred to us or those who received legal advice.”

“Administration staffing levels mean that data gathering and reporting cannot currently be completed to the level previously achieved.”

“We do not have any meaningful data to share because we implemented the collection of equality data in September and had very few responses. We have changed the way we collect this information so hope to have more meaningful data for the year 2026.”

“We don’t ask questions about people’s race, ethnicity or age so we do not know.”

“The above information is for clients advised only. We do not collect this information for clients who are signposted.”

In 2025, from the clinics that were able to provide demographic data, the most notable change observed related to ethnicity. The proportion of clients identifying as being from black and ethnic minority backgrounds increased to 51%, up from 40% in 2024. This change can be viewed from multiple perspectives – it may positively indicate that more individuals from black and ethnic minority backgrounds are accessing vital pro bono legal support, but it may also reflect a growing need for legal assistance within these groups.

The percentage of clients reporting a disability, long-term illness, or health condition in 2025 was 35%, identical to 2024.

The age profile of clients remained largely consistent, with 94% of clients aged between 18 and 65, a slight increase from 92% in both 2023 and 2024.

In terms of gender distribution, there was a small shift in 2025, with the proportion of female clients rising to 61.8% (up from 58% in 2024) and male clients decreasing slightly to 37.6% (down from 41% in 2024).

Key trends identified by clinics

Clients presenting later in their legal issues

In 2025, 36.6% of clinics reported an increase in clients seeking assistance at a later stage in their legal issue.

This trend presents significant challenges. Clients who approach clinics at this point often require ongoing casework support or court representation, whereas clinics are often only able to provide initial advice. At the same time, high demand, limited staffing resources, and long waiting lists mean that clinics are frequently unable to accommodate clients facing urgent legal deadlines.

Clinics highlighted these pressures clearly:

“People also ringing last minute and needing a next day appointment which is sometimes not possible.”

“The amount of enquiries and people presenting very late in legal proceedings and requiring help sooner than can be provided.”

“Clients approach us at short notice about court proceedings.”

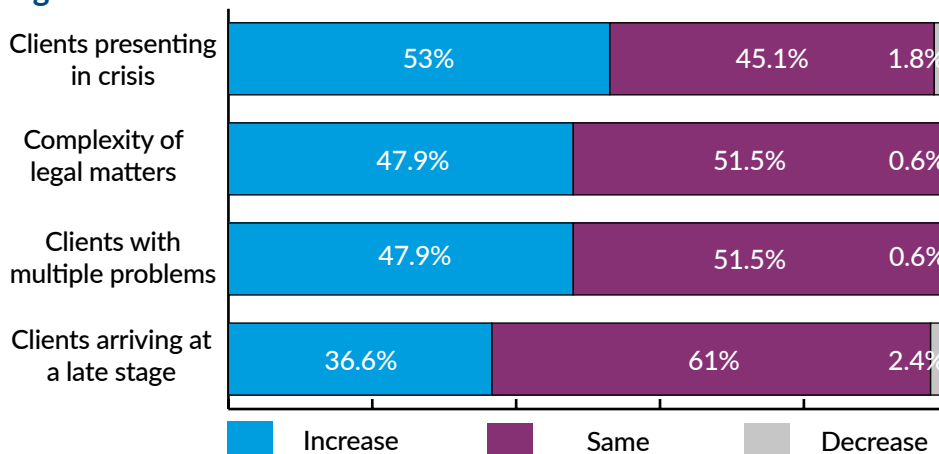
The Growth Company’s Employment Legal Advice Service

We’ve noticed that many clients contact our service when their employment tribunal hearing is fast approaching. A common theme is that they initially believed they would be assigned a duty solicitor by the court, or that ACAS would intervene, so they didn’t think legal representation or guidance was necessary.

Some clients describe feeling burnt out by the process and therefore left seeking support until the last minute because they lacked the time or energy to explore their options earlier.

We also hear from individuals who assumed that once their paperwork was submitted, the case would progress without requiring any further involvement from them.

Figure 11: Trends identified



Teesside University Law Clinic

Clients have made contact with the Law Clinic at very late stages in proceedings, be it court cases, or tribunals. This has resulted in student advisors having to complete research much quicker than usual, with some of this being very complex. The clients have often presented as being very upset and in quite a vulnerable position, and the students have had to be mindful of this.

It is also challenging to offer availability of appointments to these clients due to the availability of the student advisors, many of which have employment and family commitments of their own.

Clients with multiple legal problems

Nearly half of clinics (47.9%) in 2025, observed a rise in clients presenting with multiple, and often interconnected, legal issues. This development places additional strain on clinic capacity and available resources. Clients with needs spanning different areas of law frequently require a series of appointments in order to access advice from solicitors with the appropriate expertise. In some instances, clinics are unable to cover all relevant areas of law, resulting in additional time spent directing clients to other sources of support.

This trend is further evidenced by comments from clinics:

“Many clients present with multiple and overlapping issues, which requires more time and careful casework.”

“Clients approach us for advice on more than one area of law in many cases, some areas which we have to signpost.”

“Some cases dealt with more than one issue, for example a family case might also have involved some property issue, or probate.”

University House Legal Advice Centre

Within our evening advice clinic, which specialises in debt, consumer, and small claims matters, we have observed a clear increase in the number of clients presenting with complex and overlapping legal issues. This trend is closely linked to wider economic pressures across the UK, including sustained increases in council tax, utility costs and private sector rents, alongside ongoing affordability challenges for low-income households.

Clients frequently present with concurrent liabilities, including council tax arrears, utility debt, and rent shortfalls. These issues are often interconnected and arise from a single point of financial strain. For example, increases in rent - combined with limitations in housing benefit or Universal Credit - can create immediate shortfalls, leading clients to prioritise essential payments at the expense of other liabilities, thereby accruing further debt.

This cumulative impact has resulted in more complex casework, often involving multiple creditors and requiring a holistic, cross-disciplinary approach. Effective case management increasingly depends on collaboration between in-house teams and volunteer advisers to deliver coordinated advice. Consequently, cases require more time, enhanced supervision and careful triaging to ensure that clients receive comprehensive and appropriate support.

Complexity of legal matters

In 2025, 47.9% of clinics reported an increase in the complexity of legal matters, slightly down from 50.3% in 2024. Highly complex cases present particular challenges for clinics: they are often not well suited to the clinic setting, require more time to address than a single appointment allows, and place additional strain on already limited staffing resources.

Clinics described these challenges in detail, highlighting how the increasing complexity of cases affects their ability to provide timely and comprehensive support:

“Clients with urgent or complex issues. Our advice is sent in 3 week’s time and can only focus on one issue at a time.”

“Clients requiring help with complex matters. Increase in employment matters, often quite complex.”

“The complexity of the cases we are being referred has increased meaning that they take longer and at times are not suitable for a law clinic setting.”

“The increases above have made it difficult to triage clients for preliminary advice as they are presenting with more complex legal matters that are further down the line, but still needing initial advice.”

“Cases have been more complex so has been hard to advise in one appointment.”

“Issues presented are continuously complex.”

“Cases are becoming increasingly complex, often involving multiple creditors, vulnerable clients, language barriers, and overlapping legal issues. This has required more casework time per client and increased supervision demands.”

Queen Mary Legal Advice Centre

Demand for our services is growing year on year, and we are finding a trend that the public are presenting with more complex legal matters that are still requiring initial preliminary advice. This is for a few overlapping reasons whereby the legal problems are becoming increasingly interconnected with multiple areas of law. For example, a person seeking advice on family law may also need immigration and housing advice, so the triage process is more complex, as we are unpicking the legal problems and then identifying where we can offer support and advice. We are finding a rise in self-help enquiries whereby people try and resolve the matters first using either online or AI tools and then when that fails, they are approaching us for advice on matters that are now more complicated or with tighter deadlines. Finally, there is reduced capacity within the system generally with cuts to legal aid and overstretched services, and so more people are presenting to legal clinics that otherwise may have used the legal aid system beforehand.

People aren't necessarily asking harder questions at preliminary stage, they are sometimes arriving later, with more entangled problems, in a system with fewer early support options.

Clients presenting in crisis

Given the continuing financial and economic pressures faced by many individuals in England and Wales in 2025, it is unsurprising that the proportion of clinics reporting an increase in clients presenting in crisis has risen between 2024 and 2025. Whilst 47.6% of clinics experienced such an increase in 2024, this grew to 53% in 2025. This trend is a serious concern, placing additional demands on clinic volunteers and the time required to provide support. Working with highly distressed clients can also be particularly challenging, highlighting the need for careful and compassionate assistance.

Clinic teams have highlighted the practical implications of these trends, emphasising the additional time and support needed to assist vulnerable clients and the issues they most frequently face:

“Supporting vulnerable clients appropriately has required additional time and care to ensure fair access to justice.”

“We have seen more individuals seeking support for debt, consumer disputes and small claims matters, often at a point of financial crisis.”

Literacy or digital exclusion

A modest shift is evident in the 2025 data on client literacy and digital exclusion. The proportion of clinics reporting an increase in clients experiencing these issues fell slightly from 19.6% in 2024 to 17.8%, whilst those reporting no change rose from 75.5% to 79.6%. Although literacy and digital exclusion remain significant challenges for many clients, this small change may indicate a degree of stabilisation.

Figure 12: Literacy or digital exclusion



Feedback from clinics indicates that these barriers are not always the result of declining digital skills among clients. Instead, they often stem from the growing complexity of digital systems and, in some cases, poor design that makes navigation and access more difficult for individuals. One clinic explained:

“In relation to digital skills, we have noticed that many women are experiencing issues due to the development of digital justice systems and the ways in which this increases digital exclusion. We would reflect that this is not due to our service users’ digital skills having changed, but the ways in which systems are developed and made available becoming more difficult and complex. Sometimes it is because the digital systems are poorly designed. The increase in VAWG through digital systems/ new technologies also impacts their digital exclusion.”

Another clinic emphasised the particularly acute challenges faced by clients who experience both digital and general literacy barriers:

“Many of our clients are digitally illiterate as well as otherwise illiterate, so they may not understand the forms they are asked to complete. This makes it hard to triage them in advance of their appointment(s).”

Together, these insights highlight the ongoing need for accessible system design and flexible service models to support all clients, particularly those at risk of digital exclusion. In this context, the significant proportion of LawWorks Clinics Network services offering a hybrid model (49%) plays a crucial role in ensuring that clients can continue to access pro bono legal support, helping to maintain fair and equitable access to justice.

Other challenges

Financial pressures and resource constraints

A major challenge across the LawWorks Clinics Network in 2025 was the impact of constrained finances and limited resources on clinic sustainability, capacity, and service delivery. This was, and remains, particularly acute for university-based clinics, where wider sector funding pressures directly affect clinic operations. Many clinics reported operating on increasingly reduced budgets, often due to institutional cuts, as well as difficulties accessing funding within university structures. Feedback from university clinics clearly highlighted the funding pressures they are facing:

“we are operating in a difficult higher education landscape where resource and funding is limited.”

“difficulty in obtaining funding due to being part of a university structure.”

“university sector finance cuts which impacted the clinic.”

These pressures have led to reduced and minimal staffing, with several clinics noting redundancies, retirements, and posts not being replaced. Staffing constraints are a key consequence of financial limitations, with clinics frequently reporting insufficient supervisory capacity, restricting their ability to take on new clients.

Clinics described:

“not enough supervisor staff with capacity to take on more clients.”

“solicitors have needed to prioritise teaching... therefore less time for clinic work.”

“only 1 manager... to manage everything.”

Administrative support has also diminished, creating additional pressure on already stretched supervisors. A lack of dedicated administrative resource has compounded workload challenges and affected the smooth running of clinics.

This concern is reflected in clinic feedback, with comments such as:

“too much pressure on the qualified practitioner running the clinic”

“critical shortage of admin volunteers.”

Financial constraints are also making it very difficult for clinics to meet rising demand. Many reported an increase in client enquiries but an inability to expand service provision due to staffing limitations. In some cases, this has resulted in clinics limiting the complexity of advice they are able to offer.

These pressures are further illustrated by frontline accounts, including:

“we have seen an increase in demand... however we have been unable to increase the number of clinics... due to staff constraints.”

“insufficient resources to meet overwhelming demand.”

“Staff are under pressure to do “more with less” – to water down the clinic offering (in terms of complexity of advice).”

Short-term and insecure funding is another barrier. Many clinics operate on annual funding cycles, making long-term planning difficult leading to uncertainty about sustainability. Some clinics reported that further reductions could force closure, whilst others have already closed or reduced services due to a lack of funding and volunteers.

In addition to core staffing and operational costs, clinics highlighted the challenge of meeting essential overhead costs and investing in service development. This includes costs associated with digital infrastructure, equipment, and facilities, as well as limited capacity for marketing and outreach, which restricts their ability to reach potential clients.

Direct feedback from clinics about these challenges included:

“The additional costs of running clinic (e.g. digital subscriptions to Calendly/call booking systems, meeting room facilities, laptops etc) need financing.”

“funding and lack of resources to do marketing.”

Overall, financial insecurity is significantly affecting capacity, quality, and future planning. Without more stable and increased funding, clinics face difficult trade-offs between meeting demand, maintaining quality, and remaining sustainable.

The impact of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and online information on client expectations

An emerging challenge identified by clinics across the network is the growing impact of AI and online information on client expectations and understanding of legal issues. Whilst increased access to information can empower clients, clinics also reported that it is contributing to misinformation and unrealistic expectations about legal outcomes.

Several clinics noted that clients are increasingly conducting their own research online, in advance of their appointments, often forming fixed views about their case before they speak to an adviser or lawyer. This can make it more difficult for advisers to manage expectations and provide clear, practical guidance.

The rise of AI-generated information appears to be intensifying this issue, with clinics reporting that clients are relying on inaccurate or overly generalised outputs. This can lead to misunderstandings that require additional time to resolve and can complicate the adviser-client relationship.

As a result, clinics are encountering scenarios where:

“client’s use of AI providing them with unrealistic expectations which solicitors have to manage.”

“the impact of misinformation generated through inaccurate AI tools... which can lead service users to approach us with misunderstandings that require additional time to unpick.”

“clients having researched online often arrive with unrealistic expectations of success and firm ideas of how cases should be conducted which are not always advisable.”

Whilst digital tools and AI have the potential to improve access to legal information, managing client expectations and correcting misinformation is becoming a resource-intensive aspect of clinic work.

Conclusions

The 2025 data paints a picture of a clinics network that is both under significant pressure and delivering extraordinary impact. With more clinics reporting rising demand, and enquiries increasing by 17.5% compared with the previous year, the need for accessible legal support continues to grow. Despite this, clinics supported over 81,000 people, more than 19,000 additional individuals compared with 2024. This represents a remarkable contribution to access to justice across England and Wales.

At the same time, feedback from clinics makes clear that this level of demand is not easily met. Challenges in recruiting qualified volunteers, funding constraints - particularly within university settings - and the growing complexity of cases, all affect the ability of clinics to maintain or expand their services. The increase of clients presenting with multiple legal issues, or seeking help at a later stage, is adding further pressure on coordinators and volunteer advisers.

We were delighted that 89% of clinics submitted data for 2025, providing one of the most robust national pictures to date. However, this dataset reflects the availability of free legal support rather than the full extent of unmet legal need. Persistently high demand for family and employment law advice, alongside growing need in areas such as housing and immigration, remains a significant concern. We will continue to share this evidence with policymakers to highlight the legal issues affecting communities across England and Wales.

Despite these challenges, clinics continue to innovate, collaborate, and adapt. New approaches to service delivery, strengthened partnerships, and responses to emerging issues, from digital exclusion to AI-generated misinformation, demonstrate the sector's resilience. The dedication of clinic teams, volunteers, law schools, law firms, and partner organisations underpins every statistic in this report.

LawWorks is proud to support this network and remains committed to building strong partnerships and enabling clinics to operate effectively. As we reflect on the year and look ahead, it is clear that pro bono legal clinics will continue to play a critical role and deserve sustained recognition, investment, and long-term support. We extend our sincere thanks to all clinics, coordinators, administrators, volunteers, and partner organisations for their commitment, insight, and hard work throughout 2025. Their continued dedication ensures that people across England and Wales can access the legal help they need, at the moment they need it most.

LawWorks Clinics Network: 2025 at a glance

“LawWorks makes a significant difference by providing structure, guidance, and credibility to participating clinics. The resources, training, and best practice support they offer enhance both the quality and consistency of clinic services. Their coordination of the wider network also helps clinics share knowledge, address common challenges, and stay connected to national developments in pro bono and access to justice work.”

11

New pro bono legal advice clinics developed with support from LawWorks

“Without Lawworks we could not do what we do, we are indebted to them.”

12

training sessions held including sessions on child arrangements, SEND and the Employment rights bill

“Law Works is hugely responsive when we call on them for help. For example, recently, Law Works advertised our need for specialist volunteers and there was an immediate and very enthusiastic response.”

Developed a partnership with Yao to allow free access to their case management systems for clinics on the LawWorks Clinics Network

“Support, guidance and resources. Would be scrambling in the dark if it wasn't for LawWorks.”

4

InfoExchanges held for clinic supervisors, coordinators & administrators

“We really value all the resources LawWorks provides, especially the training videos and the networking opportunities.”

Published a new 'Immigration Advice Authority (IAA) regulation and clinics' resource


“Clinics face some unique challenges, compared to firms in private practice and LawWorks tailors their advice and guidance so that is relevant and helpful.”



LawWorks is a charity working in England and Wales to connect volunteer lawyers with people in need of legal advice, who are not eligible for legal aid and cannot afford to pay; and with the not-for-profit organisations that support them.

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