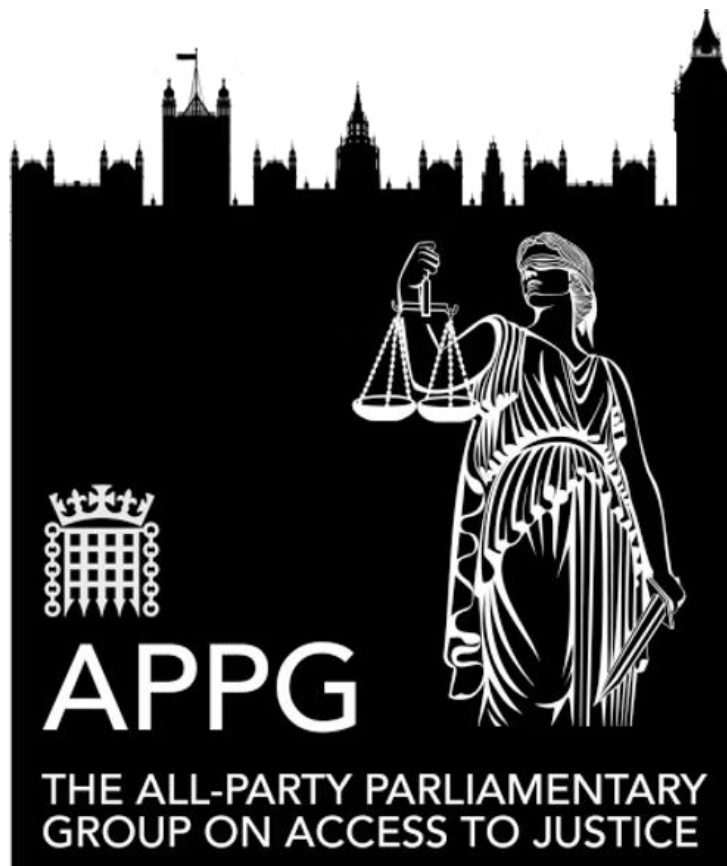




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## **APPG on Access to Justice**

Panel Event Briefing

## **The Advice Gap: Pro Bono Week 2025**

4 November 2025

Residence 2, House of Lords

15:00-16:00

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## Agenda

|       |                                                           |
|-------|-----------------------------------------------------------|
| 15:00 | Welcome and Introductory remarks by APPG Co-Chair         |
| 15:05 | Jayne Kirkham MP, Member for Truro and Falmouth           |
| 15:15 | Catriona Filmer, Pro Bono Senior Associate at Fieldfisher |
| 15:25 | Janani Paramsothy, Associate Director at Newbridge        |
| 15:35 | Rebecca Wilkinson, CEO at LawWorks                        |
| 15:45 | Questions from the floor                                  |
| 16:00 | End                                                       |

## Note

This briefing paper has been prepared to provide parliamentarians and other attendees with a broad overview of some of the key issues to consider in relation to the theme of this meeting.

## Speakers

### **Jayne Kirkham MP, Member for Truro and Falmouth**

Ms Kirkham was elected as Labour and Co-operative MP for Truro and Falmouth in the 2024 general election. Before becoming an MP, Ms Kirkham was a prominent figure in local politics, having been elected as a Labor Councillor in 2018 and later served as the Labour group leader on Cornwall Council. Prior to her political career, Ms Kirkham worked as a trade union and employments rights solicitor.

Ms Kirkham will discuss:

- The spread and prevalence of legal aid deserts
- Geographic issues generating systemic challenges driving access gaps
- Access to justice issues in Truro and Falmouth
- The impact of legal aid deserts on service users and practitioners

### **Catriona Filmer, Pro Bono Senior Associate at Fieldfisher**

Catriona Filmer is Pro Bono Senior Associate at Fieldfisher LLP. Initially practising in legal aid, Catriona has focused her work on disability rights and has represented clients in a wide range of social justice issues including at the Supreme Court and the European Court of Human Rights. Working in-house at both the National Deaf Children's Society and the learning disability charity, Mencap, Catriona represented both charities in strategic litigation matters and set up pro bono programmes with commercial firms.

At Fieldfisher, Catriona continues to bridge the gap between commercial law firms and the access to justice sector. Catriona led Fieldfisher's work in Newham last year working with local advice agencies and the Rt Hon Stephen Timm's office looking at the specific challenges for the legal advice sector in the borough. This culminated in the report 'From Disparity to Fairness' being published. Catriona will discuss:

- Why Fieldfisher got involved
- The work that was undertaken
- Key findings from the report
- Learnings from report outside of Newham

### **Janani Paramsothy, Associate Director at Newbridge**

Janani joined Newbridge in March 2025 to grow their ESG and Sustainability service. She was previously Head of ESG and Sustainability for Places for People Group where she had set up the ESG function, publishing an ESG strategy and introducing extensive ESG reporting. She was also the founder and chair of the social housing ESG working group, working closely with Sustainability for Housing on the latest version of the Sustainability Reporting Standard for Social Housing.

Prior to Places for People, Janani spent nearly 10 years in central Government, having worked across health, constitutional and housing policy. She worked on developing legislation such as leasehold reform and the Building Safety Act, and wrote the Social Housing White Paper, A Charter for Social Housing.

### **Rebecca Wilkinson, CEO at LawWorks**

As Chief Executive of LawWorks, Rebecca leads the team which supports and facilitates pro bono work by Solicitors across England & Wales. In her role, Rebecca works closely with member firms and third sector organisations, to drive forward LawWorks' pro bono programmes, helping to address unmet legal need within England & Wales.

Rebecca previously managed the Law Society's pro bono and public legal education programmes as their Pro Bono and Public Legal Education Policy Adviser (2014-2018). On behalf of the Law Society she acted as the organiser for National Pro Bono Week, sat on the Attorney General's Domestic & International pro bono committees, and coordinated the Society's relationships with key stakeholders. Rebecca was called to the Bar in 2013.

Prior to her involvement with the legal profession, Rebecca spent many years working for Community Service Volunteers, a large volunteering charity, where she ran national projects and training events. She gained extensive experience in managing and inspiring people to give up their time on a voluntary basis to help others. Rebecca will discuss:

- Talking about how MPs can interact with pro bono lawyers to help support their constituents
- Specifically looking at the new Guide to Pro Bono Clinics for MPs
- Mind the Gap Projects

## Pro Bono Week

Pro bono refers to professional work undertaken voluntarily and without payment, most commonly in the provision of legal services to those who cannot afford them. The term derives from the Latin phrase *pro bono publico* - meaning for the public good - reflecting the central purpose of this work: to use professional expertise to benefit individuals, charities, and community groups who are unable to access legal assistance through legal aid or other means.

Within the legal profession, pro bono work plays a crucial role in supporting access to justice. By providing free advice and representation, lawyers help to bridge the gaps in the legal aid system and ensure that everyone, regardless of their means, can uphold their rights and secure fair outcomes.

While we most often associate pro bono with law, the concept extends beyond it. Increasingly, professionals in fields such as economics, technology, and management are volunteering their skills for the public good, contributing to a growing culture of cross-sector collaboration to support communities in need.

Motivations for pro bono work are diverse, ranging from altruism and public service, to professional development, reputation, and a shared commitment to justice and fairness.

Each year, Pro Bono Week provides an opportunity to celebrate the vital contribution of lawyers and other professionals who give their time and expertise freely. It also offers a moment to reflect on how the pro bono community can adapt and strengthen its impact, particularly in light of the current fiscal pressures that have deepened since previous years.

## Background

The emergence of 'legal aid deserts' (areas with no legal aid provision in specific areas of law), and 'advice droughts' (where providers exist but have little or no capacity to take on new cases), has sparked significant concern about access to justice across the United Kingdom. These issues are particularly acute in rural and coastal areas.

Findings from the 2021 Westminster Commission on Legal Aid and LexisNexis' report *UK Legal Aid Deserts: Geographic Analysis and Access Crisis* highlight a growing crisis in regions such as Cornwall, Wales, and the broader South-West of England. These areas are facing a critical shortage of legal aid providers, leaving individuals and families without access to essential legal support, especially in areas such as housing, immigration, and family law.

We explore the geographic and systemic challenges driving these access below.

Numbers of civil legal aid providers have decreased sharply since 2013 when the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012 (LASPO) came into force<sup>1</sup>.

| Financial Year     | Total Civil Providers | Legal Help Solicitors | Legal Help (NfP) | Mediation Solicitors | Mediation (NfP) | HPCD Solicitors | HPCD (NfP) | Civil Rep Solicitors | Civil Rep (NfP) |
|--------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|------------------|----------------------|-----------------|-----------------|------------|----------------------|-----------------|
| <b>2012–13</b>     | 4,178                 | 2,731                 | 441              | 186                  | 18              | ..              | ..         | 3,254                | 144             |
| <b>2023–24 (p)</b> | 2,557                 | 1,415                 | 149              | 85                   | 14              | 45              | 58         | 2,010                | 123             |

| Financial Year     | Total Crime Providers | Litigators Scheme | Advocates Scheme | High Cost Case Scheme | Total Crime Lower | Police Station | Magistrates' Court | Prison Law |
|--------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|----------------|--------------------|------------|
| <b>2012–13</b>     | 7,198                 | 2,107             | 4,905            | 331                   | 2,159             | 2,089          | 2,112              | 353        |
| <b>2023–24 (p)</b> | 5,605                 | 1,582             | 3,858            | 67                    | 1,634             | 1,560          | 1,585              | 129        |

The not-for-profit (NfP) sector has been particularly affected by this contraction. Funding pressures forced many Citizens Advice offices and Law Centres to scale back or shut down their legal aid services. In 2013/14<sup>2</sup>, 94 local areas had NfPs delivering civil legal aid. Today, that number has dropped to just 40.<sup>3</sup>

This decline stems from sustained financial pressure, with funding “being squeezed from all directions,” leading to reduced service levels and the closure of many vital advice agencies<sup>4</sup> and Law Centres. As a result, even individuals who are financially eligible for legal aid and whose issues fall within its scope may find no available provider in their local area.

In these so-called “advice deserts” and “advice droughts,” clients are frequently left without local support. Many are forced to travel considerable distances to access legal assistance. For instance, someone seeking help with an immigration matter in Devon may need to travel to Somerset, Wiltshire, or Hampshire<sup>5</sup> to find a provider.

Those most affected are often the poorest and most marginalised members of society, individuals who lack both the means and support systems needed to travel for legal advice. Many are in vulnerable situations, made worse by the legal issues they face.

<sup>1</sup> [legal-aid-statistics-tables-oct-dec-2024.ods](#)

<sup>2</sup> Maynard MP, P. (2019) *Written questions, answers, and statements* (UIN 273435). Available at: <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2019-07-04/273435> (accessed 5 July 2021).

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.lawcentres.org.uk/list-of-law-centres>

<sup>4</sup> Civil Justice Council (2018) *Submission to Post-Implementation Review of Part 1 of the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders (LASPO) Act 2012*, p3. Available at: <https://www.judiciary.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/laspo-part-1-outline-submission-20-Dec-2018.pdf> (accessed 5 July 2021).

<sup>5</sup> Wilding, J. (2019) *Droughts and Deserts: A report on the immigration legal aid market*, p40. Available at: <https://www.jowilding.org/assets/files/Droughts%20and%20Deserts%20final%20report.pdf> (accessed 5 July 2021).

While online services may provide an alternative in theory, in practice they are often inadequate or inaccessible to those who need them most.

The personal impact of these gaps in provision was illustrated by former Supreme Court President Lady Hale in a 2019 speech to the Legal Action Group. She imagined a woman in rural England experiencing domestic violence<sup>7</sup>. Whereas in the past she might have accessed face-to-face advice, she is now left with only a local library and the internet. In exploring the available online resources, Lady Hale noted a striking absence of core legal principle, such as the fundamental principle of acting in the best interests of the child, demonstrating the deep limitations of remote or self-directed legal support.

There are huge positives in the role of technology in connecting the public with advice providers, particularly in more remote locations. The LAA's decision to allow providers to bid for digital delivery of services in the last housing law tender round has been a positive policy development in this area. However, there will always be vulnerable people who are unable to access technology in this way and who will be left behind.

The reduction in providers has been acute across civil and family legal aid including education, welfare benefits, clinical negligence, family, immigration, housing<sup>6</sup> and community care,<sup>7</sup> and has disproportionately impacted rural areas.

As of February 2024, 44 per cent of the population of England and Wales do not have a housing legal aid provider in their local authority area, a figure that has grown by around 7 per cent since 2019 and only 33 per cent of the population have access to more than one provider in their local authority area.<sup>8/9</sup> This means that many people across the country facing serious housing situations including eviction, will struggle to get the local face-to-face advice that they're legally entitled to. Refugee Action have warned that since 2005, 56 per cent of firms specialising in immigration and asylum law have left the market, creating geographical gaps in legal aid provision.<sup>10</sup>

The scale of the legal aid deserts can be clearly seen in heat maps produced by The Law Society and Dr Jo Wilding that show the number of housing, education, community care, welfare and immigration providers across England and Wales. The heat maps, which were most recently updated in February 2024, are included in the analysis of each legal aid desert.

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<sup>6</sup> Ministry of Justice (2019), *Post-Implementation Review of Part 1 of the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012 (LASPO)* (CP 37), para 816, para 165, p35. Available at: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/777038/post-implementation-review-of-part-1-of-laspo.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/777038/post-implementation-review-of-part-1-of-laspo.pdf) (accessed 12 September 2021).

<sup>7</sup> The Law Society (2021) *Legal aid deserts*. Available at: <https://www.lawsociety.org.uk/en/campaigns/legal-aid-deserts> (accessed 5 October 2021).

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.lawsociety.org.uk/campaigns/civil-justice/legal-aid-deserts/housing>

<sup>9</sup> <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CDP-2018-0120/CDP-2018-0120.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> Ministry of Justice (2019), *Post-Implementation Review of Part 1 of the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012 (LASPO)* (CP 37), para 816, p196. Available at: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/777038/post-implementation-review-of-part-1-of-laspo.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/777038/post-implementation-review-of-part-1-of-laspo.pdf) (accessed 12 September 2021).



We show these, together with relevant findings from the LexisNexis report ‘UK Legal Aid Deserts: Geographic Analysis and Access Crisis’<sup>11</sup> below, which investigated the disparity between the need for legal aid and its availability across England and Wales, and ultimately identified legal aid deserts where demand significantly outstrips supply. The LexisNexis report used government data on legal incidents and legal aid providers to calculate this imbalance in housing, family, and crime law, and ultimately seeks to drive conversation about how to better support vulnerable people.

For the purposes of the report (which follows the heat maps), ‘Legal Need’ is determined by the number of legal "incidents" such as domestic abuse cases, homelessness, or crimes committed in a local authority area; and ‘Legal Aid Supply’ is determined by the number of legal aid providers in a local authority area.

These figures were calculated per 10,000 people to allow comparison between areas with different population densities. The report also considered the need and supply of neighbouring local authorities by measuring within a 15km radius. A final metric was assigned to each local authority by dividing supply by need. The bottom 10 per cent of local authorities based on this metric were characterised as legal aid desert.

## Advice deserts

The reduction in providers has been acute across civil and family legal aid including education, welfare benefits, clinical negligence, family, immigration, housing<sup>12</sup> and community care,<sup>13</sup> and has disproportionately impacted rural areas.

As of February 2024, 44 per cent of the population of England and Wales do not have a housing legal aid provider in their local authority area, a figure that has grown by around 7 per cent since 2019 and only 33 per cent of the population have access to more than one provider in their local authority area.<sup>14/15</sup> This means that many people across the country facing serious housing situations including eviction, will struggle to get the local face-to-face advice that they’re legally entitled to. Refugee Action have warned that since 2005, 56 per cent of firms specialising in immigration and asylum law have left the market, creating geographical gaps in legal aid provision.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> LexisNexis (2021) UK Legal Aid Deserts: Geographic Analysis and Access Crisis’. Available at: <https://www.lexisnexis.co.uk/insights/the-lexisnexis-legal-aid-deserts-report/index.html>

<sup>12</sup> Ministry of Justice (2019), *Post-Implementation Review of Part 1 of the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012 (LASPO)* (CP 37), para 816, para 165, p35. Available at: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/777038/post-implementation-review-of-part-1-of-laspo.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/777038/post-implementation-review-of-part-1-of-laspo.pdf) (accessed 12 September 2021).

<sup>13</sup> The Law Society (2021) *Legal aid deserts*. Available at: <https://www.lawsociety.org.uk/en/campaigns/legal-aid-deserts> (accessed 5 October 2021).

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.lawsociety.org.uk/campaigns/civil-justice/legal-aid-deserts/housing>

<sup>15</sup> <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CDP-2018-0120/CDP-2018-0120.pdf>

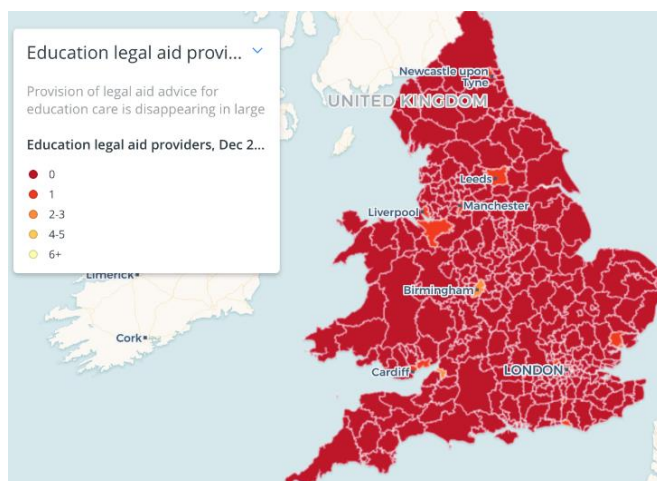
<sup>16</sup> Ministry of Justice (2019), *Post-Implementation Review of Part 1 of the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012 (LASPO)* (CP 37), para 816, p196. Available at:

## Community care

Law Society analysis of LAA and ONS statistics found that 71 per cent of people do not have access to a local provider and of those with access, only 15 per cent have access to more than one legal aid provider in their local authority area.



## Education



Data from LAA and ONS found that 9 in 10 people in England and Wales do not have an education legal aid provider in their local authority: that's over 53 million people.<sup>17</sup> Without access to legal aid in education law, many families are unable to secure the education and support their children need. The inability to challenge discrimination in schools or appeals decisions made by local authorities around education provision is particularly

troubling when compared against increases in the number of EHCPs. The number of pupils with an Education and Healthcare Plan increased by over 80 per cent between 2016 and 2024.<sup>17</sup>

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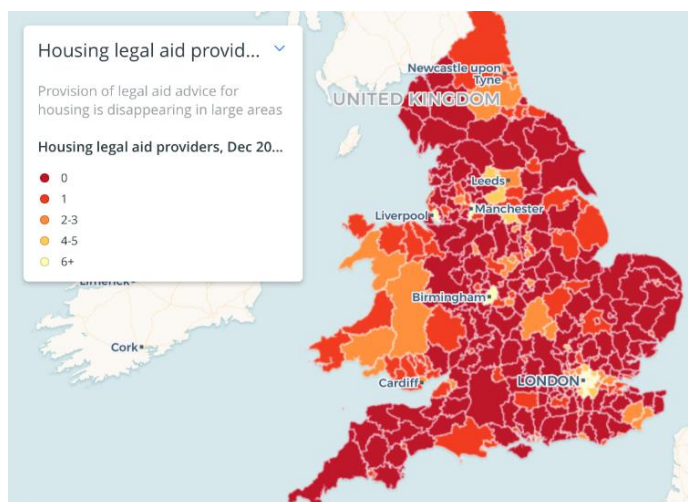
[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/777038/post-implementation-review-of-part-1-of-laspo.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/777038/post-implementation-review-of-part-1-of-laspo.pdf) (accessed 12 September 2021).

<sup>17</sup> Spending on Special SEN in England: something has to change. (2024). Available at:

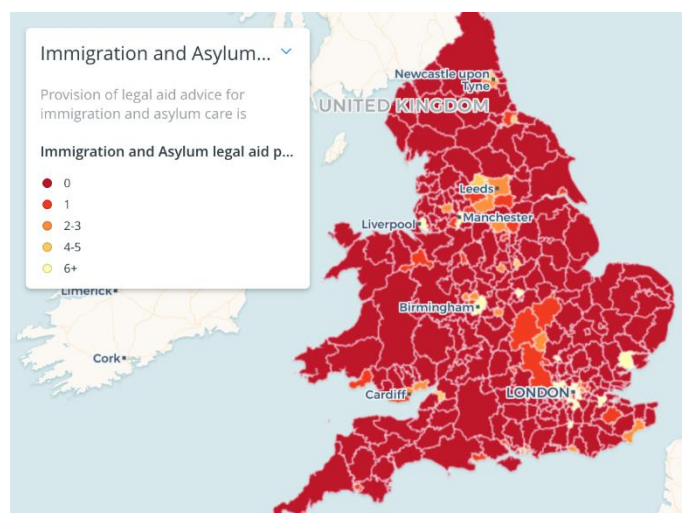
<https://ifs.org.uk/publications/spending-special-educational-needs-england-something-has-change>

## Housing

As highlighted above, data shows that 44 per cent of people do not have access to a local provider, of which only 33 per cent have access to more than one local provider, leaving 12.45 million people in a legal aid desert for housing. Access to legal aid and early advice can be the difference between a safe home and homelessness. The high rates of housing repossessions are an indicator of how real the threat of homelessness is. Being able to access the local face-to-face advice that they're legally entitled to is essential for keeping people across the country on low wages and at the cusp of eviction



## Immigration



Across England and Wales, 63 per cent of the population do not have access to an immigration and asylum legal aid provider. The Home Office's dispersal policy generates a mismatch between supply and demand with those in need of supported housing in areas without legal aid provision. Without access to legal support that works in cohesion with the Home Office's dispersal policy, many are left facing

an unfamiliar legal system that is made increasingly difficult to navigate when combined with intersecting complexities such as language barriers, neurodivergence and trauma.

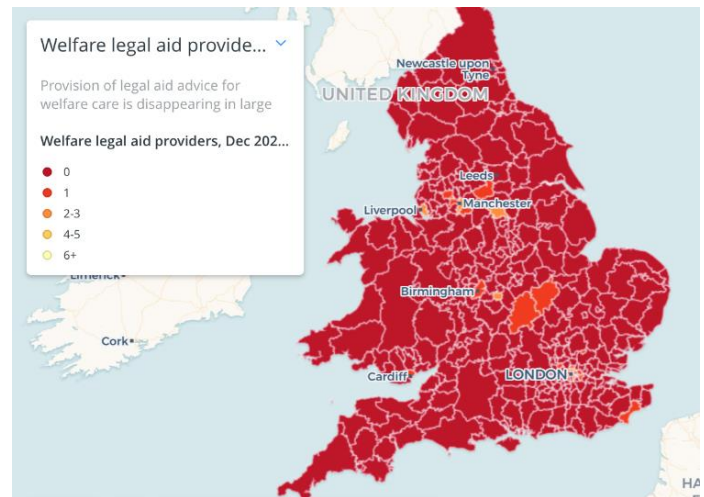
We spoke to academic and researcher, Dr Jo Wilding, who has been looking at provider capacity and legal aid deserts in immigration and asylum law for a number of years.

*'I've just finished updating the access to immigration advice report and that shows a collapse in provision in Wales and the South West, and a deficit in every region*

*within England and Wales - even London which had a very small surplus at the time of the first report in 2022. The largest deficits now are in the North West and Yorkshire and the Humber, which are not generally thought of as advice deserts, with severe shortages also along the south coast and in the eastern half of the East of England.'*<sup>18</sup>

## Welfare benefits

LAA and ONS data shows that 85 per cent do not have access to a welfare legal aid provider, leaving them unable to challenge or appeal decisions. Of those with a welfare legal aid provider in their local authority, 11 per cent only had a single firm available.



## Family

The Lexis Nexis report identified 1.09 million people live in legal aid deserts for family law. Family legal aid deserts in the bottom 10 per cent had 0 providers per 1,000 incidents, compared to 14.43 providers in the five best-served areas. Demand for family law work increased during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The research primarily captured public family law cases; the inclusion of private cases would likely show even greater undersupply.

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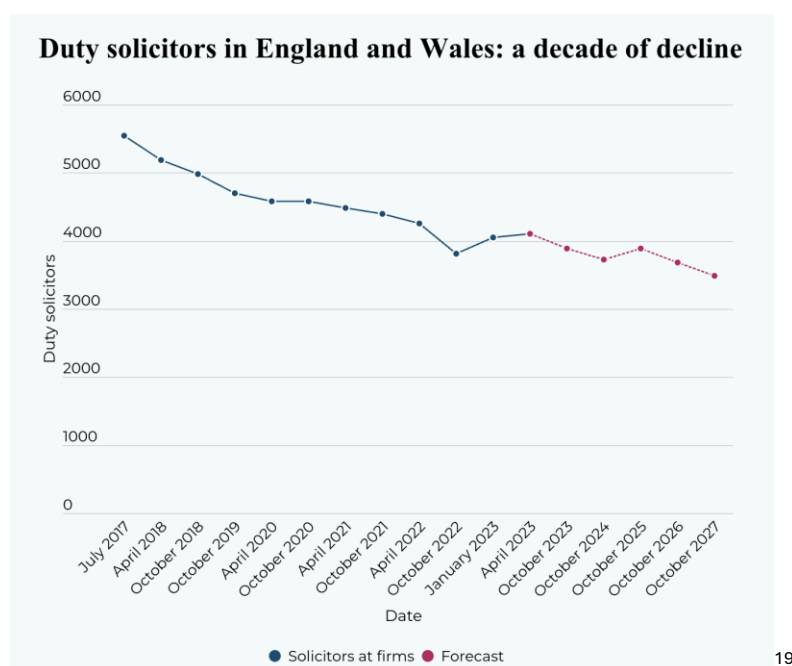
<sup>18</sup> 'No Access to Justice 2: Mapping the UK's continuing immigration and asylum legal advice crisis', by Dr Jo Wilding (June 2025) <https://justice-together.org.uk/articles/no-access-to-justice-2/>

## Crime

Nationally, 2.12 million people live in legal aid deserts for crime. Crime legal aid deserts in the bottom 10 per cent had 0 providers per 1,000 incidents, compared to only 0.89 providers in the five best served areas.<sup>10</sup>

The strain on the criminal legal aid system has been highlighted by strikes by the bar and other reports such as the 2021 Independent Criminal Legal Aid Review (CLAIR).<sup>19</sup> The significant reduction in Criminal Duty Solicitors is another indicator of the struggles within crime. A report by the Law Society notes that an ageing workforce and poor remuneration have resulted in the number of duty solicitors providing representation at police stations falling by 1,446 since 2017 – a 26 per cent drop.<sup>20</sup>

*‘Nearly half (48 per cent) of defendants appearing in the magistrates’ courts on imprisonable summary offences did not have legal representation recorded on their case in the first half of 2023. This had risen from 35 per cent during 2022. (According to management information requested by the Centre for Public Data.)’<sup>19</sup>*



Criminal duty solicitors perform a vital public service, providing those accused of a crime with representation and advice free of charge. The troubling trends shown in the graph above suggest that we are hurtling toward a society where the majority of those accused

<sup>19</sup> Criminal Review of Legal Aid. (2021). Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/groups/independent-review-of-criminal-legal-aid>

<sup>20</sup> Criminal Duty Solicitors: A growing Crisis. (2025). Available at: <https://www.lawsociety.org.uk/campaigns/criminal-justice/criminal-duty-solicitors>

of a crime will go through the legal process with significantly diminished access to justice.

## Contributing factors

### Legal Aid Fees

The underlying issues in legal aid remain unsustainable fee levels and a scheme which has removed many practice areas from scope. Proposals from across the sector include increasing legal aid rates in line with inflation to reflect the actual cost of delivering legal services and to make publicly funded work financially viable for providers. Fees in civil legal aid were last increased in 1996. Since then, inflation has been at an average inflation rate of just over three per cent, totalling a cumulative price change of 140 per cent.

While fee rates have been increased in response to decreasing provider numbers in immigration and housing, increases are needed across the board if the civil legal aid profession is to remain a viable career. Increased funding for the legal aid system is seen as crucial, drawing parallels with the funding of the healthcare system.

Pro bono work by lawyers can provide additional support but cannot replace a properly funded legal aid system. Organisations like the Free Representation Unit (FRU) and LawWorks play a significant role in facilitating pro bono work.

Early Legal Advice also has the potential to provide additional support and deliver savings in the long run by preventing incorrect applications and missed claims in court, but again, is no replacement for a properly funded legal aid system.

### Administrative Burden on providers

Reducing the administrative burden on legal aid providers could make it more sustainable with many providers deterred by excessive bureaucracy within the legal aid system. The Westminster Commission and LAPG recommend simplifying billing processes and reducing compliance paperwork. A more streamlined process would allow practitioners to spend their time focussing on clients rather than red tape.

The latest civil legal aid data<sup>21</sup> reveals a deepening crisis in civil legal aid provision, with a growing number of contracted providers starting fewer than 5 or 10 cases per year — a clear indicator of “legal aid droughts” across multiple areas of law.

In 2022–23, 235 offices<sup>22</sup> completed fewer than 5 cases, rising to 253 in 2023–24, and sharply increasing to 370 in 2024–25. The picture is even starker for those starting fewer

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<sup>21</sup> [Written questions and answers - Written questions, answers and statements - UK Parliament](#)

<sup>22</sup> [Written questions and answers - Written questions, answers and statements - UK Parliament](#)



than 10 cases: from 357 in 2022–23 to 417 in 2023–24, escalating to 587 by 2024–25. Particularly alarming increases are seen in family law (which only covers cases of domestic abuse) (rising from 142 to 234 providers doing fewer than 10 cases), housing (which only covers cases of homelessness) (from 36 to 86), and discrimination (from 5 to 13), suggesting not just regional withdrawal but collapse in certain specialisms. These figures point to a legal aid system at breaking point, with many offices holding contracts in name only, unable or unwilling to take on meaningful caseloads — leaving vulnerable individuals without access to justice.

## About the APPG on Access to Justice

The All-Party Parliamentary Group on Access to Justice is the result of a merger between the APPG on Legal Aid and the APPG on Pro Bono and Public Legal Education. You can find out more information about both the APPG on Legal Aid and APPG on Pro Bono and Public Legal Education by scontacting [Rohini.Jana@lapg.co.uk](mailto:Rohini.Jana@lapg.co.uk).



The APPG on Access to Justice provides bespoke training to MPs and their caseworkers on a range of subjects through Member Services. Studies and research have shown that as a consequence of the LASPO cuts there has been a huge increase in the number and complexity of legal problems that MPs are encountering in their surgeries. Our training is designed specifically with caseworkers in mind and provided by industry experts.

To date, we have provided training in the following areas:

- Legal Aid,
- Immigration,
- Housing Law,
- Disability and Discrimination Law,
- Employment Law,
- Anti-Social Behaviour Orders and
- Special Education Needs.

Sessions are run both online and in-person. Do get in touch with [APPGA2J@lapg.co.uk](mailto:APPGA2J@lapg.co.uk) or Member Services for more details.

Each month, we publish a bulletin with up the most recent Access to Justice news, insights from Westminster, and updates from key stakeholders within the Legal Aid and Pro Bono world. You can view previous bulletins via [appg-access-to-justice.co.uk/bulletins](http://appg-access-to-justice.co.uk/bulletins).

If you would like to be added to our mailing list, from which you will receive our monthly bulletins, exclusive updates and invitations to future events, please contact [APPGA2J@lapg.co.uk](mailto:APPGA2J@lapg.co.uk). For more information, visit our website at [appg-access-to-justice.co.uk](http://appg-access-to-justice.co.uk).

To keep up to date with the work being done by the APPG on a weekly basis, follow our LinkedIn account: [linkedin.com/company/appg-access-to-justice](https://www.linkedin.com/company/appg-access-to-justice).



## About LAPG

Legal Aid Practitioners Group (LAPG) is a membership body for firms and organisations with a contract to conduct legal aid work in England and Wales.



Our members are private practice firms, not for profit organisations, barristers, and costs lawyers. Our members conduct all areas of civil and criminal legal aid work and cover the entire range of business models from smaller, niche and/or sole principal firms to many of the largest providers of legal aid services.

We have over 40 years' experience of supporting practitioners and advocating for a sustainable, effective and accessible legal aid scheme. We are one of three bodies that consults with the Legal Aid Agency and Ministry of Justice on all legal aid contracting issues.

We engage formally with a wide range of organisations and public bodies on broader access to justice issues, such as through our representation on the Civil Justice Council, advice sector panel of the Administrative Justice Council, MOJ Legal Support Policy Delivery Group, HMCTS JPEGs, Law Society Access to Justice Committee, and the boards of AdviceNow and Advice Services Alliance. We also provide secretariat services to the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Access to Justice, which provides a platform in parliament to discuss legal aid, pro bono, public legal education and access to justice.

For more information, access the LAPG website via [lapg.co.uk](http://lapg.co.uk).

## LawWorks – The Solicitors Pro Bono Charity

LawWorks (The Solicitors Pro Bono Group) is a national charity dedicated to improving access to justice through free legal advice. Operating across England and Wales, LawWorks connects volunteer solicitors with individuals and not-for-profit organisations who cannot afford legal services and are ineligible for legal aid.



Founded in 1997, LawWorks delivers its mission through several key programmes:

**Clinics Network:** Over 300 free legal advice clinics, often based in community centres, law schools, and advice agencies, offering initial legal advice on housing, employment, family, and consumer issues.

**Not-for-Profits Programme:** Provides legal support to small charities and community groups, helping them navigate legal challenges that could otherwise hinder their work.

**Secondary Specialisation:** Trains lawyers in areas of social welfare law, such as community care and employment, to expand the pool of pro bono expertise.

LawWorks also runs Free Legal Answers, an online platform where eligible individuals can submit legal questions and receive written advice from qualified solicitors.

The charity is led by Rebecca Wilkinson, who became CEO in 2023 after serving as Deputy CEO and Director of Programmes since 2018. Rebecca brings extensive experience from roles at The Law Society, the Free Representation Unit, and the Public Law Project. She is a passionate advocate for pro bono and has spent her career in the legal and voluntary sectors. Under her leadership, LawWorks has expanded its reach, strengthened partnerships, and championed the role of pro bono in addressing legal need.

LawWorks is supported by over 100 law firms, in-house legal teams, and law schools. It also engages in policy work to promote a more supportive environment for pro bono and access to justice.

For more information, visit [www.lawworks.org.uk](http://www.lawworks.org.uk).