

LSA

Legal Services Agency

Doing the Right Thing,
the Right Way

2023-2024 Annual Report

Our Year in Numbers



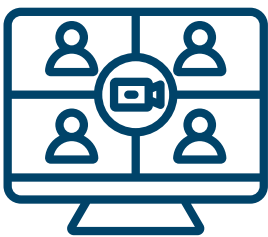
We appeared at over **1,200** hearings.



We provided advice and representation to over **1,400** people.



We received over **26,000** telephone calls.



We hosted **26** live webinars.



We raised **17** Judicial Review proceedings.



Chair's Introduction

Welcome to the Trustees' Annual Report covering the period April 2023 to April 2024.

The trustees are pleased to support the work of LSA, which has now been providing high-quality legal support to people who would otherwise not be able to access legal services, for over thirty years. We are proud of our role as the largest not-for-profit Law Centre in Scotland, and of our contribution to tackling the effects of inequality and poverty which unfortunately remain endemic to our society.

In line with our [vision](#), we remain committed to working for social justice and advocating for human rights for individuals and communities across the country.

In summarising our work over the last year, we would like to highlight a notable rise in the number of people who have required our help and assistance. While we are pleased that we have been able to assist a greater number of clients, this increase in demand reflects the challenges that communities continue to face as a result of the lasting socio-economic impacts of the pandemic, global conflict, and the cost-of-living crisis. We have strived to rise to these challenges, continuing to respond to homelessness, employment rights issues, disability rights issues, and the legal needs of people with mental health problems; as well as

establishing new services in line with our established values.

This is only possible through the hard work, dedication, and willingness to go the 'extra mile' by our highly professional staff group – in administration and legal services. The trustees are hugely appreciative of the commitment shown by our staff and in their individual and collective achievements on behalf of our clients.

LSA's clients are often highly marginalised and, in some instances, have complex needs. This sets us apart from mainstream legal services who would not be able to devote the amount of resources or time needed to respond appropriately to such a vulnerable client group. We value the specialist input, knowledge, and expertise of our solicitors but this comes at a cost, and Legal Aid is simply not enough to cover the work carried out. As such, we are only able to provide the services we do as a result of grant funding, which in itself is limited.

We are highly appreciative of our full range of funders and rely on their support. We would like to specifically thank the Scottish Government, Glasgow City Council, the Robertson Trust, AB Charitable Trust, the National Lottery Community Fund, and St-Martin-in-the-Fields' Frontline Fund. Their

financial support has been invaluable in allowing us to provide high quality legal advice and assistance to those who need it most.

However, due to funding limitations, this year LSA has struggled to cover rising overhead costs and to adjust salaries to keep up with inflation. Our financial position is outlined in the report and highlights the challenges facing the field. These challenges affect staff retention and recruitment which can have a knock-on impact on our service provision. We remain committed to providing our full range of services, but we reiterate our call for the funding shortfall in law centre services to be fully addressed by central and local government. We will continue to lobby and campaign, and welcome the support of colleagues, elected members, and communities in this respect.

In spite of these challenges, the past year has been an incredibly busy period for LSA as we have continued to develop our service delivery whilst also addressing organisational change and improvement.

A very noteworthy change was the relocation of our Glasgow premises earlier this year to the well-known Savoy Centre in Sauchiehall Street. This was a significant development for LSA, having been at our previous offices for over 30 years. Thanks are due to all who helped with the move to our new location, which has proven to be more accessible for clients and an enjoyable, healthy workspace for staff.

The Board continue to be committed to improving working conditions for our staff, and accordingly, approved a trial period of hybrid working with the aim of increasing flexibility in working practices along with positively

impacting staff well-being, whilst ensuring no reduction in service provision.

Thanks also go to our volunteers who provide a much-appreciated level of additional support behind the scenes. In a similar vein, thanks also go to our board members who have worked consistently hard over the past year in ensuring our level of oversight is thoroughly professional and in providing strategic direction to the work of LSA. The work of trustees often goes unacknowledged, but an effective board is essential to the overall health of an organisation, and as a board we would like to thank all staff who have supported the board in its work this year.

A special mention needs go to our CEO Aaliya Seyal, who has provided excellent leadership, steered the work of the LSA, and supported the Board in its duties with an exceptional level of professionalism.

This has been a challenging but successful year with many achievements as detailed in the report. Thanks again go to our staff, funders, board members, volunteers, and many supporters who have contributed their time, energy, and experience to the work of LSA. We are very proud of the work that we do, all of which goes towards providing legal help to those that need it most, tackling inequality, and effecting social change.

We commend this report to you and look forward to your continuing support.

Barrie Levine
Chair, LSA



CEO Report

“Real change, enduring change, happens one step at a time.”
- Ruth Bader Ginsburg

LSA’s reflections of the past year are that the challenges that communities continue to face have been exacerbated by the social and economic aftermath of the pandemic, by global conflict, and the ongoing impact of the cost-of-living crisis. Sadly, the impact of these extreme situations is often felt first and worst by those already experiencing disadvantage.

Throughout the year, we have seen more people struggling to make ends meet and with severe rent arrears, putting them at risk of losing their homes and significantly impacting their mental well-being. I am immensely proud of how the team at LSA have remained committed to supporting individuals during these difficult times. With thanks to the dedication of our staff and volunteers, and the invaluable backing of our funders, we’ve been able to uphold people’s legal rights and empower them to make informed decisions and undertake changes required through these challenging times.

The impact of the cost of living crisis is not felt alone by the people we assist, but also by LSA as an organisation. Rising operational costs and overheads have not been met with a corresponding increase in grants and overall income, which has presented challenges of its own. Nevertheless, despite these financial strains, I am delighted to report that we have continued to make significant progress in our mission to defend and enhance the rights of people experiencing disadvantage.

One of our proudest achievements has been our ability to change, adapt and innovate in our service delivery. Whether through face-to-face appointments, outreach, home visits, or telephone and video consultations, we’ve maintained flexibility in meeting the diverse needs of those we assist. This approach has also allowed us to provide services suiting individual circumstances and preferences and extend our reach across the country, supporting individuals in 29 of Scotland’s 32 local authorities in Scotland.

We are also pleased to report on the successful delivery of a number of new initiatives designed to address the needs of our communities. These initiatives focus on protecting employment rights, the rights of disabled individuals, and preventing recurring cycles of homelessness and disadvantage for those who have interacted with the criminal justice system. Each initiative is driven by a collaborative and preventative approach, focusing on early intervention to reduce hardship before it escalates.

At the heart of LSA’s work is our commitment to providing a high-quality, person-centred service. We do not just address the legal issue in isolation, we take a holistic and multi-disciplinary approach ensuring individuals are connected with additional support services to tackle the underlying causes of disadvantage. This enables individuals to feel empowered in accessing justice and interacting with other services to address root causes of disadvantage, maximising the chance of achieving sustainable outcomes.

Our dedication to developing robust legal strategies remains a cornerstone of our work. We conduct a comprehensive assessment of the law, ensuring that we not only consider the primary legislation relevant to the subject matter, but also take into account equalities and human rights law to safeguard our clients' basic human rights. Applying these principles, we are pleased to report advice and representation provided to 1,437 individuals in the last financial year, a 9% increase from the previous year.

Another major milestone this year has been the relocation of our Glasgow office. After 30 years at our previous location, we identified new premises at Savoy House, offering greater accessibility, particularly for disability access and retaining a central city location. The move, completed in January 2024, was a monumental effort, and I am deeply grateful to the entire team for their hard work and patience throughout the process. I am delighted to share that the team is now settled and enjoying their new working environment.

In the pages ahead, we are excited to share the significant progress and activities of LSA in:

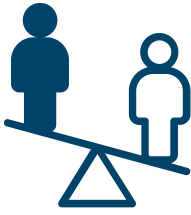
1. Addressing the effects of poverty, disadvantage and discrimination
2. Promoting human rights and equalities
3. Strengthening communities
4. Providing high quality legal information and education
5. Influencing policy and practice

It goes without saying that none of the accomplishments highlighted in these pages could have been achieved without our remarkable team. I extend my deepest gratitude to our staff for their tireless efforts, our volunteers for their unwavering dedication, our trustees for their vital governance, and our partners for their collaborative support. I would also like to thank our funders for their continued trust in our work. Their support enables us to tackle injustice and to do the right thing, the right way.

As we look to the year ahead, there is no doubt that the challenges for the communities we serve will persist. However, I am confident that LSA is well-equipped and ready to face these challenges head-on.

Aaliya Seyal
Chief Executive Officer

Strategic Objectives and Activities



1. Addressing the effects of poverty, disadvantage, and discrimination



2. Promoting human rights and equalities



3. Strengthening communities



4. Providing high quality legal information and education



5. Influencing policy and practice

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Housing and General Court Department

The Housing and General Court Department has had a successful year undertaking prevention of homelessness work.

Services have been provided in Glasgow, East and West Dunbartonshire, North & South Lanarkshire, Renfrewshire and Inverclyde. Our department focuses on preventing homelessness, mainly through defending evictions and mortgage repossessions.

We also assist people who have no accommodation to obtain accommodation through the local authority. This work involves appearing in the Sheriff Court, the Housing and Property Chamber of the First Tier Tribunal and instructing cases in the Court of Session in Edinburgh. We appear in procedural hearings as well as full evidential hearings to assert our clients' rights.



The department has a physical full time presence in both Glasgow and Inverclyde. A help desk continues to operate to provide emergency representation to those facing eviction at Glasgow Sheriff Court. Building on a relationship with the local authority's homeless and welfare rights services in West Dunbartonshire, we accept referrals directly from them to provide a similar service to those defending eviction proceedings in Dumbarton Sheriff Court. This is an important project providing emergency legal representation to those who require our assistance. We have continued to work in partnership with Airdrie CAB to assist people in North Lanarkshire. Second tier support is provided to advice workers with Renfrewshire and Hamilton CAB.

Since the coronavirus pandemic, we have continued to see an increase in the level of rent arrears that people have accrued, and an increasing number of people presenting to us with complex cases, including evictions based on criminal convictions and anti-social behaviour. The department continues to operate as one of the few sources of advice and representation in respect of the latter cases. The after effects of the pandemic and cost of living crisis continue to pose challenges for those on low and insecure incomes with the services the department provides as important as ever.

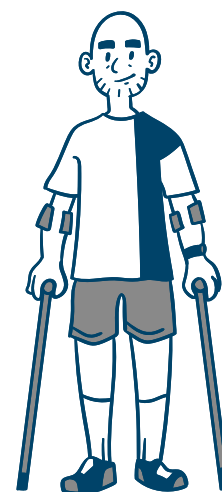
Case Studies

Mr P:

Mr P approached our helpdesk at Glasgow Sheriff Court seeking advice. His landlord had raised eviction proceedings against him due to a criminal conviction for assault for which he had received a prison sentence. Mr P suffered from complex mental health issues, including post-traumatic stress disorder and would be homeless if evicted.

The reasonableness defence was not available, so we opposed the granting of decree on the basis of the locality of the offence, relying on interpretation of the tenancy contract and the proportionality of breaching the tenant's rights in terms of Article 8 of the ECHR.

An outcome was negotiated with Mr P's landlord whereby he agreed to the demotion of the tenancy to a Short Scottish Secure Tenancy, allowing him an opportunity to keep his home.

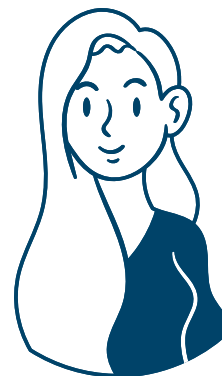


Ms H:

Ms H was an occupant of asylum accommodation and was facing eviction as she had lost her right to accommodation following granting of leave to remain. The local authority had accepted duties to secure her and her family permanent accommodation as a homeless person under the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987 but, in part due to her complex needs as a result of disability, had failed to offer accommodation and an eviction had been scheduled.

We instructed counsel to prepare and lodge a petition for judicial review of the local authority's breach of their statutory duty. Following the lodging of the petition, the local authority discovered that the asylum accommodation was being sold to a social housing provider and an arrangement was reached whereby Ms H would be made a Scottish Secure Tenant in fulfilment of the local authority's duties.

Ms H was happy to remain within the accommodation, it being suitable for her needs, and avoided having to move with her children to temporary hotel accommodation.



CABx collaborations

We have a number of collaborations with CABx, with models set-up to provide second-tier support to staff, increasing their capacity to deal with complex legal matters as required.



Airdrie CAB

We partner with Airdrie CAB in delivering their North Lanarkshire Community Legal Service. A qualified solicitor works closely with the lay representative, taking on referrals and providing qualified legal representation at the appropriate stage in housing-related legal proceedings.

Hamilton CAB

In a new partnership established in November 2023, we operate bi-weekly second tier advice clinics on undertaking homeless prevention work, and resource dependent referrals to us for more complex contentious cases. We also provide assistance on non-housing matters such as debt cases and heritable rights.

Renfrewshire CAB

Our collaboration with Renfrewshire CAB has been operating successfully for the second year running. We provide second tier advice clinics three times a week, and legal representation in complex cases as required. Our collaboration is focused on addressing disadvantage and protecting the rights of communities, aligning well with both organisations objectives.

Welfare Benefits collaboration

Our partnership with Glasgow Advice and Information Network partners has continued to work well, collaborating to challenge 35 unfair welfare benefit decisions.



Glasgow's Advice & Information Network

Our Benefits Administrator assists with providing evidence for welfare benefits tribunal hearings. Our assistance enables people to assert their rights and access the welfare benefits that they are entitled to.

More than 95% of the decisions are overturned with people being awarded the social security benefits that they are entitled to.

Inverclyde Housing Rights Project

Our Inverclyde Housing Rights service has continued to provide residents of the Inverclyde area with advice, assistance, and representation at court and at the Tribunals service.



Our core work focuses on prevention of homelessness, defending evictions from social housing tenancies and private tenancies, mortgage repossessions, and other tenancy issues.

We have continued to provide tenants with advice about the validity of eviction notices served on them by their landlords. We work closely with the Homelessness Services at Inverclyde Council to prevent clients with valid eviction notices from becoming street homeless.

We have also provided advice and assistance to clients who are facing homelessness about their homeless applications, reviewing decisions by the Council, and about standards of temporary accommodation. We have advised clients on the legislative changes brought about by the cost of living crisis, and the changes to homelessness law.

The project continues to deal with high numbers of social sector eviction cases. As with other geographical areas, we are being required to provide advice and representation to tenants who have accrued increasingly high levels of rent arrears as well as those facing eviction due to criminal convictions and alleged antisocial behaviour.

In the past year, the project has also dealt with a higher number of homeless persons in dispute with the local authority over the provision of temporary accommodation, both in terms of that provided and alleged breaches of occupancy agreements.

Case Studies

Mr R:

Mr R contacted us whilst living in emergency interim accommodation provided by the local authority. He had been there for a few months, but was removed and left homeless after an allegation of drug-dealing. Mr R denied the allegation but admitted that he was suffering from drug and alcohol addiction, as well as other health issues.

There is no rule through which local authorities can discharge their duty to provide interim accommodation. We consulted an Advocate, who recommended initiating judicial review. Mr R's case was heard in the Court of Session the following week.

The Judge decided in Mr R's favour, citing his vulnerability, poor mental health, and addiction as reasons why. The Judge granted interim orders which meant that the local authority had to provide Mr R with accommodation prior to a substantive hearing. Soon after, Mr R was offered a place at a residential rehabilitation program. He has informed us that he is staying for six months and is happy with the progress he is making.



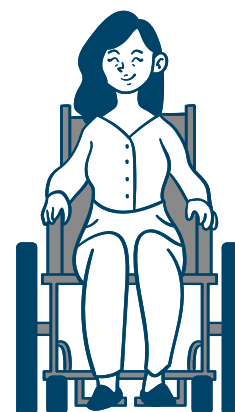
Ms Q:

Ms Q contacted us seeking urgent advice regarding an eviction due to take place the following week. She was unrepresented at court, unable to attend due to her poor mental health and alcohol dependency.

We urgently lodged a Minute for Recall with the court. Due to Ms Q being unrepresented, this had the effect of cancelling the eviction and bringing the case back to court.

Ms Q advised that she had been unable to work for some time. We recommended that she apply for disability benefits and referred her to a local advice agency for assistance in completing the application.

Ms Q received a positive decision on her application shortly before her hearing. She was able to make an increased payment proposal to her landlord. As a result, the hearing was discharged. Ms Q has now cleared her rent arrears balance and the case has been dismissed.



Frontline Fund Project

We were pleased to be able to do early intervention work to prevent homelessness with support from St-Martin-in-the-Field's Frontline Fund.



Our Disrupting Cycles of Disadvantage: Early Intervention in Homelessness Project provides early legal advice to people in prison, with a view of preventing homelessness for those entering or at the point of release.

We work with individuals and their families within a few weeks of their custody into prison and in the six to eight weeks leading to their release, to establish their specific legal and other support needs. By providing tailored legal advice and representation, we empower the people we work with to understand their housing options and understand legal processes, enabling them to make more informed decisions.

The approach adopted is to ensure people entering HMP Low Moss and HMP Greenock are aware of their housing rights and options to enable them to take appropriate action in relation to their tenancies. Advice is also provided to people that are due to be liberated to avoid them going into homelessness and circumstances which could lead to reoffending.

Partnership agreements are in place with HMP Low Moss and HMP Greenock with information about the service included in the induction packs to ensure awareness amongst those who are imprisoned. Collaboration with Link Centre staff and other services has also been key in ensuring people receive the support they need.

We are grateful to St Martins-in-the-Fields Charity for the opportunity to help people who have found themselves in a vulnerable position to retain or obtain a safe place in which they feel at home.

Case Studies

Mr F:

Mr F contacted us whilst in prison, expecting to be liberated soon. He was concerned about rent arrears owed to his social landlord accruing whilst in prison as he had no means to make payment.

We corresponded with the landlord, providing Mr F reassurance that he would be afforded an opportunity to pay the arrears on his release. We also assured him that should court proceedings thereafter be raised, we could assist with representation

Further, Mr F jointly owned a house with his ex-wife, which she occupied with their daughter. Mr F was concerned about enforcement action by creditors as he had accrued debts due to the criminal proceedings against him. He could not obtain any debt advice while in prison, so we assisted with the submission of a notice of a statutory moratorium to allow him an opportunity to be released from prison, resume work and apply to the Debt Arrangement Scheme.



Mr V:

Mr V had been incarcerated in England. Prior to this, he had spent some time in a rehabilitation facility for alcohol addiction and mental health issues. Once released, Mr V was rearrested and brought to Greenock for charges in Scotland. He provided his nephew's address as his bail address but was not able to live there. Because of this, when he presented as homeless to the local authority, he was refused temporary accommodation.

We challenged the decision and the local authority refused again. We then instructed counsel to prepare an opinion which supported judicial review proceedings. The local authority then accepted Mr V's application and offered him temporary accommodation. We also helped him to access financial advice.

When Mr V contacted us he had no support for his alcohol dependency, memory issues, or mental health issues. He reported feeling suicidal. We made an urgent referral to the social work department for mental health and social support. He has now managed to access medication and is re-engaging with addiction services.



Employment Law Project



The Employment Law Project has continued successfully into its second year of service.

Our Employment Law Project protects employment rights to improve financial circumstances. We provide employment law advice to individuals throughout Scotland, and provide support to fellow grassroots advice agencies, bringing together stakeholder expertise to challenge injustice in the workplace.

We advised 212 people on 299 matters, protecting and improving employment rights. The project was able to achieve settlement in a number of cases and in 11 instances, the case was able to conclude without proceeding to the full Tribunal hearing, which can be a stressful experience for people.

Collaborating with other organisations, particularly by providing second-tier advice, we know that we have been able to assist many people indirectly.

We responded to an important consultation regarding the possible re-introduction of fees in the Employment Tribunal and Employment Appeal Tribunal. We did this as part of a working group with other organisations, and also submitted an individual response.

We have also been able to provide volunteering experience to 10 law students to get first-hand practical experience. We also delivered 15 training sessions and engaged with 55 partners, noting the benefits of collaboration and wider impact.

This year:

- We provided advice and support in 299 matters.
- We helped improve individuals' financial circumstances by over £547,000.
- The highest individual amount secured was £65,000.
- The average amount secured was £14,000.
- We worked collaboratively with 55 partner organisations.
- Feedback from clients was positive in 100% of cases.

For more, [have a look at the Employment Law Project's 'Year in Numbers'](#).

We are grateful to our funder, the National Lottery Community Fund, for the opportunity to provide this vital service. We are looking forward to the continued progression of this project over the third year of the current funding.



Case Study:

Ms K:

Ms K was working in the care sector on a zero-hours contract. When factoring in travel, waiting, and a rest break, she was being paid under the National Minimum Wage. We assisted Ms K in raising an informal grievance, which then became a formal grievance. We then raised a grievance appeal for Ms K and negotiated a four-figure settlement prior to hearing. Ms K reported anxiety and stress during proceedings which was lessened due to our support, and thanked us for our assistance:

“... I have just received payment in full from the company. Wow, can't believe it's officially over, 14 months later. Thank you so much for all your work, advice, patience...”

Additionally, around the time of the settlement, Ms K reported that the company had changed their pay practices for staff. We cannot accurately estimate what financial difference this has made to others in a similar position to Ms K, but we believe that there could be hundreds or thousands of indirect beneficiaries – each of whom will be better off immediately and on an ongoing basis.

The direct and indirect outcomes would not have been possible without funding from the National Lottery Community Fund. Ms K could not afford a solicitor and was unlikely to receive the type of legal aid available in Employment Tribunal cases.

We spent around 15 hours on this case; had a typical solicitor's hourly rate been applied, more than the full amount of compensation would have been used up in solicitor fees. Ms K may not have taken steps to enforce or protect her rights without the availability of our advice and assistance.



Criminal Injuries Department

LSA is focused on assisting those who are particularly disadvantaged with applications to the Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority.



Applications to the Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority (CICA) can be made by victims of reported crimes of violence.

The department works with clients who have an unmet legal need and who, due to their vulnerability, may not be able to access compensation without our assistance.

Advice, assistance and representation is provided to victims who have brain injuries, mental disorders, and co-morbidity of mental health. Such cases are often very complex and the client can require additional supports to progress matters. They require a specific approach with an appropriate level of expertise.

The department provides advice, assistance and representation in relation to the application, review and appeal to the Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority and subsequently, HM Court and Tribunal Service.

We are equipped and experienced to act for victims of crime with major physical trauma such as serious brain injuries, as well as those who have experienced significant physiological trauma.

We assisted 21 individuals with their claims for compensation under the criminal injuries compensation scheme.

In many instances, we note people are not fully aware of what evidence to submit, in particular for mental injury, and past and future loss of earnings. Expert knowledge is crucial to ensure there is appropriate evidence put forward for consideration of disabling mental injury and all elements of compensation considered.

The highest award achieved just over £114,600, the lowest award was £2,000 and the total amount achieved in 19 compensation awards processed during the reporting period was £528,927.

Case Studies

Ms O:

Ms O had submitted two separate applications to CICA: one for childhood sexual abuse by her father, and the other for domestic abuse by a partner. Ms O had significant mental health injury because of the crimes committed against her; she was very traumatised.

Despite this, both of her applications resulted in no award. Ms O then approached us for help.

As is often the case, there were no legal proceedings in respect of the sexual abuse committed against Ms O. Because of this, we investigated, alongside Fife Law Centre, to find evidence that the abuse took place. We assisted in obtaining an independent medical assessment, and supported Ms O in making a new complaint to the police.

As a result of the new evidence, Ms O's application was approved and she received an award. Ms O was thankful for our support.



Mr G:

Mr G was the victim of a serious racist assault and had received an award from CICA in respect of the mental injury sustained. However, when this was made, the permanent nature of his injury was not yet known. Years passed and Mr G's injury persisted. He was traumatised and could not leave his house, particularly so when there were incidents of racist violence in the news. In light of this, it was clear that his application should be re-opened.

As Mr G's application was beyond the time limit for re-opening, we obtained extensive evidence to prove his case was exceptional. This was complicated as, due to the time that had passed, records and files had been destroyed. We arranged an appointment with an expert medical professional from England, who travelled to see Mr G due to his agoraphobia. Mr G required significant support in order to attend this appointment, as well as appointments with solicitors.

The re-opening has led to a further award in recognition to the severity of Mr G's injuries. The new payment has enabled Mr G to access private psychological treatment which has significantly improved his life.



Mental Health Department

The Mental Health Department provides advice and representation to people subject to compulsory medical care, together with specialist services for people requiring interveners, financial and welfare guardians, or those who have child and family law issues or community care difficulties.



The Mental Health Service for Glasgow and West and Edinburgh and East were combined into a central department last year, the consolidation working well.

We have continued the adaptable appointment approach undertaken during the Covid-19 pandemic. We are able to meet clients in our office, at their home, in hospital, care homes, or through video call. This increased flexibility allows our clients to be comfortable whilst meeting with the team.

The department have taken a lead in promoting human rights and equalities and have developed considerable expertise in dealing with complex issues and protecting the rights of adults with incapacity.

We have been invited to speak at various events, including at secondary schools, advocacy projects, and the Ayrshire Independent Living Network. We have also attended talks with social workers and foster parents to raise awareness of the importance of guardianships.

The department provided legal advice and representation to adults with incapacity, handling 306 new cases alongside dealing with an existing caseload from the previous year. In addition to the above-noted new cases, we dealt with 103 Financial Guardianship applications, protecting people with incapacity from financial abuse. We also executed 26 powers of attorney.

Furthermore, the team provided representation in 142 hearings for Adults with Incapacity, 108 Mental Health Tribunals representing individuals subject to detention, and 8 hearings dealing with varied matters - including child welfare hearings, children's hearings, and banning orders.

Case Studies

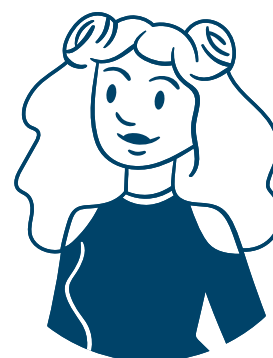
Ms Z:

We were approached by Ms Z as her son was detained in hospital following an application for a Compulsory Treatment Order (CTO) being made.

Ms Z and her son strongly disagreed with the order and the administration of anti-psychotic medication. Ms Z's son had had a traumatic admission to hospital. He was placed on a defibrillator and there was a possibility that he would undergo amputation.

Ms Z's son lacked the capacity to nominate her as his 'named person', meaning that she could not appeal the CTO on his behalf at Tribunal. We utilised legislation to request that Mr Z's mother could access his paper work and be permitted to participate in proceedings.

The request was granted which allowed Ms Z to fully participate in his hearing, and be legally represented at the Tribunal. Ms Z felt supported and that her views in relation to the best interests of her son were known to the Tribunal.



Mr W:

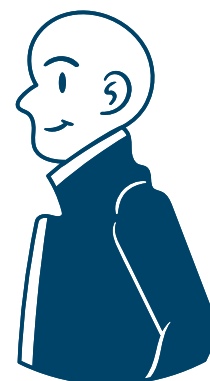
Mr W's daughter approached us for assistance in obtaining a financial and welfare guardianship for her father in order to discharge him from hospital and move him into a care home.

Mr W had previously instructed a solicitor, intending to grant a Power of Attorney in favour of his daughter, but an assessment of his capacity did not allow this to progress.

Due to the delayed discharge, we liaised with social work services and acquired a Mental Health Officer for Mr W.

The Mental Health Officer identified an appropriate care home placement for Mr W, and we obtained interim orders to move him into the home.

Mr W's daughter was very happy that matters progressed quickly, allowing her dad out of hospital and into suitable accommodation as soon as possible - especially as she lives far away and cannot visit him regularly.



Power of Attorney Project

We are delighted to report on the successful Legal Support Test-for-Change Power of Attorney service delivered with funding from Glasgow Health and Social Care Partnership (GHSCP).



The project was a collaboration between GHSCP, Alzheimer Scotland and community law centres.

This project was developed in response to findings that many individuals were remaining in the hospital despite not needing medical care. Due to the lack of capacity and the absence of any power of attorney, they could not be discharged home. The project sought to apply an early intervention approach to ensure people get timely legal advice to have a power of attorney in place.

In the 9-month pilot, the service provided advice to 214 individuals, with LSA covering 125 cases in the north of the city. The evaluation report found the Test-for-Change service was deemed a seamlessly smooth experience for people with the strong partnership approach and established referral routes being considered a strong contributory feature.

Our team received positive feedback for the time taken to explain matters clearly and in simple terms at an understandably difficult time for families. Since the end of the project we have continued to work with the referring agencies in relation to assisting with preparing powers of attorney.

Case Study:

Mr S:

Mr S approached us in relation to granting a power of attorney to his granddaughter. He was temporarily living in a care home while awaiting a more suitable home to become available. He had physical limitations and required assistance with managing his affairs due to this.

We arranged to visit Mr S at home to discuss the matter with him, and were able to progress the power of attorney urgently, allowing for his granddaughter to take steps to protect him financially.



Disability and Social Justice Project

We are pleased to report on the successful delivery of the Disability and Social Justice Project supported by the Scottish Government Equality and Human Rights Fund.



The success of this project very much lies in our collaboration with partner organisations, in particular Disabled Persons organisations.

This year, we dealt with 96 cases and 58 enquiries on a range of matters related to housing, accessibility issues, and disability discrimination in the provision of goods and services and education.

We attended 20 procedural hearings and 4 full evidential hearings. We achieved financial settlements and compensation to a total amount of just under £20,000, with the highest award being just over £5,000 and the lowest in the region of £1,000.

We continue to find that people are often making contact for legal advice when the time to raise legal action has passed, highlighting the importance of raising awareness of legal rights and early legal advice.

In order to raise awareness, we have collaborated with a number of partners and attended their team meetings. Through these collaborations, we are pleased to have established a monthly legal advice clinic with the Scottish Commission for Learning Difficulties (SCLD).

We were pleased to participate in a Glasgow Disability Alliance (GDA) event for Challenge Poverty Week to highlight the disproportionate impact on cost of living for disabled people. Our stall was well attended with positive feedback received from GDA in relation to the time our team gave to each and every individual who attended. We were invited back to their Democracy Matters event and received similar positive feedback on our participation.

Case Studies

Mr X:

Mr X suffered from anxiety, depression, and drug and alcohol dependency. He had been living alone in his home for 10 years when his landlord initiated eviction proceedings.

His landlord initiated eviction proceedings due to the property's conditions, marking the second time Mr X had been in this situation. Previously, an agreement was reached, and Mr X was allowed to stay in the property. However, Mr X's mental health deteriorated during the Covid-19 pandemic, leading to new court proceedings being initiated by the landlord.

Mr X's mental health issues make it difficult for him to engage with support services. We contacted Mr X's support worker, to be able to speak with him and they visited the property to provide guidance and receive further instructions.

We negotiated with Mr X's landlord to reach a reasonable agreement that allowed him to stay in the property and spared him from having to go to court. We prevented Mr X from becoming homeless, which would have severely impacted his mental health. The condition of the property also improved.



Ms C:

Ms C is registered blind and had been provided correspondence from her local authority in an inappropriate format, despite having previously informed them of her accessibility requirements.

After raising an Equality Act claim in the Sheriff Court, we successfully negotiated a settlement for Ms C as well as an acceptance that the local authority had not taken appropriate steps to provide her with accessible information.



MS Helpline

We are pleased to partner with the MS Society, covering their legal helpline for people in Scotland with MS.



The MS Helpline has been set up to offer people living with MS the opportunity to access legal advice on various issues.

We cover the helpline twice a week and through expertise within the organisation, advise on areas of housing, power of attorney, employment, disability discrimination, welfare benefits, and community care issues. We are also able to make onward referrals as appropriate.

We have also had the opportunity to attend team meetings of the MS Society to increase awareness of the support each aspect of our service provides, and to ensure we are able to better support individuals seeking advice.

Case Study:

Mr L:

Mr L first contacted the MS helpline after being dismissed by his employer. His employer was aware of the fact that he had MS, and was on immunosuppressant medication. Despite this, he was asked to travel to England, where his former employer was based, for a six month performance review. Mr L refused to do this on health grounds. He raised a grievance which was upheld. Despite this, Mr L was ultimately dismissed for gross misconduct.

We provided Mr L with initial advice about raising a discrimination claim with the Employment Tribunal within the necessary timescales. We kept in contact to provide support and advice regarding his application.

Later, we assisted Mr L in drafting his application and submitting it to the Employment Tribunal Service. Mr L has been extremely grateful for the help we have provided him in this.



Strengthening Communities

LSA sought to work with partners to share trends and use our collective expertise to protect the position of the communities we support.



We recognise that the strength in communities lies in their understanding of their rights, so that they can make decisions and undertake action as appropriate.

Working with and developing new partnerships with voluntary sector organisations, we continued to undertake work with experts in housing, equality, human rights and asylum law through various networking opportunities:

- We are pleased to continue partnership work with **Shelter** and **Scottish Refugee Council** to deliver second tier advice covering housing law in the **Fairway Scotland** programme.
- Noting the challenges on the horizon for asylum-seeking communities with regards to homelessness, we delivered training to **Scottish Refugee Council** destitution team.
- We were delighted to speak at **Clackmannanshire CAB**'s team meeting highlighting the services LSA provides and discussing areas of mutual interest in relation to housing, employment and disability discrimination.
- LSA continued working in partnership with the **Environmental Rights Centre for Scotland (ERCS)** following a successful pilot, creating a referral pathway in environmental cases being referred to LSA for legal representation.
- LSA was pleased to be one of the sponsors of **Glasgow Advice and Information Network's** Cost of Living Conference.

Seminar Department

LSA continued to play a leading role as one of Scotland’s top legal education providers by delivering affordable and thought provoking legal education - building knowledge and skills within the sector.



We delivered 26 webinars, attended by 660 delegates from diverse voluntary, statutory, and private sector organisations.

While our events are well-attended, we are pleased to note that recordings of live events are also very popular, highlighting the importance of flexibility in delivery medium.

The topics continued to cover a range of subjects, highlighting changes in statute, updates on case law and issues to consider in responding to consultations. A key objective remained a focus on human rights and equalities law to address disadvantage and injustice.

We are proud to note that the feedback we receive from delegates is overwhelmingly positive.



Some of our most popular events included:

- Liferents - what are they good for? delivered by John Kerrigan who has 47 years of experience of legal practice.
- We ran a webinar in collaboration with Amnesty International on The Human Rights Bill for Scotland: New Routes to Remedy.
- We were grateful to Lockton’s for sponsoring a free Risk Management webinar which attracted 100 bookings and was fully booked within a day of advertising.

Testimonials:

“I am new to practicing in Scotland and the overview and explanation of the terms and language was very useful. It gave clarity to the processes I am already using and reassurance. Thank you”
- attendee of our ‘Collection of debts using Bankruptcy’ webinar

“Great tips given on risk management issues and ways to address them. It was great to have a wellbeing section included, recognising the issues that can arise there!”
- attendee of our ‘Risk Management’ webinar

Traineeships at LSA

Taranveer Kaur

The first 9 months of my traineeship have been the most valuable. I began working with the Housing and General Court Department, which has involved defending clients facing evictions, mortgage repossessions, and homelessness.



From the outset, I was able to increase my knowledge of the law via access to recordings and trainings from LSA's seminar department. This was helpful when I was given the opportunity to have my own clients through LSA's referral partnership with Glasgow City Council. I took instructions from clients and progressed matters from start to finish under the guidance of my supervising solicitor.

Such a responsibility has been hugely beneficial in allowing me to build knowledge within the sector and grow in confidence with each new client. Having my own client work has meant managing competing deadlines, which has become easier with the amazing support system which has been available from day one of the traineeship.

I am able to learn from my colleagues who are highly experienced in their fields. I look forward to using this knowledge and experience and applying it to the next year of my traineeship.

Michael Sweeney

I started my traineeship in October 2023. Since then, I have gained experience working in mental health, employment, and equality law. I have also assisted with criminal injuries compensation applications. Working in these areas has helped me to build drafting skills and to gain an understanding of legal procedure and client management. I have also benefitted from the guidance of good supervisors and support staff in my day-to-day work.



Alongside my legal training, I have also had the opportunity to contribute to the policy and educational aspects of LSA's work, which has involved communicating with external organisations and delegating and supervising work. For example, I have drafted correspondence on behalf of the Scottish Ethnic Minority Deaf Charity as part of their discussions with the DVSA regarding accessibility issues experienced by their members when navigating the DVSA's test booking system.

Overall, my traineeship with the LSA has provided me with the opportunity to develop a range of skills and to gain experience in a range of areas which will help me to continue to develop as I move forward.

Traineeships at LSA

Karolina Dziezic

I started my traineeship in November 2023, and from the beginning, I was provided with a warm reception that made me feel supported and respected. My first seat was in the Disability and Social Justice Project, where I was able to broaden my understanding of disability issues and work towards preventing discrimination. While in my first seat, I contributed to campaigns and wrote articles, furthering awareness about disability rights.



I have had the opportunity to shadow my senior colleagues as part of my preparation for future advocacy. I am fortunate to be working alongside an exceptional team of experienced colleagues who are incredibly supportive. I feel fully integrated into all cases and activities. I have been entrusted with opportunities to work independently, and my input is consistently valued and taken into account by my colleagues. I believe this has further nurtured my development as a future solicitor, enabling me to effectively engage with clients and colleagues and share my perspectives and ideas.

Additionally, LSA is registered for CPD, which allows me to participate in easily accessible seminars that contribute to my ongoing development as a prospective solicitor. I am encouraged to participate in seminars that align with my interests, not just those directly related to my work.

Fiona Anderson

My traineeship at Legal Services Agency started in February 2023. I am based in our Greenock office which means that I work under the Inverclyde Housing Rights Project and primarily focus on evictions and homelessness.



In my first week at LSA I had the opportunity to attend a number of Sheriff Courts, virtual Tribunal hearings and also observed a client appointment within a prison. My first week was indicative of what was to come at LSA. Due to the nature of the work we do, the work is fast paced and challenging but no two days are the same. I now have responsibility for my own cases, with appropriate input from my supervisor and other colleagues, and have high levels of client contact.

Whilst at university, I was quite adamant that I didn't want to be doing lots of court work and the thought of doing so seemed daunting, however since making my first court appearance I have appeared in the Sheriff Court on an almost weekly basis and have enjoyed myself doing so despite earlier reservations! This is thanks to continued support and encouragement from colleagues. I have thoroughly enjoyed my time at Legal Services Agency so far and I am excited to continue applying the skills and knowledge I have gained during the final few months of my traineeship.

Volunteering at LSA

Alexandra MacMillan

Volunteering at LSA has been a great experience. I have assisted with important tasks under the supervision of solicitors, and contributed to the provision of emergency legal representation.

In the Mental Health Department, I shadowed solicitors in client consultations - gaining insight into the compassion and sensitivity required in this type of work. I have also drafted documentation, scheduled meetings, and called clients to provide updates and clarify important information.

As part of the Employment Law Project, I drafted a bundle for a Preliminary Employment Tribunal Hearing. I have also shadowed calls, conducted research and drafted correspondence.

Most recently, I have assisted in matters within the Housing and General Court Department. I have drafted court instructions and defences for rent arrears eviction cases. I have also worked on preparing Inventories of Productions which will be relied upon as evidence in various cases.

I have been kept updated on case developments and outcomes, seeing the impact of my contributions, which has been incredibly rewarding. My experience has inspired a newfound desire to help those most vulnerable in our society, and do the right thing, the right way.

Erin Sweeney

Increasing access to justice is one of LSA's core objectives. Working with the Disability and Social Justice Project, I wrote two articles to raise awareness of disability discrimination, highlighting how LSA can help those affected access justice. Through this, I was able to improve my research and communication skills.

I was able to shadow the Housing and General Court Department at their emergency helpdesk at Glasgow Sheriff Court. I admired the team's ability to work under pressure and the empathy shown in their interactions with clients.

As part of the Employment Law Project, I have attended client meetings, taken attendance notes, and learned how to use a case management system. I also summarised a recent report on Scottish housing inequality, and undertook research on the work of law centres throughout the country.

Overall, volunteering with LSA has built upon my practical skills and confidence, and opened my eyes to the importance of tackling unmet legal need. I have been inspired by LSA's values and hope to carry these with me throughout my legal career.

Collaboration

LSA remains committed to addressing policy issues, particularly through collaborative work with partners.



We were pleased to continue bringing our frontline experience and focus on equalities to our participation in **the Scottish Government's Homeless Prevention Strategy Group (HPSG)**.

We were pleased to welcome the Housing Minister to hear more about our work from our frontline team at LSA, highlighting the issues that people are facing and our collaborative approach to prevent homelessness.

We continued our active participation in **the Everyone Home Collective**, a collaboration of over 40 organisations committed to identifying solutions to prevent homelessness.

We participated in **the Robertson Trust and Joseph Rowntree workshop** focusing on ending destitution in Scotland for people subject to No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) and highlighted developed matters that can be considered to support people subject to NRPF under housing matters, community care provisions.

We have been invited to join **Consumer Scotland's** Committee on Consumers in Vulnerable Circumstances to allow us to contribute and protect the rights of people in vulnerable circumstances.

We continued to take a lead role in facilitating monthly meetings of the **Glasgow Advice and Information Network** and the **Scottish Association of Law Centres**, holding the secretariat role for both networks. These meetings provide a crucial platform for the advice sector to consider issues facing communities and engage with Glasgow City Council and the Scottish Government Justice Directorate.

We are pleased that these opportunities have led to a number of joint initiatives addressing challenges facing Glasgow residents and have facilitated engagement with Glasgow City Council to co-produce pathways focused on ending child poverty.

Consultation Responses

LSA have responded to consultations relevant to our expertise.

This year, we responded to:



- The Scottish Legal Aid Board’s consultation on the requirement for declarations when assessing individuals for legal aid. We reported the flexibilities introduced during the pandemic for declaration through remote appointments.
- [We responded to the UK Government’s additional consultation on potential reforms of the scope and time limits of the Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme](#), focusing on the Independent Inquiry into child sexual abuse. We submitted all forms of child sexual abuse should be considered and further submitted that adults are included as well and that the time limit should be extended with discretion applied for late application in all appropriate cases.
- [We were pleased to submit an independent and joint response with Scottish Association of Law Centres on the Scottish Government’s Human Rights Bill consultation](#) and further meet with Scottish Government officials to share our experience and the importance of ensuring effective remedies are in place to address barriers to access to justice.
- [We submitted a response to the Ministry of Justice consultation on the potential introduction of fees to submit a claim to the Employment Tribunal or Employment Appeal Tribunal](#). We submitted that the principles of affordability, proportionality, and simplicity would not be met if the proposal was implemented.

We supported the following statements and campaigns:

- [The Scottish Refugee Council and JustRight Scotland’s campaign against the #RefugeeBanBill](#).
- [Shelter’s response to the consultation on the Human Rights Bill with respect to the right to adequate housing](#).
- [Homeless Network Scotland’s response to Scottish Budget cuts on affordable housing](#).
- [Crisis’s response to the consultation on the Wellbeing and Sustainable Development Bill](#), recommending the national definition of wellbeing considers having an adequate home as a fundamental aspect of wellbeing.

Testimonials from our clients

“Thank you so much for all your fantastic support and work on my behalf. Your council, advice and approach has been first class throughout and my family and I cannot thank you enough for everything you have done for us. You have helped us through a very difficult and challenging period and we will be forever grateful.”

“I was informed as to exactly what to expect and what I had to do. I don't cope well with these things and I was treated with respect and understanding. You won my case for me. Thank you.”

“It is hard to put into words what your help, understanding, compassion, guidance and support have meant to me through such a traumatic set of circumstances [...] You truly were a shining light in the darkness.”

“The solicitor Stuart was extremely helpful, efficient and warm in his handling of my case. It has been such a relief working with them and the services were stellar. I would not hesitate to recommend LSA to friends and family. I cannot thank you enough for your impeccable service.”

Testimonials from our clients

“Thanks again for all your help. I appreciate all the time and effort you have put into my case while showing me all the empathy towards my situation. I couldn’t have been more pleased with you representing me. You are truly great at what you do.”

“Thank you for your email and for taking the time to meet me yesterday [...] Your patience and allowing me to ask many questions yesterday was very much appreciated. I came into your office feeling very worried and stressed. After speaking to you, I felt I had calmed down considerably and a weight had been lifted from my mind.”

“I don’t know how to build a bunch of words in order to convey my happiness [...] Thank you for representing fairness. Justice never leaves us I hope.”

“Perfect service with perfect outcome [...] Communication from start to finish was amazing and overall service 10/10.”

Our Funders

We would like to specially thank our funders for their essential support which allows us to remain available to our clients and provide the best possible service.

- AB Charitable Trust
- Collaboration of sub-grant and funding from Renfrewshire CAB, Airdrie CAB, and Hamilton CAB.
- Glasgow City Council
- Glasgow Health and Social Care Partnership
- Glasgow Community Health
- Inverclyde Council
- MS Society
- National Lottery Community Fund
- The Robertson Trust
- The Scottish Government, Third Sector Preventing Homelessness Fund
- The Scottish Government, Equalities and Human Rights Fund
- The Scottish Government, Legal Aid Traineeship Fund
- St Martin-in-the-Fields Charity Frontline Fund
- Scottish Refugee Council

Staff and Board

The accomplishments highlighted in this report would not have been possible without the dedicated work of our staff and board members:

Aaliya Seyal	CEO
Aileen Miller	Solicitor/Partner
Alastair Houston	Solicitor/Partner
Angela Hudson	Legal Secretary
Ann Marie McKay	Legal Secretary
Anthony Huddleston	Financial Guardianship Assistant
Barrie Levine	Convener
Caroline Love	Communications Officer
Carrie-Anne Clifford	Senior Solicitor
Christine MacInnes	Finance Manager
Cinzia Biondi	Trustee
David Alexander	Administrative Officer
Evelyn Boyd	Trustee
Fiona Anderson	Trainee Solicitor
Gary Burns	Company Secretary
Grant Carson	Trustee
Gwyneth King	Solicitor
Jacqueline O'Donnell	Accredited Paralegal
Julie Robertson	Deputy Office Manager
Karolina Dziejczak	Trainee Solicitor
Kathleen Bolt	Trustee
Kirstie Cusick	Trustee
Lindsay Taylor	Trustee
Luisa Fidelo	Solicitor
Mark Stringer	Administrative Officer
Mhairi Reid	Trustee
Michael Sweeney	Trainee Solicitor
Peter Beckett	Treasurer
Philip Grady	Finance Assistant
Rachel Scott	Solicitor
Rachel Walker	Solicitor/Partner
Siobhan O'Donnell	Legal Secretary
Stuart Swan	Solicitor
Susan Bell	Seminar Manager
Taranveer Kaur	Trainee Solicitor
Tracey Donnelly	Benefits Administrator
Troy Charman	Administrative Officer
Wanda Greig	Cleaner

Conclusion

Legal Services Agency looks forward to continuing our commitment to addressing unmet legal need in the next year.

We will continue to use our resources and work with partners to best protect and advance the legal rights of people experiencing disadvantage, inequality, and discrimination - as well as those whose voices remain unheard in policy developments.

Our work in preventing homelessness and ensuring people obtain suitable accommodation remains crucial as a number of local authorities declare housing emergencies. We also recognise the continuing impact of the cost of living crisis and the growing number of people living on low incomes.

Our goal is to push the boundaries of the law by developing new legal remedies and utilising cross-departmental expertise for strategic litigation - using not only subject matter expertise but consideration of equalities and human rights legislation.

Our priority is to contribute to policy issues, based on our frontline experience and responses to consultations, as well as through stakeholder engagement opportunities. Ultimately, our objective is to defend and enhance legal rights.

We will persist in fostering interest in social justice issues through training and knowledge sharing, creating volunteer opportunities and traineeships.

We would like to express our gratitude to our staff and volunteers for their ongoing commitment and dedication. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to our partners and funders, whose collaborative efforts and resources make it possible for us to deliver invaluable services and advance access to justice addressing inequality.

We celebrate significant progress achieved in the last year, as summarised in this report, in our commitment to uphold and improve the rights of people experiencing disadvantage. In the year ahead, we remain committed to building on these achievements and working towards improving access to justice.

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