



# **LAWWORKS CLINICS NETWORK REPORT APRIL 2015 - MARCH 2016**

**Analysis of pro bono legal advice work being done  
across the LawWorks Clinics Network between  
April 2015 and March 2016**

LawWorks, November 2016

Supported by  
**The Law Society**

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## Foreword

The legal profession has a proud tradition of pro bono – for many, it is a vital part of being a lawyer.

Demand has never been greater: cuts to legal aid, reduced funding for law centres and local advice services, and the introduction of tribunal and court fees have significantly reduced the ability of many to access legal advice and representation.

Pro bono, while it makes an important and profound contribution to enabling access to justice, is not – and should not be seen as – an alternative to legal aid. Nor should it become an alternative to funding for the work of law centres and advice agencies. Pro bono works most effectively when it complements and supports wider legal and advice provision – and is tailored to best meet need. It also needs an ‘infrastructure’ to flourish and survive, not least local organisations or groups able to facilitate, host or support pro bono volunteers.

Local pro bono advice clinics play a vital role, and make an important contribution towards, supporting individuals and communities. There is no typical advice clinic: there is considerable diversity in their size, regularity and services offered. But what they all share is the core component of volunteering: by solicitors (individuals, firms and in-house teams), barristers, trainees, pupils, legal executives, paralegals, law students and law schools, and others.

The volunteering of law students and the support of law schools deserves particular recognition – making a difference to individuals and local communities, but also providing valuable experience and learning for the lawyers of tomorrow, and potentially instilling a commitment to pro bono which can last a lifetime.

LawWorks (the Solicitors Pro Bono Group) exists because of a shared passion in the contribution and power of pro bono. Supported by the Law Society and our members, we work to encourage, support, facilitate and celebrate pro bono across England and Wales.

The clinics in the LawWorks Network are independent and self-managed. Our role includes working in partnership with stakeholders to help set up new clinics, including advice and guidance on issues such as regulatory requirements, insurance and volunteer recruitment. We provide ongoing support where needed, including ‘troubleshooting’ advice, but also training, networking opportunities and online information and resources. But importantly, by being part of a network, we can help highlight and celebrate the work of clinics and volunteers, and identify emerging trends and issues.

This report brings together data and information from different surveys. In the year April 2015 to March 2016, there were over 53,000 enquiries at clinics, with over 35,000 clients receiving legal advice and nearly 11,000 given information, signposting or referral. While this represents a large increase in enquiries compared with the previous year, we need to be cautious about extrapolating trends, particularly as the number of clinics in the network has grown. However, most clinics report an increase in demand for advice, and an increase in the complexity of issues. The reported increase in enquiries in some areas of law, particularly family law, but also for housing and employment, reflects the experience of advice agencies and law centres.

But numbers alone do not, of course, reveal individual stories, experiences or emotions. A legal problem does not have to be complex to be potentially life-changing or to be daunting. Not every legal problem can be solved or solved satisfactorily, but the advice pro bono clinics provide can improve lives for the better.

The clinics in the LawWorks Clinic Network should be rightfully proud of the work they do and the positive contribution they make. We would like to thank the thousands of pro bono volunteers, and the advice workers, staff and volunteers that make each clinic possible.

**Martin Barnes**  
**Chief Executive, LawWorks**

## Introduction

### LAWWORKS AND THE LAWWORKS CLINICS NETWORK

LawWorks is the operating name for the Solicitors Pro Bono Group, a national charity working across England and Wales. LawWorks aims to inspire and support lawyers and law students to engage in pro bono activity which supports both:

- individuals in need of legal help, who are not eligible for legal aid and are without the means to pay for a lawyer; and
- smaller charities and not-for-profit organisations, to support the continuation and expansion of their services to people in need.

LawWorks supports and develops a growing network of local and independent pro bono clinics across the country, each delivering free legal advice and assistance to individuals in need of help. Setting up and supporting free legal advice clinics has been a long-standing feature of LawWorks' work and in March 2016 there were 223 clinics in the Clinics Network.

As this report will highlight, while each clinic is unique, they generally involve a partnership bringing together a mix of law firms, in-house legal teams, barristers and law schools, working with advice agencies and other charities to support individuals in the local community.

The clinics team at LawWorks supports both the development of new clinic services, from initial idea stage through to piloting and launch, as well as providing ongoing support and consultancy to established clinics. This support includes:

- **Consultancy:** LawWorks works with stakeholders to identify local need and provides support through the stages required to set up a new legal advice clinic.
- **Training:** LawWorks runs free training sessions covering many areas of social welfare law and advice skills, available in-person and online via video and audio recordings.
- **Troubleshooting:** LawWorks provides advice and guidance to clinics on issues such as regulatory requirements, volunteer recruitment and clinic expansion.
- **Resources:** Members of the LawWorks Clinics Network get free access to software such as legal research tools, secure document storage solutions, as well as factsheets, toolkits and template resources for use in clinics.
- **Networking:** LawWorks runs networking events connecting clinic stakeholders to discuss common issues and share best practise.
- **Awards:** LawWorks runs annual awards recognising excellence in the pro bono work being done by lawyers and law schools.

LawWorks supports clinics in the network to collect monitoring data on the work being done at clinics, and the clients that access their services. LawWorks collates this data to produce a national picture of the contribution that pro bono advice clinics



LawWorks  
Clinics  
Network

in the network are making, and highlights emerging trends and issues which clinics across the network are experiencing.

This report presents the data collected from clinics for the work conducted during the period of April 2015 – March 2016, and presents it in comparison with data from the previous year.

Three years on from the implementation of the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012 which resulted in an almost 80% reduction in the number of cases funded by civil legal aid<sup>1</sup>, this report looks at the important role pro bono clinics play in the access to justice landscape across England & Wales. While free legal advice clinics cannot be and should not become a substitute for legal aid, clinics report that they are experiencing considerable growth in the demand for their services from the public.

The reduction in the scope of legal aid has contributed to an increase in the number of people going to court or tribunal without a lawyer. Timely access to legal advice can identify options and remedies (including alternatives to going to court) and help prevent problems escalating. LawWorks is a partner, with Law for Life, RCJ Advice, the Personal Support Unit, the Bar Pro Bono Unit and the Access to Justice Foundation, of the Litigant in Person Support Strategy. Supported by the Ministry of Justice, the Strategy brings together different components of support for people unable to access or afford a lawyer, including: online information and resources, legal advice (including local pro bono clinics), support when in court, and representation.

We would like to thank the clinic co-ordinators that provided statistics to inform this report. We would also like to acknowledge the tireless work of the thousands that volunteer their time at free legal advice clinics, and the vital advice workers, supervisors and support staff that make each clinic possible.

***‘When we sat down at the free legal clinic, I felt the adviser was finally listening to what we had to say and was on our same page.’***

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<sup>1</sup> Ministry of Justice, (2014), “Legal Aid Statistics in England and Wales 2013-2014”, p19. Accessible at [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/328901/legal-aid-statistics-2013-14.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/328901/legal-aid-statistics-2013-14.pdf)

## Methodology

This report draws principally on data obtained from two surveys conducted with nominated clinic representatives for the periods April 2015 to September 2015 and October 2015 to March 2016 respectively. In order to gather an accurate account of pro bono activity taking place in clinics across England & Wales, LawWorks requests all clinics across the network participate in these surveys. This year we have had responses from 68% of the network.

The surveys elicit responses on key aspects of the clinic's activities over each relevant period. Broadly, these concern: the enquiries received by the clinic, how these enquiries have been dealt with, the area of law advice was given in, as well as details concerning volunteer make up, and the number and diversity of the clients accessing the clinic.

In addition, LawWorks conducted a separate survey in July 2016 seeking feedback from all registered clinic co-ordinators on trends and challenges faced by their clinic over the previous year. We received a response from 74 co-ordinators across England & Wales, representing 130 clinics participating in the LawWorks network (as some individuals co-ordinate more than one clinic).

In addition to data obtained from the various surveys mentioned above, LawWorks maintains a database of key information on each clinic's services based on the information being provided by a representative of the clinic at the time of registration to the network. This information is updated on an ongoing basis as the clinic's services evolve and changes are notified to LawWorks. This data we hold on individual clinics informs the '*Services Offered*' and '*Methods of Service Delivery*' sections of this report.

To better understand the client experience, a sample of individuals accessing clinics in Wales between May 2015 and April 2016 were interviewed. 364 participants were surveyed before they were given advice, 324 were surveyed immediately after being given advice and then 68 took part in follow up phone interviews which took place approximately six weeks to six months after they were given the advice.

### *Consolidation of clinics within the network*

During this period, based on clinic frequency and client numbers, it was decided that 36 clinics should more accurately be viewed as one clinic operating on an outreach basis in a further 35 locations. The data presented within this report takes account of this consolidation and should be considered by readers comparing data with that of previous years, particularly in the analysis of services available in clinics. On paper, this consolidation demonstrates a drop in the size of the network by 35 clinics, which masks the fact that an additional 39 clinics joined the network in this period. While the consolidation creates the impression of a more modest growth in the number of clinics in the network compared to previous years, we feel that the change provides for a more accurate picture of the network.

### *Clinics outside England & Wales*

The data from this report relates to pro bono clinic work in England & Wales only. While LawWorks maintains links with a number of clinics outside England & Wales and supports them to collect data on their activities, for the sake of clarity, that data is not contained in this report.



## Executive Summary

This report details the pro bono advice and assistance carried out by pro bono clinics participating in the LawWorks Clinics Network for the period 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016. The main findings are summarised below:

### CLINIC SERVICES AVAILABLE

- There were 223 clinics across England & Wales in the LawWorks Clinics Network on 31 March 2016.
- 88% of clinics offer initial advice, 41% offer written advice, 25% offer form filling, 19% offer casework and 14% offer representation.
- 86% of clinics offer face-to-face advice, of which 69% offer appointments, 31% offer drop-in advice, and 8% offer both appointments and drop-in options.
- 9% of clinics offer online or email advice, and 5% offer telephone advice.

**223**  
clinics in the  
LawWorks  
Clinics  
Network

### CLINIC ENQUIRIES & ADVICE

- There were over 53,000 individual enquiries at clinics in the period between April 2015 and March 2016, a 24% increase on the previous year.
- Over 35,000 clients were given legal advice at a clinic with a further 11,000 clients given general information or signposted or referred to other services.
- 36% of clinics in the network are law school clinics and collectively, they dealt with over 16,000 enquiries last year with 84% of clients receiving legal advice or general information, signposting or referral to other services.

**Over 53,000**  
enquiries at  
clinics last year, a  
24% increase

**35,000**

clients given legal  
advice last year

## AREAS OF LAW

- Family, housing, employment and consumer/contract law remain the most common areas of law **available** across the clinics network.
- Family, employment and housing law remain the three most common areas in which advice is **given** across the clinics network, representing over half of all advice provided. The full breakdown (by area of law) is: family law 21%, employment 17.4%, housing 17.1%, asylum and immigration 14%, consumer and contract law 8%, civil litigation 5%, crime 2.6%, welfare benefits 2.4%, debt 2.2%.
- Family law overtook employment and housing law over the last year to become the most common area in which advice is provided, rising 37% compared to the previous year. There has also been a notable growth in asylum and immigration advice which has seen a 45% increase over the last year.

## Family law

Most common area  
in which advice was  
given

45%

increase in  
asylum &  
immigration  
advice

## PRO BONO VOLUNTEERING

- 4,824 individuals volunteered across the LawWorks Clinics Network, a 5% increase on last year.
- Across the network, over half of volunteers are students and over a third are solicitors or trainees with smaller proportions of volunteer barristers and pupils, legal executives, paralegals and administrators.

4,824

volunteers across  
the network

5% increase in the  
volunteer numbers

## CLIENTS

Where recorded:

- 85% of clinic clients have a household income below the Joseph Rowntree Foundation Minimum Income Standard threshold of £17,100.
- 59% of clinic clients are female, 40% are male and 0.3% are of non-binary gender.
- Over half of clinic clients are from ethnic minority groups, a proportion considerably higher than the 14% of the UK general population from ethnic minority backgrounds as identified in the 2011 UK census.
- Over half of clinic clients are aged between 25 and 44 with less than 6% under 25 and over 65 respectively.
- 27% of clinic clients report having a disability, a proportion significantly higher than the 20% of the population estimated to have a disability.

**85%** of clinic clients below minimum income standard

**27%** of clients have a disability

## CLINIC TRENDS

Of those reporting:

- 89% of clinics report an increase in demand for advice over the last year.
- 71% have seen an increase in the number of clients in crisis or distress, 70% have seen an increase in the complexity of clients' legal matters, and 60% have seen clients presenting at a later stage in their problem or issue.

**89%** of clinics have seen an increase in demand over the last year

**71%**

have seen an increase in the number of clients in crisis or distress

- While 38% of clinics say that they have experienced difficulty in sourcing and retaining pro bono volunteers, 47% have seen an increase in their capacity to provide pro bono services and 33% have witnessed an increased willingness from lawyers and students to volunteer.
- It remains a challenging environment for clinics with 29% experiencing reduced access to funding to run their clinics.

**29% of clinics have seen reduced access to funding to run their clinic**

## CLIENT IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Based on surveys of clients who accessed clinics in Wales:

- Of the clinic clients where stress was relevant, 81% felt less stressed directly after the advice they received at the clinic. Follow up interviews three to six months later found that 80% felt less stressed about their legal matter since receiving the clinic's advice.
- Where applicable to their situation, 67% felt that their mental or physical health had improved since receiving the free legal help, with 78% reporting improved wellbeing.
- 93% of clinic clients felt they had a better understanding of their matter directly after receiving advice at the clinic, consistent with 92% of clients feeling this in follow up interviews.
- Where applicable to their situation, 44% believe that as a result of the advice they received they have avoided going to court about their legal matter, and 23% stated that they had received money that was owed to them as a result of receiving the advice.

**81%**

of clients less stressed after getting advice

**93% of clients have a better understanding of their matter following the advice**

## Clinic Services: April 2015 – March 2016

### SERVICES OFFERED

At 31 March 2016, there were 223 clinics in the LawWorks Clinics Network across England and Wales. 39 clinics were added to the network over the year, representing a 21% growth in the network over the year.<sup>2</sup> This growth comes from both new clinic services launching through the year, as well as existing pro bono services joining the network to take advantage of LawWorks' resources, training and support.

There is considerable diversity in the services offered by each clinic and in the methods by which these services are delivered. In this section we set out the types of pro bono services offered by the 223 clinics in the network, together with information on how these services can be accessed by clients.

Figure 1 below illustrates the range of pro bono services provided by clinics in the network, showing the proportion of clinics that offer each distinct service. Many clinics offer more than one of the services indicated.

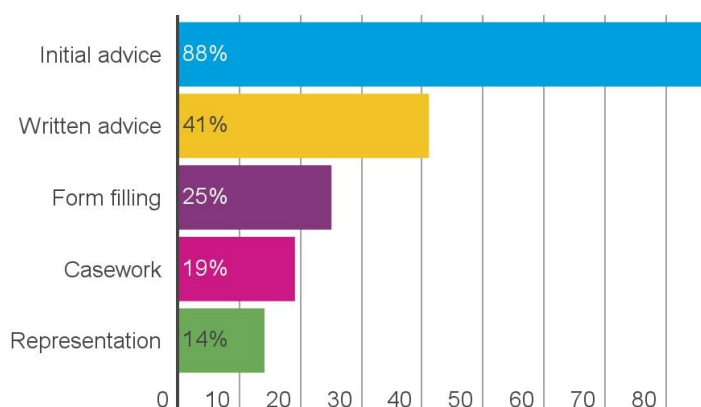


Figure 1.

The vast majority of clinics (88%) offer initial advice. Two-fifths of clinics (41%) offer to provide clients with written advice, and a quarter of clinics (25%) offer assistance with form filling. While the focus of clinic work is predominantly on advice provision, 19% offer casework services and 14% offer representation.

**88% of clinics offer initial advice**

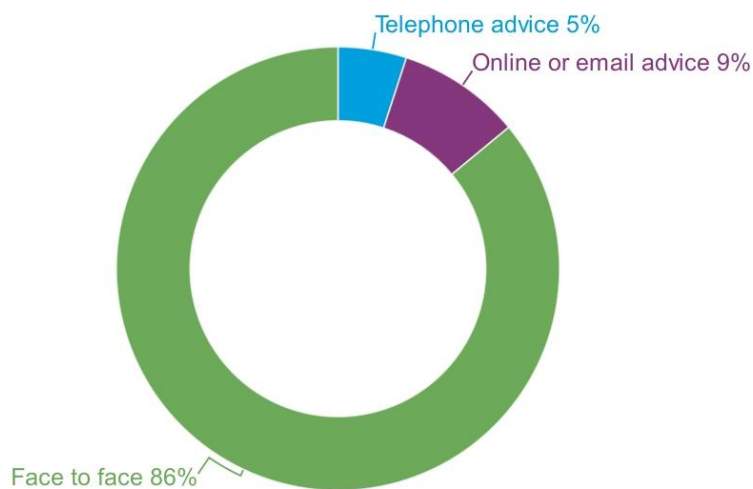
**21%**  
**increase in the LawWorks Clinics Network**

<sup>2</sup> Please see note in *Methodology* on page 8 above on the consolidation of certain clinics within the network.

## METHODS OF SERVICE DELIVERY

There are a variety of means by which clinics provide pro bono legal advice and services to members of the public. There is no universal approach applicable to every clinic; each will have developed its own particular model having had regard to the legal needs of the local community as well as clinic resourcing, volunteer availability and capacity.

In figure 2 below we set out the methods by which advice is currently delivered. Face to face advice is available at the vast majority of clinics (86%), of which 69% offer appointments, 31% offer drop-in services and 8% offer both appointment and drop-in options for clients.



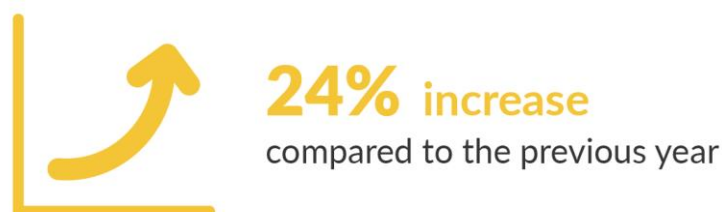
**Figure 2.**

Smaller proportions of clinics offer online or email advice (9%) and telephone advice (5%).

**86%**  
offer face to  
face advice

## CLINIC ENQUIRIES & ADVICE

In 2015/16 there were 53,221 separate enquiries received by clinics across the network. This represents a 24% increase in the number of enquiries received in comparison with the previous year, due in part to the increase in the number of clinics in the network.



Over 35,000 clients  
given legal advice  
last year

Not all enquiries received will result in the provision of legal advice, however, a significant 71% of enquiries (35,268) resulted in clients receiving advice. This is an increase of 25% on the number of clients who received advice compared to the previous year. Again, part of this increase will be due to the increase in the number of clinics in the network.

Each clinic will have in place policies and procedures for identifying types of enquiries that warrant advice; if advice is not needed or available, then appropriate information, signposting or referral will be provided. Over the last year, 11,339 clients (23%) received general information, signposting or a referral.

Policies to identify how to assist clients are generally focused on the needs of clients and the capacity of the clinic to provide advice in the relevant area. In some cases, and particularly in law school clinics, the educational needs of the students may also be an influencing factor for clinics deciding how to deal with a request for assistance.



The graphic above represents how enquiries were dealt with across the network over the last year. While the vast majority of clients were helped, in 6% of cases clinics have indicated that neither advice or information, signposting or referral was provided. In previous years the proportion of clients who did not receive any form of assistance had been higher, at 9% in 2014/15 and 15% in 2013/14. To better understand why clients might not be given advice or information at the clinic, we asked clinics to indicate the reasons why they were unable to provide assistance in these situations.

The predominant reasons for an enquiry not resulting in advice or assistance included: clinics being unable to re-establish contact with a client following an initial enquiry, or the client failing to turn up to an appointment; actual or potential conflict of interests arising for the clinic, volunteer or law firm; the enquiry being outwith the scope of the clinic's service or expertise; the client accessing assistance elsewhere; the issue being resolved between initial enquiry and the clinic appointment; the urgency or complexity of the client's matter meant the clinic service was unsuitable; or initial enquiry identified the client's problem was not legal in nature. Specific to law school clinics, in some cases enquiries were not supported as it was deemed that there was no educational benefit to the students participating in the clinic, or the enquiry was made during holiday periods when the clinic was closed.

Each clinic will decide on its approach to the acceptance of returning clients where the support is limited to discrete pieces of advice. They will decide whether advice is provided strictly on a one-off basis or can be given over a number of occasions. Across the network, 15% of enquiries last year were recorded as coming from returning clients. This represents a 20% decrease from the preceding year.

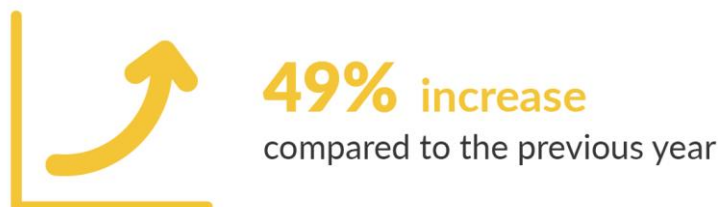
**15% of enquiries  
are returning  
clients**



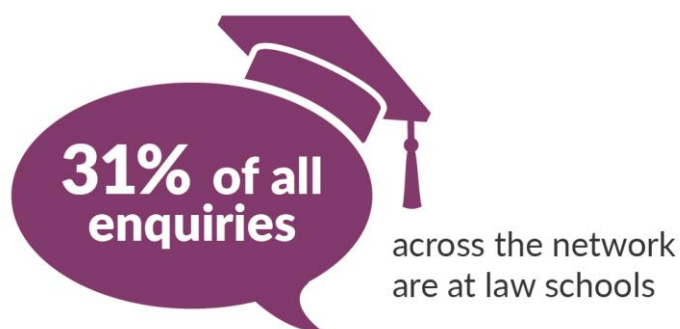
## LAW SCHOOL CLINIC ENQUIRIES

Over a third of clinics in the network (36%) operate with law schools. Across the year these particular clinics received 16,471 enquiries, a 49% increase on the previous year, and representing 31% of all clinic enquiries across the network as a whole.

**36%** of clinics  
in the network are  
law school clinics



Of these law school enquiries, 46% received legal advice, compared to the 71% of enquiries that resulted in advice across the whole network. A higher proportion of client enquiries at law school clinics (38%) resulted in the provision of information, signposting or referral services, compared to 23% of enquires across the network as a whole.



As noted above, a common feature of law school clinics is that in many cases the services will either be closed or operating on a reduced basis over the summer period. It is understandable, therefore, that law school clinics receive more than three times the number of enquiries during the autumn/winter period (12,543 enquiries) compared with spring/summer (3,928 enquiries).

## Areas of Law

### ADVICE AVAILABLE

In this section we look at the areas of law in which clinics offered advice over the last year. We follow this with analysis of the areas of law in which advice was provided to clients in the year and identify trends emerging over recent years.

The legal problems that bring people to pro bono clinics can be very diverse in nature. Each clinic will decide which areas of law it will offer advice on, informed by local legal need, its own priorities and the expertise of supervisors and volunteers. Some clinics are specialist in nature and will narrow their offering to advice within a particular field or sub-field of law. Other clinics are more generalist in scope, offering advice across a broader spectrum of legal areas.

In figure 3 below we represent the proportion of clinics offering the different areas of law available.

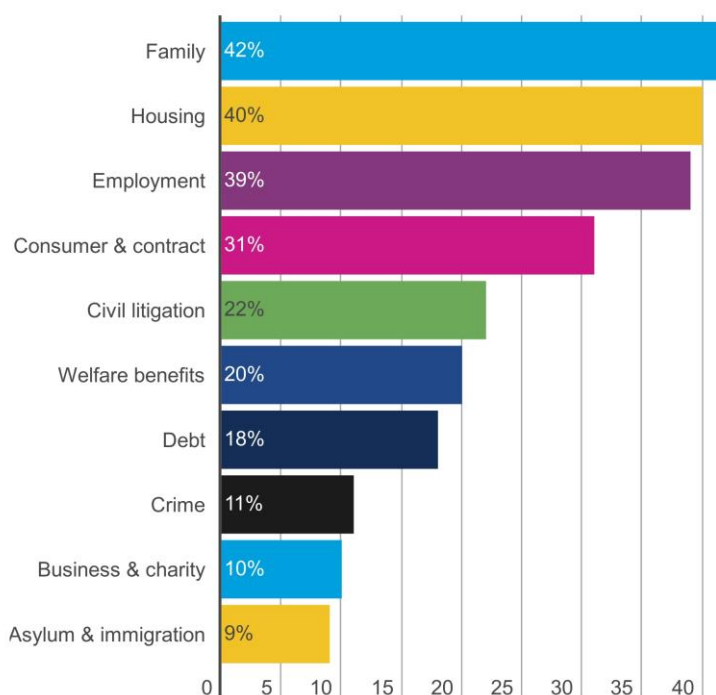


Figure 3.

**Family law  
now most  
commonly  
available  
area**

This year family law has overtaken housing as the area of law most commonly available at clinics across the network, available at 42% of clinics. Housing advice is provided at 40% of the network, followed closely by employment at 39%.

31% of clinics offer advice in consumer & contract law, with smaller proportions of clinics offering advice on civil litigation (22%), welfare benefits (20%); debt (18%); crime (11%); asylum & immigration (9%).

## ADVICE PROVIDED

Turning now to the areas of law in which advice was provided, the proportion of legal advice given in each area is illustrated in figure 4 below.

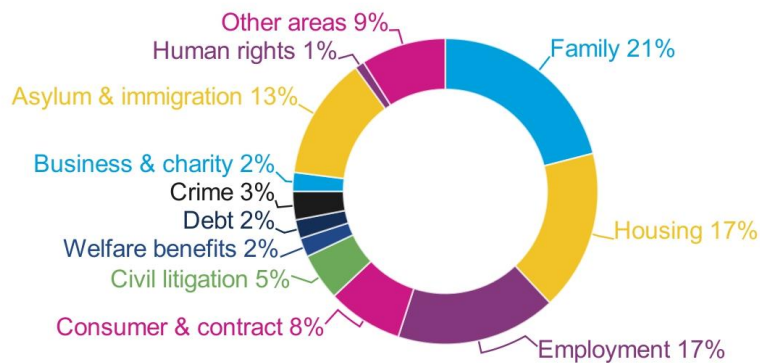


Figure 4.

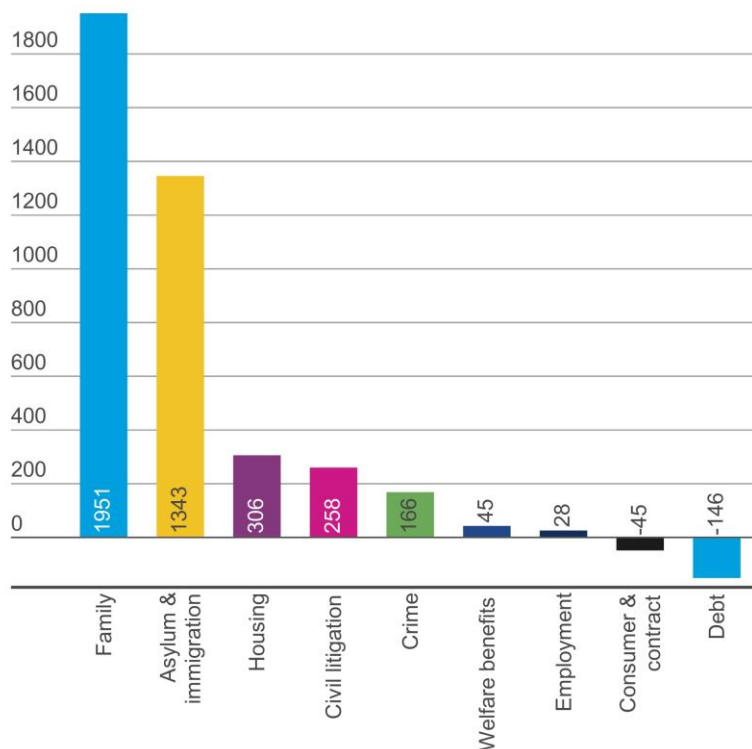
This year family law has overtaken both employment and housing law to become the area of advice most commonly provided at clinics representing 21% of all advice given. This is followed by employment at 17.4% and housing law at 17.1%. These three areas of law make up over half (55.5%) of all advice provided across the network.

**Family, employment and housing law make up over half of all advice provided in clinics**

Asylum and immigration, including asylum support, makes up 13% of advice provided. This is followed by consumer & contract law which constitutes 8% of clinics' advice output.

In these figures, we have also included the category of 'other', which makes up 9% of the total. This category is intended to capture advice provided that does not fit within any of the other named categories. Respondents were given the option to indicate in their survey submission the 'other' areas of advice provided. Responses included: change of name; discrimination; parking issues; police complaints; power of attorney; fines; information rights and privacy; education; personal injury; and mental health law.

In figure 5 below we illustrate the change in the number of separate pieces of advice provided compared to the previous year, across the different areas of law.



**Figure 5**

The largest increase in advice provided was in family law, with an increase of 1,951 individuals compared to the previous year, an increase of 37%. Asylum & immigration advice also saw a significant increase over the year, with the number of clients given advice increasing by 1,343, a 45% increase on the previous year.

**37% increase in people given family law advice**

More modest increases were seen in the areas of crime (23% increase), civil litigation (19% increase), welfare benefits (5.9% increase), housing (5.5% increase) and employment (0.5% increase).

Interestingly, despite the growth of the clinics network over the last year, there has been a 16% decrease in the amount of debt advice being delivered across the network, and a 2% drop in the delivery of consumer & contract advice. This can be seen against a backdrop where changes to the licensing of consumer credit activities in 2014 (when regulation moved from the Office of Fair Trading to the Financial Conduct Authority<sup>3</sup>) resulted in a number of clinics being forced to close debt advice services. This is an issue LawWorks continues to raise with policymakers, and these latest figures provide further evidence of the impact that the regulatory changes have had on the provision of pro bono debt advice.

A large purple circle containing the text "16% decrease in debt advice" in white.

**16%**  
**decrease in  
debt advice**

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.fca.org.uk/news/press-releases/fca-takes-over-regulation-consumer-credit-firms-research-shows-9m-people-are>

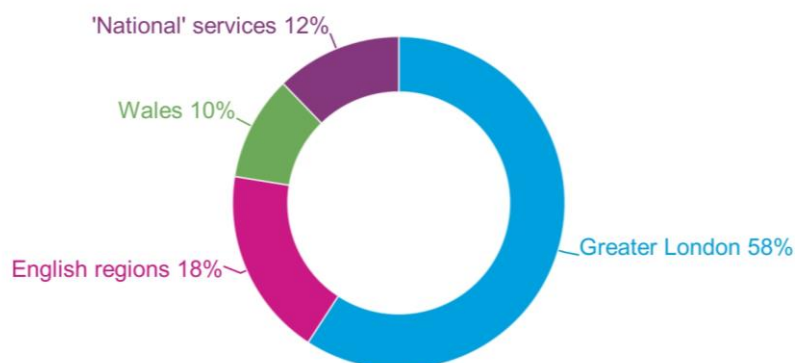
## Regional Variation

With clinics in the network spread across England and Wales, the following section presents information broken down by geographical area. It is followed by an analysis of the work being conducted by 'national' clinics – those which provide services to individuals across England and Wales regardless of where the client is based, often via online or telephone advice clinics.

As the following pages will detail, there is considerable variation across the regions which reflects the concentration of clinics seen in different parts of the country. Over half of all enquiries last year (58%) came from Greater London and 63% of all advice given across the network occurs in London. Information on advice provided across England and Wales is broken down in figure 6 and the table below.

**58%**  
of all  
enquiries  
from Greater  
London

	Client enquiries	Clients given advice	Clients given general information, signposting or referral
<b>East of England</b>	2,291	2,202	82
<b>East Midlands</b>	454	232	9
<b>Greater London</b>	30,934	22,354	3,620
<b>North East England</b>	1,369	507	685
<b>North West England</b>	2,102	1,292	567
<b>South East England</b>	1,172	423	404
<b>South West England</b>	411	200	107
<b>West Midlands</b>	597	254	218
<b>Yorkshire</b>	1,264	753	431
<b>Wales</b>	5,164	2,693	2,252
<b>'National' services</b>	6,552	3,576	2,378



**Figure 6.**

## Pro Bono Volunteering at Clinics

### VOLUNTEERS

Earlier in this report we explored the considerable reach that pro bono clinics have had over the previous year. In this next section we will focus upon the important contribution of volunteers. It is due to the willingness of volunteers to devote their time and energy to pro bono clinics that these services can operate.

Last year, 4,824 individuals volunteered across the LawWorks Clinics Network, a 5% increase on the previous year. Volunteers undertake the key task of providing advice and other legal assistance to clinic clients, however, there are also a variety of other vital supporting roles undertaken by volunteers. Figure 7 below sets out the breakdown of volunteers that supported clinics over the last year.



Figure 7.

The largest category of volunteers is students, with 2,630 participating in clinics across the year – an increase of 26% compared to the previous year. Students participate in clinics in many ways beyond the direct provision of advice, for example acting as a scribe, undertaking initial triage or intake, involvement in casework support and research, and assisting with co-ordination, reception and administration.

**+5%**  
in volunteer  
numbers

**2630**  
volunteer  
students



The second largest category of volunteers across the network is lawyers, comprising of solicitors, trainee solicitors, barristers, and pupil barristers with 1,757 volunteers from these professions participating across the year. Of this group, 73% are solicitors, 19% are trainee solicitors, and 8% are barristers or pupil barristers. This breakdown is represented in figure 8 below.

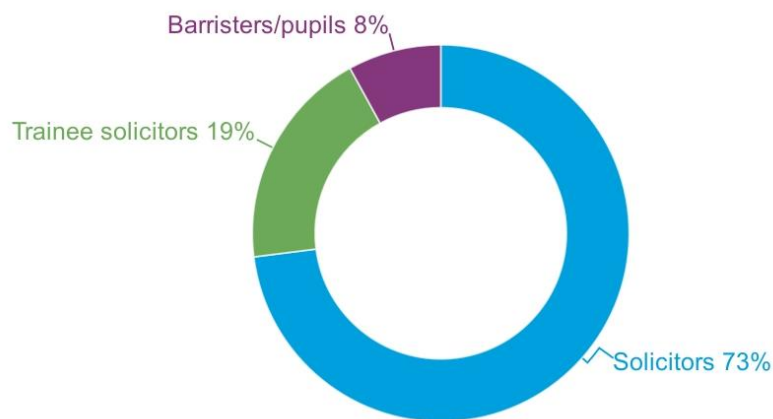


Figure 8.

The remaining volunteers across the clinics network include administrative volunteers (2%), paralegals (1%) and legal executives (0.4%), with 'other' volunteers making up 5.1% of the total.

## VOLUNTEER HOURS

In order to understand the scale of volunteering work undertaken across the network, co-ordinators were asked how many hours of volunteering had been given by each volunteer type across the year. In total, 84,642 pro bono hours were volunteered across the network last year. The breakdown of hours by category is shown in figure 9 below.

**84,642** pro bono  
hours across network

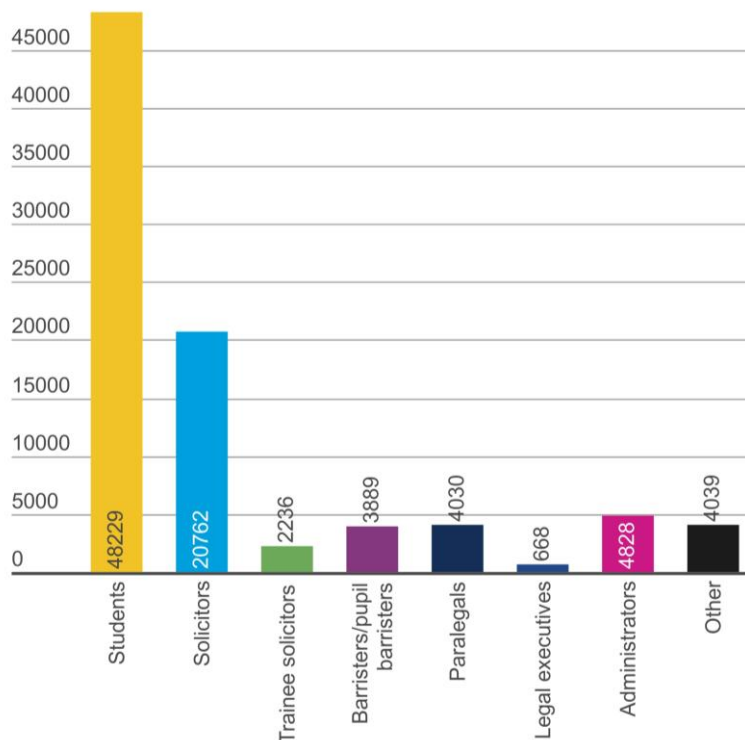


Figure 9.

Students deliver the greatest number of hours at 48,229 hours in total across the year, which represents over half (57%) of the total hours being volunteered. Solicitors, trainee solicitors, barristers and pupil barristers collectively provide 26,887 hours across the year, representing nearly a third of all volunteer hours delivered (32%).

Significant but smaller amounts of time were also delivered by administrative volunteers (4,828 hours or 6%), paralegals (4,030 hours or 5%), legal executives (668 hours or 0.8%) and 'other' volunteers (4,039 hours or 5%).

## Clinic Clients

LawWorks asks clinics to collect anonymised information on the clients they help in order to identify who is benefiting from their services. This information can contribute to ensuring that pro bono efforts are being targeted to those most in need.

### INCOME

LawWorks receives information from clinics on the annual income level of clients which helps us to show whether pro bono assistance is being provided for those likely to be unable to afford legal advice and representation.

We use the *Joseph Rowntree Foundation Minimum Income Standard<sup>4</sup> [2015]* as our key income measure, using an average household income figure of £17,100. For those clients where annual income was recorded, 85% had an income below £17,100.

**85%**  
of clients  
below  
minimum  
income  
standard



**85%** of clinic clients have income  
below minimum income standard

LawWorks is reviewing how we collect information on income so as to ensure that we can better account for the variety of factors which impact on somebody's ability to pay for legal advice. Of course, it is worth noting that the MIS relates to the level of income required for day-to-day essentials and depending on the complexity of the legal matter and the individual's finances more generally, someone with a higher income still may not be in a position to afford legal advice and representation.

<sup>4</sup> Joseph Rowntree Foundation, (2015), "A Minimum Income Standard for the UK in 2015", p2. Accessible at <https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/minimum-income-standard-uk-2015>

## GENDER

Clinics also provided data on the gender identity of clients accessing their advice services. Figure 10 below represents the relative proportions (where gender was recorded) of female clients (59.4%), male clients (40.3%), and non-binary gender (0.3%).

**59%**  
**of clients**  
**female**

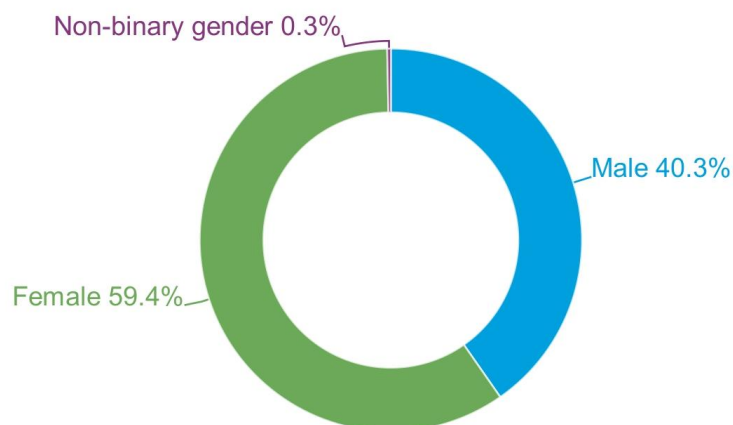


Figure 10.

This year's figures show a significant increase in the proportion of female clients compared to last year where the balance was almost equal between female (49.6%) and male (49.2%) clients. It will be interesting to see how the balance progresses in the coming years.



**59%** of clinic clients are female

## ETHNICITY

Clinics also reported on the ethnicity of clients accessing their services. Figure 11 below sets out (where recorded) the ethnic diversity of clinic clients. Just under half of clinic clients are of 'White' ethnicity (43%). Over half of clinic clients (57%) are from ethnic minorities with nearly a quarter of 'Black' ethnicity (23%), a fifth of 'Asian' ethnicity (20%), with smaller numbers of clients of 'Other Ethnic Origin' ethnicity (12%), and of 'Mixed Race' ethnicity (4%).

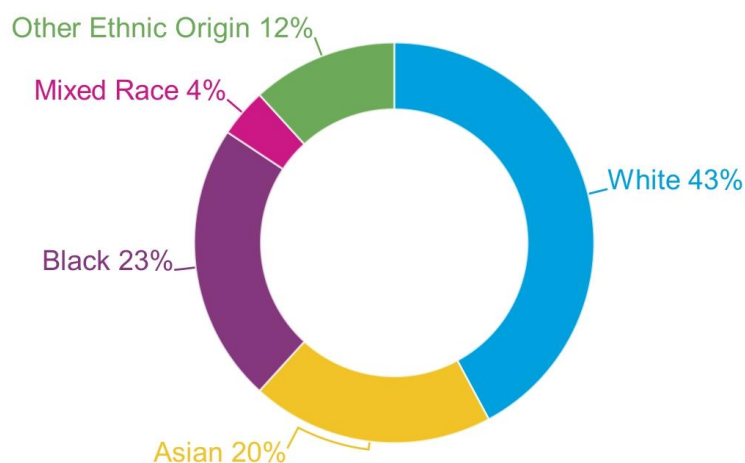


Figure 11.

According to Office of National Statistics data on ethnicity, from the 2011 census, ethnic minorities comprised 14% of the UK population<sup>5</sup>. In contrast, 57% of clients accessing clinics are from ethnic minorities.



**57%** of clinic clients are from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds

<sup>5</sup> Office for National Statistics, (2012), "Ethnicity and National Identity in England and Wales", p3-4. Accessible at [http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171776\\_290558.pdf](http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171776_290558.pdf).

## AGE

Figure 12 below presents the data collected from clinics on the age of clients accessing their services.

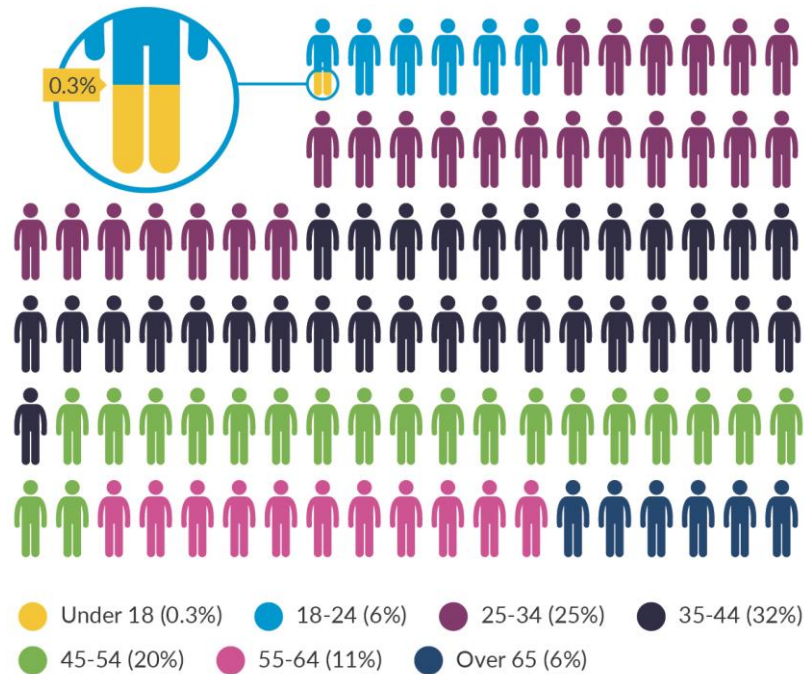
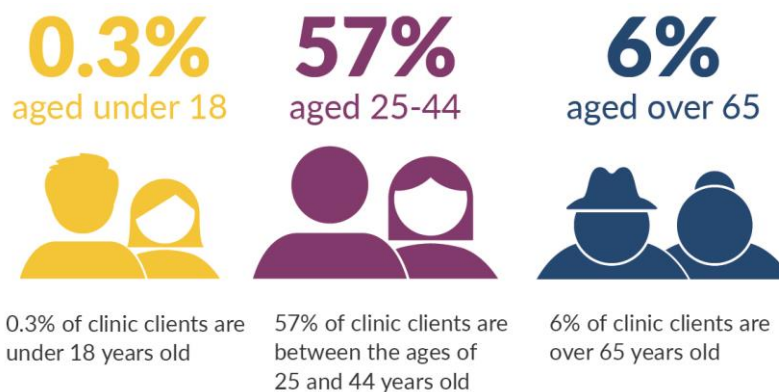


Figure 12.

The age profile of clinic clients is similar to previous years, with over half of clients (57%) between the ages of 25 and 44 years old. Only 0.3% of clients are under 18, and 6% of clients are over 65.



## DISABILITY

In 2015/16 over a quarter (27%) of clinic clients identified that they had one or more disabilities, consistent with client information from last year.



**27%** of clients have a disability

**27%**  
of clients have  
one or more  
disabilities

The Family Resources Survey of 2014/15 found that 20% of the population of England & Wales have a disability<sup>6</sup>, so the figure of 27% represents a proportion notably higher than the level of disability in the general population.

<sup>6</sup> Department for Work & Pensions, (2016), "Family Resources Survey 2014/15", 7. Accessible at [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/531242/family-resources-survey-2014-15.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/531242/family-resources-survey-2014-15.pdf)

## SEXUALITY

In 2015/16 a significant minority of clinic clients (6%) recorded a sexual orientation other than 'straight/heterosexual'. 3% of clinic clients identified as gay, 2% identified as bisexual and 1% identified their sexual orientation as 'other'.



**6%** of clients have a sexuality other than 'straight/heterosexual'



## Clinic Trends

LawWorks undertakes an annual survey of clinic co-ordinators to identify the trends and challenges clinics have been experiencing over the last year. In Figure 13 below we set out the findings.

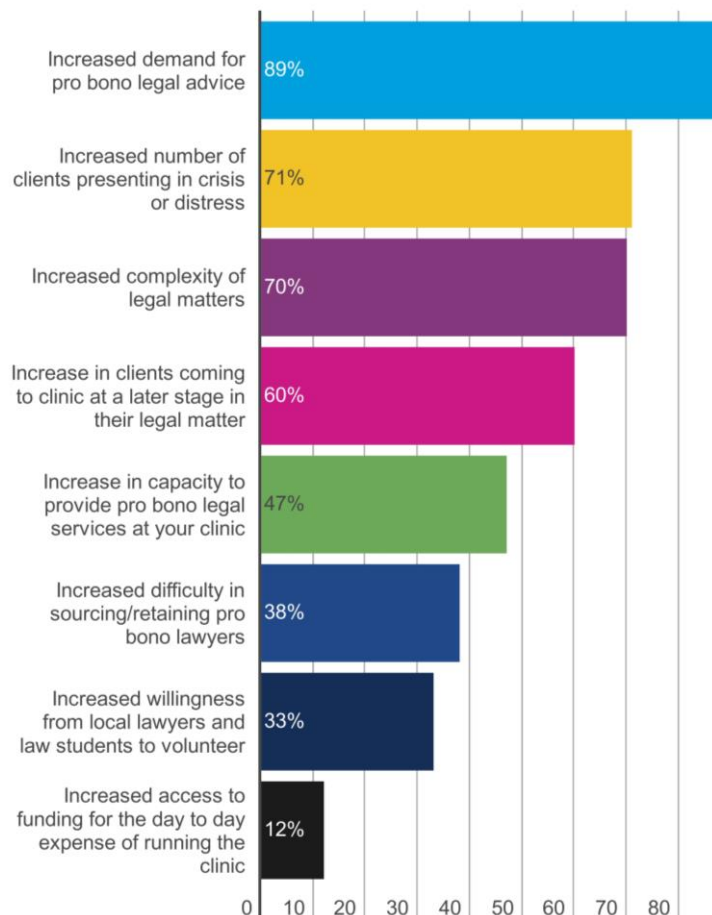


Figure 13.

89% of clinic co-ordinators have seen an increase in demand for pro bono legal advice over the last year. The majority of clinics (71%) have also seen an increase in the number of clients in crisis or distress.

Over two-thirds (70%) of clinic co-ordinators reported an increase in the complexity of the legal matters clients are presenting at the clinics and three-fifths (60%) are seeing clients presenting at a later stage in their problem.



Against a backdrop of increased demand and complexity, over a third of clinics (38%) report experiencing difficulty in sourcing and retaining pro bono lawyers.

Looking at the underlying infrastructure needed to host a pro bono clinic, almost half of clinics (47%) have increased capacity to provide pro bono services compared to the previous year, with nearly two-fifths (37%) seeing no change over this period.

It remains a challenging environment for many clinics, with nearly a third (29%) seeing a decrease in access to funding for the day to day expenses of running their clinic, and less than one in eight (12%) seeing an increase in access to funding.

Within this context, it is promising to see that a third of clinics (33%) report an increased willingness from lawyers and students to volunteer. It is therefore encouraging to observe at a time of such high demand an increase in the willingness of the legal community to volunteer their time, skills and knowledge to support individuals in need of help.

**A third of clinics have seen an increased willingness from lawyers and students to volunteer**

## Client Impact Assessment

LawWorks has been developing the monitoring and evaluation that takes place at clinics in an effort to increase knowledge about the impact that attendance at a pro bono clinic has on clients.

### PROCESS AND SAMPLE INFORMATION

A sample of clients that attended clinics in Wales between May 2015 and April 2016 took part in surveys and interviews which took place:

- **just before** the clinic advice session (with 364 clients completing a paper form);
- **immediately after** their advice session (with 324 clients completing a paper form);
- **six weeks to six months after** the advice was given (with 68 clients taking part in follow up telephone interviews).

The 364 client sample that took part in this impact assessment had the following characteristics:

- **Health:** 28% have a long-term illness, health condition or disability;
- **Employment status:** 50% employed, 31% unemployed, 10% self-employed, 4% retired, 4% student, 1% homemaker/carer;
- **Means-tested benefits:** 49% are in receipt of means-tested state benefits;
- **Legal area of advice:** 46% family law; 46% employment; 3% housing, 1% debt. Other legal areas included welfare benefits, business, consumer and crime.

The analysis below presents the main findings at each of the three stages in the feedback process.

## BEFORE ADVICE

### Clients across all legal areas

At the pre-advice stage, clients identified a range of emotions caused by their legal problem as shown in figure 14 below. Notably 82% felt 'stressed' because of the issue, with 77% 'worried' and 62% 'upset'. Over half identified feeling 'anxious' (56%), 'depressed' (53%), 'angry' (53%), and 'confused' (52%).

**82%**  
**stressed**  
**because of**  
**their legal**  
**issue**

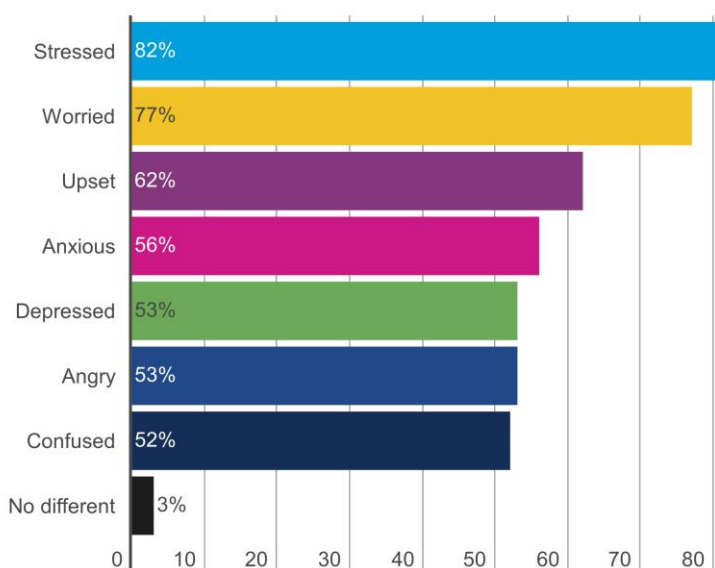


Figure 14.

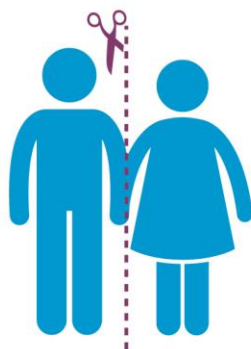
7% of respondents identified 'other' feelings resulting from their legal issues, where responses included 'suicidal', 'helpless', 'hopeless', 'frustrated', 'humiliated' and 'degraded'. 3% of respondents indicated that they felt 'no different' because of their legal problem.

67% of respondents felt that their mental or physical health had been affected by the legal problem, with 24% feeling it had not affected their health, and 9% feeling this was not applicable to their situation.



**67%** of clients felt that their mental or physical health had been affected by the legal problem.

The majority of respondents (85%) felt that their legal problem was having an effect on their family or personal relationships with 54% experiencing an increase in tension with family, and over a third (36%) experiencing an increase in arguments with family.



**85%** of clients felt that their legal problem was having an effect on relationships.

Clients also identified that the legal problem was affecting behavior problems in children (17%) and resulting in increased arguments with children (7%). 15% of clients referenced that the legal problem was having an effect on separation or divorce. 15% of respondents stated that they were experiencing 'no difference' in their family or personal relationships in relation to their legal problem.

## Employment law cases

***'I have always been the main provider for my family and now I feel very stressed as I have to rely on benefits for the foreseeable future.'***

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165 clients with employment law legal problems were asked about how the issue was affecting them in practical terms.

People described the effect of their legal issue on their employment, primarily. Many (47) had lost their jobs, with a similar number (42) mentioning a drop in income, loss of financial status, financial problems or money worries. Six of those who had lost their jobs were pregnant or on maternity leave. A few (5) had chosen to leave their job, while others (6) felt the threat of job loss. Related issues included being denied their paperwork such as P45s or payslips, were causing issues for finding another job or sorting out taxes.

Some (15) reported that being in work was difficult due to the issue, for instance because of bullying (3) or damage to their reputation (3).

***'Psychologically hard to go and be in work. Had heart palpitations and sometimes feel even physically sick before going into work.'***

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One client stated that they were ***'feeling stressed and depressed – scared of facing people at work.'***

Others (10) felt uncertain about their future employment prospects, or that their education was now also at risk (4).

For some, salary issues caused financial and emotional hardship around paying bills (12) and buying essential goods for themselves and their family (5). Six had lost their home or accommodation, with one person homeless while pregnant.

The ability to earn money and be independent or provide for others can form a strong part of personal identity. Some reported feelings of humiliation, a loss of confidence and a general loss of trust as a result of their legal issue. There was also concern about the well-being of their children (4), and an experience of normal life being disrupted.

***'Lost everything – friends – everything in a mess. Bad mouthed – feel like there is no justice.'***

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The issue affected people's relationships with family and friends (18), causing damage or loss to the relationship or causing people to feel isolated. Mental and emotional well-being suffered too, with fourteen reporting worry, stress or anxiety and ten mentioning depression or unhappiness.

Other emotional effects included anger, frustration, feeling suicidal, worsening of existing mental health conditions, and a sense that the problem was dominating their lives. People mentioned a great sense of uncertainty about their future, and that they were losing time due to the issue, with one stating ***'life seems to be on hold.'***

Mental health and emotional distress can have a direct effect on physical well-being. People reported being unable to eat or sleep, losing weight and having headaches, as well as memory loss. One client stated ***'not eating properly – sleep – mistakes driving on the road.'***

***'It has destroyed my life – emotionally, mentally, socially, financially and most importantly my dignity and sense of being has been destroyed.'***

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## Family law cases

***'I am in considerable debt – over £6,000. I am a single mother, alone in this country, with no support at all. It has affected every practical area of my life. Debt, freedom to see my friends, work, career...'***

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162 clients with family law legal problems were asked about how the issue was affecting them in practical terms.

People described the effect of their legal issue on their relationships and mental health, primarily. Twelve felt their relationships were suffering, six were concerned about their children's well-being, and twelve had restricted or no access to their children.

***'Emotional impact is indescribable on every relationship strand. Day to day activities tremendously affected.'***

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Jobs and income were also affected. Nineteen reported that they were underperforming at work, or reducing their hours due to stress and disruption. Others had left their job or felt their work or business was at risk. Nine described financial loss or hardship, while others mentioned debt, and financial worries or instability.

***'It is causing problems with the children, and making it difficult to concentrate on work and stay calm.'***

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Five people had lost their home or had to move. Some described feeling in limbo or that their life was on hold, and that they were losing time due to the issue, for instance travelling to and from court.

In terms of mental and emotional health, people described feeling stressed (15), depressed or distressed (14), as well as angry (5) or anxious/on edge (3).

***'Amazing lows of depression – inability to do everyday things.'***

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Two people described feeling suicidal, with one person having attempted suicide twice. People also described a loss of motivation (3) or ability to focus (5), a loss of hope/interest (2), or function (5).

Physical health was affected too (10), including sleep (10), eating, headache and heart issues. One person described drinking more, another stated ***'feeling depressed – causing difficulty sleeping – problems getting up for work.'***

***'Job loss. Unable to work. Difficulty concentrating. Loss of home. Attempted suicide twice. Ill health.'***

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### Other areas of law

Lower numbers of participants experiencing legal problems in other areas of law took part in the surveys. In answer to the question *'How has this legal problem affected you in practical terms?'* the themes emerging for each area of law are presented in the table below.

Case type	Number of responses	Themes
Housing	13	Stress, depression, off work, unable to remortgage, loss of time, education affected
Debt	5	Depressed, stressed, anxious
Welfare benefits	3	No income, destitution
Business	3	Education, personal life
Consumer	2	Inconvenience, [mild] stress
Crime	2	Travel to the US, future job prospects

One client needing advice in housing law said that they were *'not enjoying going home after work'*, with a client needing welfare benefits advice stating that they were *'depending on family and friends for food'* and *'selling household goods to live.'*

## IMMEDIATELY AFTER ADVICE

In surveys completed immediately after the advice was given at clinics, clients considered the impact of that advice. 93% felt that they had a better understanding of the legal matter on which they were helped, with 4% feeling they did not, and 2% feeling that this was not applicable in their situation.



**93%** of clinic clients had a better understanding of the legal matter after getting the advice

Of the 272 clients that felt stress was applicable in their situation, 81% felt that they were less stressed as a result of the free legal help they received.



**81%** of clinic clients less stressed after getting the advice

Considering how they felt following the advice, nearly half felt 'reassured' (48%), nearly a third felt relieved (31%), over a quarter felt 'able to face [their] problems' (26%). Smaller proportions referenced feeling 'calm' (24%) and 'empowered' (18%). 11% of respondents stated that they felt 'no different' following the advice.

In considering how else the respondents felt as a result of the help they received at the clinic, responses included 'confident', 'informed', 'positive', 'optimistic' and 'happy'.

Respondents were then given the opportunity to provide further information on the effect that receiving free legal help had had on them. Of the 144 responses to this question, participants' answers covered three main topics - the service itself, their emotional response, and their legal capability. Most people focused on the quality of the service.

Forty-two people said the service was helpful or useful, while others (27) described the advice as good, informative, or that they were happy with the advice. Twenty-six expressed gratitude or a sense of gladness that they had come to the clinic.

People described their advisers as positive, knowledgeable, professional, respectful, straightforward and intuitive. Some praised the service and advisers for helping them to feel at ease, being friendly approachable and reassuring, providing support and fully understanding their position.

Two people expressed that they had found the advice helpful, even though it was not what they wanted to hear. Three criticised their adviser for not being on their side, or not being certain what they should do next. One person who said that they had not been called back described the service as 'rubbish'.

People described emotional responses to receiving advice including relief (7), reduced stress (3) and being reassured that there are people who want to help in the world (3).

***'A large weight has been taken off me,' said one client, with another adding the advice had 'lifted a burden off my head.'***

Other responses included feeling less helpless, less scared, listened to, more positive and able to move forward with their issue. Two mentioned hope, or being able to look ahead in their lives more generally.

***'She gave me straightforward advice and even helped me with a letter. I feel like I have more time with my daughter and am able to focus on her. Thank you!'***

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Three said they still felt sad or worried, and one person said that they now felt more stressed and isolated than before. ***'I feel that I understand a little more and am very pleased with what is available. But still sad, worried.'***

In terms of legal capability, fourteen described having the knowledge or understanding to make a decision, tackle their issue or now have a better way forward. People also said that they now know their rights, understand better where they stand, and feel more confident and less confused.

***‘Receiving free legal [advice] has definitely helped me emotionally and I feel more comfortable applying to the court.’***

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***‘Great help! Feeling positive. I have a plan, don’t feel as helpless and confused.’***

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## SIX WEEKS TO SIX MONTHS AFTER ADVICE

In follow up telephone interviews, 68 clients provided further detail about the effects of the legal advice they received at the clinic and the impact this had had on their situation.

At this follow up stage, 92% felt that they had a better understanding of the legal matter on which they were helped. 6% felt that they did not, and a further 2% felt that this was not applicable in their situation.

Of the 54 clients interviewed that felt stress was applicable in their situation, 80% stated that they felt less stressed about the legal matter since receiving the advice. Where clients had indicated that they now felt less stressed, 86% felt that this had led to an improvement in relationships with their family.

Clients were asked to reflect on their health since receiving the advice at the clinic. Of the 54 clients that felt health was applicable in their situation, 67% felt that their mental or physical health had improved since receiving the free legal help, and 78% felt that their wellbeing had improved since receiving the free legal help.

Clients were asked to consider whether the legal advice had enabled them to feel more empowered to deal with the situation or not, and give reasons for their answers. A significant majority (83% of the 53 clients that felt empowerment was applicable to their situation) responded that the advice had helped them to feel more empowered.

Where further detail was given, it fell into the broad categories of knowledge or understanding, skills, confidence and emotional benefits.

Fourteen people described having an improved understanding of their situation, with 11 knowing better what to do next. Other areas of greater understanding mentioned were mediation, and their rights.

***'After receiving the advice I know what to do in the future, even if I was alone! Alone you can't do anything, I needed advice. Knowledge is power.'***

A purple circular graphic containing the text "92% of clients had better understanding of their matter".

**92%**  
of clients had  
better  
understanding  
of their matter

A purple circular graphic containing the text "83% felt more empowered after receiving advice".

**83%**  
felt more  
empowered  
after receiving  
advice

Skills mentioned included how best to speak in court, knowing what to do if a similar situation came up in the future, and being more able to focus.

***‘If you know what your rights are, that’s it, you are empowered. Nobody can take that knowledge away from me once I know it.’***

Some described being more confident in their position, or in their own solicitor. This issue cropped up a few times across the broader response set – that some use the clinic to get a second legal opinion, which can be very beneficial.

Two people felt the advice was too limited to be empowering. Seven reported they did not feel more empowered, either because the guidance came too late, the case was still on-going, or that the idea of empowerment did not feel relevant to them. One client stated ***‘I would say that... I am in a better position than before, but I would not say that I feel more empowered. I have never really felt so.’***

Reflecting on the progress of their legal matter, clients were asked about any money that was owed to them related to their legal matter, for example welfare benefits, unpaid wages and compensation. 31 felt this question was applicable to them of which 23% had received money that was owed to them as a result of receiving the free legal advice.



**23%** of clinic clients had since received money owed to them

Of 48 clients that felt the question was applicable to them, 44% had avoided going to court about the legal matter as a result of the advice.



**44%** avoided going to court about the legal matters as a result of the advice

Clients were then asked an open question on other ways in which the free legal help had improved things for them, which 59 clients answered.

All but two people said that the advice had helped them in other ways. For these two, it was because their case was still on-going, or had not really been resolved to their satisfaction.

For the majority, the earlier outcome themes were repeated, including knowledge, skills, confidence, emotional well-being, physical health, getting a positive outcome to their case, and being able to plan for the future again.

***‘The clinic helped me in gaining a better position to maintain a role in the life of my children.’***

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Additional themes included being glad to have representation in court, no longer feeling suicidal, feeling more integrated in society, and having more faith in humanity in general.

Two participants described a changed attitude to the legal system, with one stating:

***‘Yes, basically I thought that the justice system was a load of rubbish but it’s worked in my favour. I have a fair outcome and things are improving.’***

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Some mentioned the benefits of meeting others in a similar situation. This enabled people to feel less alone and also to have the satisfaction of helping others in a similar situation.

One person's account brought many themes together:

***Mentally I am in a far better position. The solicitor has helped take a lot of the stress away. It has helped me set aside the issues, the cause of my worry. Previously I couldn't sleep. The guidance helped me to relax... I have been able to crack on with my work rather than thinking of it all the time. As a result I have a better relationship with my partner and my kids. At times it has felt like a bereavement. The solicitor has helped me to move on. The case is no longer dominating my life.'***

Clients were next asked what they would have done if they had not received the free legal advice at the clinics, which was answered by 61 respondents.

***'It would have been very bad for me. I would have probably entered the contract, being very naïve.'***

People described potential effects of being without the clinic's support in four areas: on their legal choices, actions within the system, relationships and emotions. Sixteen said they'd have gone elsewhere, including:

- Paying for solicitor (possibly with a loan);
- Keeping looking for further help;
- Union;
- Another advice centre;
- Small Claims Court;
- ACAS;
- Ombudsman;
- Non-expert friend.

One person said they would have represented themselves as a litigant in person.

*'I would have gone through the courts anyway but it would have taken a lot longer to get to the position that we are in now... I have been put in a stronger position more quickly... I really didn't have a clue what to expect.'*

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Thirteen people said they feel they would not have coped well, or would not have been able to do it alone. Some said their actions would have been the same, perhaps with less confidence, while others said they would have done nothing or delayed action.

*'I think that I would have tried to ignore the problem if I had not received this advice and just hoped it would have gone away.'*

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A few described how they would likely have made a 'wrong move'. Two people felt that they would have lost contact with their children.

*'If I had not found [the clinic] I would have probably attacked the system, and lost all contact with the people important to me, also with my ex-partner. I wanted to challenge the system, but the risk of doing that is being totally isolated and risk to never be able to change the position in better any more.'*

Lastly, clients were asked for any further comments on the service they received at the clinic and how it could be improved. These questions prompted a few people to describe what they particularly appreciated about the service: reduction in stress, good advice, getting their desired outcome, and having a welcoming environment.

Most respondents to these questions gave some additional suggestions for improvements. These included:

- longer with the adviser;
- more advice sessions (particularly, more than one appointment);
- the clinic being open more frequently;
- more of these types of service being available;
- more collaboration and signposting between services;
- more awareness of the services, for instance in GP surgeries and through the Local Authority;
- more online advice;
- being able to book appointments in advance (where not available);
- support in court itself.

A small number of people had critical feedback on the service they received at the clinic and anonymised details, together with specific suggestions and recommendations which have been passed to the respective organisations.