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The Law Society

LawWorks Clinics Network Report

Analysis of clinic activity between
January 2024 – December 2024

June 2025

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Introduction

As we reflect on 2024, I am once again struck by the extraordinary resilience, dedication, and compassion that define the LawWorks Clinics Network. This year's report captures not only the scale of the pro bono legal support delivered across England and Wales, but also the impact that clinics continue to have on individuals and communities navigating complex and often distressing legal challenges.

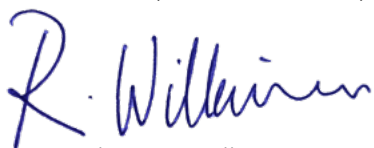
Despite ongoing pressures, from the persistent cost of living crisis to the widening gaps in legal aid provision, clinics have remained a vital source of support for those who would otherwise face legal problems alone. The data collected from 284 clinics, representing 91% of our network, offers a powerful testament to the commitment of clinic coordinators, volunteers, and partner organisations. Together, they supported over 61,000 people, responded to more than 90,000 enquiries, and provided a lifeline to those in crisis.

This year's findings also highlight the continued complexity of legal issues, the increasing number of clients presenting with multiple and interrelated problems, and the continued rise in demand for family and employment law advice. These trends underscore the urgent need for sustainable investment in free legal services and for continued collaboration across the sector and with Government agencies.

At the heart of this work are the volunteer solicitors who generously give their time and expertise, to support those in need. Their contribution is nothing short of transformative. Whether advising on family, employment, housing, or other areas of law, these professionals play a crucial role in ensuring that individuals receive timely, high-quality legal advice. In a year marked by increasing numbers of clients presenting with multiple, related problems, their dedication has been instrumental in helping clinics meet the needs of their communities. We are deeply grateful for their continued commitment and the difference they make in their communities.

At LawWorks, we are proud to support this remarkable network. We remain committed to equipping pro bono legal clinics with the tools, training, and partnerships they need to thrive. I want to extend my heartfelt thanks to everyone who contributed to this year's data collection. Your insights not only inform our advocacy and policy work but also help us to better understand and respond to the evolving needs of the communities we serve.

Thank you for all that you do.



Rebecca Wilkinson
Chief Executive

Methodology

Each January, LawWorks undertakes a data collection exercise across its network of clinics, capturing information that reflects the previous calendar year (January to December). This annual survey gathers both quantitative and qualitative insights, offering a comprehensive national snapshot of the vital pro bono work taking place across England and Wales. The data not only highlights the contributions of dedicated volunteers but also supports our policy and advocacy efforts - strengthening the case for a well-funded legal aid system and evidencing the ongoing value of pro bono legal support.

The survey explores a range of clinic activity, including the volume of enquiries and clients supported, the legal areas in which advice is delivered, volunteer numbers and client demographics. We also ask clinics to share information about notable trends they have experienced over the year including the level of demand for their services, complexity and the stage at which a client's legal issue has reached at the point of them reaching out to a clinic for help.

We recognise that data collection can be a challenge. Not every clinic is able to supply a full set of responses - particularly when it comes to client demographics. Common barriers include low client response rates, limited staff capacity, and practices where demographic details are only recorded when clients are seen in-person.

This year we were delighted that 91% of clinics on our network (284 clinics) provided their statistics. This is considerably higher than the 64% (191 clinics) return rate for 2023 and this should be kept in mind when comparisons are made between the 2023 and 2024 data throughout this report.

Even in the face of incredibly high demand and persistent resource constraints, clinics across our network have continued to share valuable data about their work. We are deeply grateful to everyone who took the time to collect and submit their data – a huge thank you! We understand that considerable time and effort goes in to collecting and supplying the data, and we remain committed to keeping data requests focused on what's truly essential.

A network in constant demand

Throughout 2024, LawWorks remained committed to strengthening and expanding its dynamic network of independent legal pro bono advice clinics across England and Wales. In 2024 there were 313 clinics registered on the LawWorks Clinics Network in comparison to 297 in 2023.

Although inflation declined in 2024, the cost of living crisis persisted. According to data from the Office for National Statistics (October 2024), 53% of adults reported a rise in their living costs compared to the previous month, primarily due to increases in electricity, fuel, and food prices. The sustained financial pressure, combined with the ongoing issue of legal aid deserts, led to continued high demand for pro bono legal advice clinics throughout the year. One clinic clearly articulated the strained financial situation a lot of their clients are facing by saying:

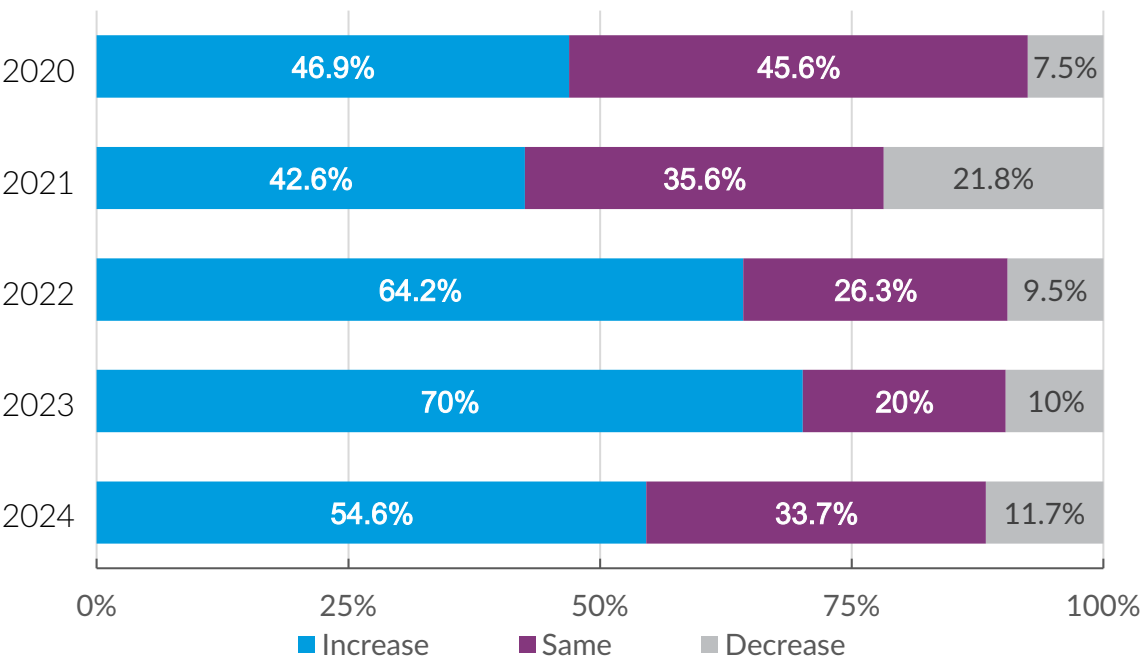
“In 2024, our charity faced significant challenges due to the rising cost of living and increased demand for free legal advice, particularly on debt-related issues. Many clients struggled with mounting utility debts, with some facing court action due to unpaid gas and electricity bills. The financial strain forced individuals to prioritise basic needs over repayments, leading to higher instances of enforcement action. Clients increasingly faced issues related to job insecurity, housing difficulties, and debt threats in county court, reflecting the broader economic pressures.”

When asked about the biggest challenges they faced in 2024, another clinic said:

“Lack of legal aid providers in the South West region, having people approach us who are not able to find a legal aid solicitor but are entitled to legal aid, especially for immigration law advice.”

Figure 1 below shows that in 2024, 54.6% (89) of responding clinics in the LawWorks Clinics Network reported an increase in demand for their services, 33.7% (55) reported no change, and 11.7% (19) reported a decrease.

Figure 1: Levels of demand



Below are some of the comments given by clinics about the demand they have experienced in 2024:

"We are seeing an increased demand for services, and at some points in the year have had to close to new enquires on some areas of law due to capacity."

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

"Due to lack of capacity in housing and consumer rights matters, we were unable to provide as much advice in these areas as we've done so previously. We had to close services in these areas for several months during the year".

"There has been an increase in the total number of enquiries that we have received. This has presented a challenge, since we have had to signpost many clients as our clinics do not have capacity to see all of the clients."

"Overwhelming amount of enquiries versus the appointments we have available."

Method of delivery

In 2024, 54% of responding clinics operated a hybrid model, while 38% were fully remote - figures nearly identical to 2023 (54% and 36%, respectively). Four years after the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, which prompted a rapid shift to online services, it is clear that some form of digital delivery - whether hybrid or fully remote - has become standard practice for the vast majority of clinics on the LawWorks Clinics Network.

The prevalence of hybrid clinics helps extend access free legal advice to individuals in rural areas without a nearby physical clinic and to those unable to travel - while still ensuring that in-person appointments remain available for people who are digitally excluded.

In 2024, some of the clinics that continue to offer in-person services faced challenges related to relocating and securing adequate space:

"For data protection reasons all student volunteers complete work in-person at our office using our devices. The biggest challenge is the physical space for volunteers to work from since opening new clinics and dealing with increased number of enquiries and advice appointments."

"Being able to retain a fixed location, we had to relocate mid-year."

Types of clinic service offered

These numbers on Figure 2 (see facing page) do not add up to 100% as some clinics offer more than one type of service.

As in previous years, the most commonly offered service by clinics in the LawWorks Clinics Network is initial legal advice, while full representation remains the least frequently provided. The figures above are almost identical to those reported in 2023. While initial advice may not always fully resolve a client's legal issue, it plays a crucial role in helping individuals understand their rights, consider potential next steps, and assess their eligibility for legal aid.

Figure 2: Types of clinic service

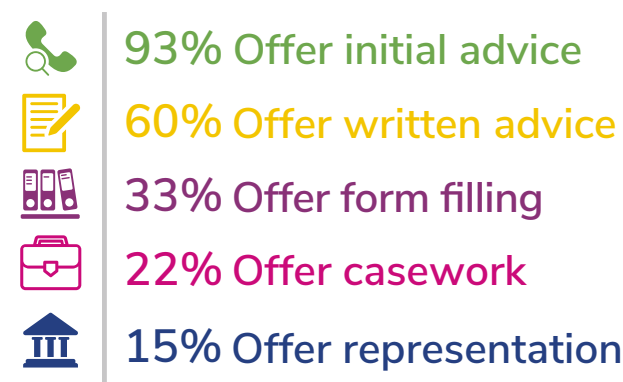


Figure 3: Map of clinics on the LawWorks Clinics Network in England & Wales



The map on the previous page highlights the broad geographic coverage of clinics within the LawWorks Clinics Network across England and Wales. However, certain regions - particularly North Wales, Southwest England, and other rural areas - continue to have few or no registered pro bono clinics. Addressing this gap remains a key priority for LawWorks. Although the map does not capture the expansion of online pro bono services, which often serve clients without geographic limitations, these remote services - discussed earlier in this report - are instrumental in increasing access to free legal advice for individuals in rural and underserved communities.

Figure 4: Number of clinics by region and setting

	Court based	Law Centre	Law Firm	Law School	Local Citizens Advice	Other	Other non-profit	Total
East			2	13	4	1	5	25
East Midlands			3	11	3	2		19
Greater London	1	15	9	48	5	4	34	116
North East		1		8			1	10
North West		1	2	20			2	25
South East			5	18			3	26
South West		1	1	10	1	1	4	18
Wales	1	1	3	8			5	18
West Midlands	1		1	28		3	4	37
Yorkshire			1	17			1	19
Total	3	19	27	181	13	11	59	313

As set out above, in all regions across England & Wales the majority of clinics are based in university law schools with these clinics accounting for over 50% of clinics on the LawWorks Clinics Network (57%). The number of university-based clinics grew from 157 in 2023 to 181 in 2024.

A regional comparison shows that clinic growth has been most concentrated in the Midlands - particularly the West Midlands - where the number of clinics registered on the LawWorks Clinics Network increased from 27 in 2023 to 37 in 2024.

Volunteers driving impact across the network

The dedication and expertise of volunteers continue to be central to the impact of clinics within the LawWorks Clinics Network. These clinics depend on the valuable contributions of a diverse group of volunteers - including students, trainees, paralegals, solicitors, barristers, and administrative staff - who generously offer their time and expertise to assist individuals who may otherwise be unable to access free legal advice.



LawWorks continues to champion pro bono volunteering by equipping clinic volunteers and coordinators with ongoing support, training, and resources, and by working to forge new sustainable partnerships between law firms, in-house legal teams, law schools and advice agencies to develop and expand the clinic network.

In 2024, 266 clinics submitted data about their volunteer numbers (compared to 165 clinics in 2023). More than 13,100 volunteers supported clinics within the LawWorks Clinics Network in 2024 - an increase from 10,421 in 2023. However, this rise should be considered in the context of a significantly higher number of clinics responding to the 2024 data request. When looking at the average number of volunteers per clinic, there was a decrease - from 63 per clinic in 2023 to 49 in 2024.

The following comments from clinics highlight the significant challenges they faced in 2024 in recruiting and retaining volunteer solicitors - especially in certain areas of specialism - and in managing the reduced availability of existing volunteers:

"Recruiting and retaining volunteers continues to be a challenge given that in the past many of our volunteers had been legal aid lawyers. There are fewer legal aid lawyers, and the capacity for those who remain has been diminished as they struggle to cope with cuts to legal aid and an under resourced system."

"Struggling to find housing solicitors who can help, or any solicitors willing to do elements of case work."

"It is a challenge to recruit qualified volunteers. We have a small bank of qualified volunteers who advised at more than one clinic throughout the year."

"Difficulties in finding volunteers to advise on particular areas of law, especially housing. Some volunteers are not very reliable and all are extremely busy in their day jobs and therefore under pressure."

"The loss of our family solicitor means we can no longer continue with the clinic."

"Shortage of employment and family law volunteers."

"Less availability from lawyers - scarcity of family and immigration lawyers and wills and probate."

Figure 5: Number of volunteers by region and setting

	Court based	Law Centre	Law Firm	Law School	Local Citizens Advice	Other	Other non-profit	Total
East				452	56		145	653
East Midlands			9	610	24	29		672
Greater London	106	338	393	2,835	350	75	1518	5,615
North East		6		457				463
North West			4	1,359			9	1,372
South East			13	1,024			47	1,084
South West		63		907	76		70	1,116
Wales		17	3	373			96	489
West Midlands			3	642		77	7	729
Yorkshire				945				945
Total	106	424	425	9,604	506	181	1,892	13,138

The number of volunteers represents data from 266 of 313 clinics

Clinics often face challenges in reporting exact volunteer numbers for various reasons. The comments below summarise some of the key explanations provided in the 2024 survey:

“Many of our law firm partners have a large number of volunteers who each do a few sessions per annum, therefore the number given is approximate.”

“This is the number of our student volunteers for the academic year 23/24 (1/9/23-31/8/24) plus two external solicitors. As we collect our data for each academic year, it is not possible to break this down to reflect the volunteers for 2024 only.”

“We have adhoc support from barristers and solicitors but they do not regularly volunteer with us and so are not included here.”

“We have volunteer solicitors and barristers advising in these clinics. There are also students who volunteer for us who are helping out sometimes. The number above is an estimate based on this.”

Clinics in focus: enquiries and advice

In 2024, the 284 clinics on the LawWorks Clinics Network that provided data received over 90,000 enquiries and helped over 61,000 people.

The data presented powerfully highlights the seismic impact and meaningful role that pro bono advice clinics play in enhancing access to justice. LawWorks hopes this report will not only shine a light on that impact, but also celebrate the vital contribution these clinics make.

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

Figure 6: Enquiries and how they are dealt with



The comments below illustrate some differences in how clinics record client information:

"We do not record the number of people who were signposted or referred or the number of people who could not be assisted."

"We currently do not have the facilities to accurately collect total numbers of enquiries."

"The figure for those who could not be assisted includes help-seekers who disengaged and those no-shows for appointments."

"We do not record enquiries that do not become clients."

Number of enquiries

The demand faced by clinics on our network is clearly evidenced by the 90,551 enquiries they received in 2024. This appears to be a significant increase on the 70,432 enquiries received by clinics in 2023 but it is important to remember that the number of clinics responding to the 2024 data request was significantly higher than in 2023.

Comparing the average number of enquiries received per clinic per year, on average each clinic received slightly fewer enquiries in 2024 compared to 2023 (369 enquiries per clinic in 2023 compared to 323 for 2024).

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

	Enquiries	Provided advice	Given information or referred
Court-based	326	302	3
Law Centre	14,521	6,026	3,886
Law firm	3,128	1,717	417
Law school /college	33,700	10,083	16,074
Local Citizens Advice	11,034	3,598	375
Non-Profit (Other)	27,265	14,302	4,840
Other	577	234	99
Total	90,551	36,262	25,694

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

	Enquiries	Provided advice	Given information or referred
East	10,496	4,316	1,526
East Midlands	3,669	1,099	2,506
Greater London	49,757	21,591	10,630
North East	1,645	325	419
North West	6,433	2,067	3,092
South East	5,030	1,330	2,629
South West	4,003	1,207	1,961
Wales	3,434	1,704	1,028
West Midlands	3,405	1,571	1,039
Yorkshire & Humber	2,679	1,052	864
Total	90,551	36,262	25,694

Number of people helped

Although clinics across the network cannot provide legal advice to every individual who contacts them, it is clear they work tirelessly to ensure clients receive meaningful support - whether through information, guidance, or appropriate referrals. In 2024, clinics on the LawWorks Clinics Network provided legal advice, information or referral support to 61,956 individuals which is an increase on the 60,798 helped by responding clinics in 2023. However, on average less people were helped per clinic in 2024 compared to 2023 (318 people per clinic and 221 people per clinic respectively).

Despite the clear commitment and outstanding efforts of clinics across the Network, unfortunately they will never be able to assist every individual that contacts them. In 2024 clinics reported being unable to assist 23,747 people. This figure is significantly higher than the 9,634 people clinics were unable to assist in 2023. The average number of people not helped per clinic in 2023 was 50 compared to 85 people per clinic not helped in 2024.

Although these figures will appear disappointing for clinics, it is important to remember the huge number of people that have been helped by clinics across the Network who would otherwise not have access to free legal advice. It is also important to draw attention to some of the challenges faced by clinics in 2024 which have had an impact on the number of people they can help – these include funding cuts, staffing challenges, restricted operating hours, clients failing to respond when contacted and clinics receiving enquiries outside of their remit of expertise:

“Workload of staff at the university being too great to manage the service to the level we would like.”

“Due to staffing constraints our solicitor for this clinic now also needs to teach meaning they have less time for clinic work.”

“Lack of resources due to ending of some of our largest funding streams.”

“Sector wide university budget and staffing challenges.”

“Due to limited resources, we have had to send numerous enquiries elsewhere.”

“Our funding for the co-ordinator position ceased in October 2024 and the clinic has had to be suspended until we can secure funding for a new co-ordinator.”

“Receipt of referrals which are outside the scope of the clinics.”

“As a student-led clinic, we only operate during academic term time. We often receive enquiries over the summer months that we can't help until October.”

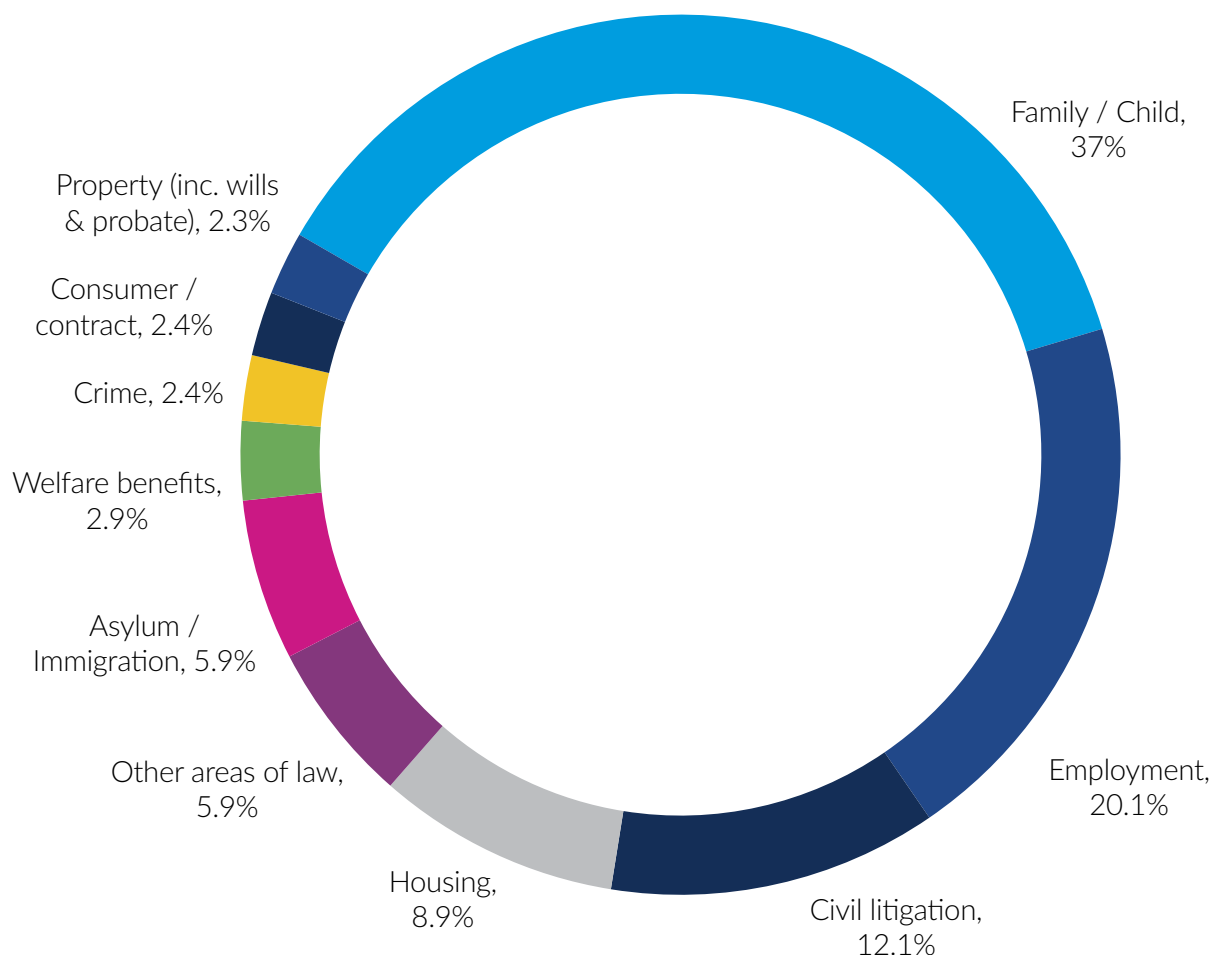
“Conversion of clients into appointments. Enquires were responded to and clients either didn't respond or cancelled a booked appointment.”

“The low figure for those assisted is in part due to clients not reverting once we conclude that we have an external solicitor who can supervise our students and who have performed a clear conflict check.”

Areas of law

Clients approach pro bono clinics with a wide range of legal concerns, though most commonly these involve social welfare and family law. Each clinic determines which areas of law it covers based on a combination of factors, including the expertise of its volunteers and supervisors, the specific legal needs of the local community, and its own strategic goals. While some clinics take a 'generalist' approach, offering advice across multiple legal fields, others focus on a specialist model, delivering more comprehensive support in one or two specific areas of law.

Figure 9: Advice provided by area of law



In 2024, the most advised area of law across the LawWorks Clinics Network was family (37%) followed by employment (20.1%) in second place. Together family and employment amounted to over half of all cases advised on. Employment was followed by civil litigation (12.1%) in third place and housing (8.9%) in fourth place. This pattern has remained largely the same over the last 6 years but in 2024 there was 7.3% increase in the number of family law cases advised on (29.7% in 2023) and a small decrease (4.5%) in the number of employment cases advised on (24.5% in 2023).

Other areas of law includes: *business / charity services, civil liberties, community care, competition law, data protection, debt / insolvency, discrimination, education, IP, medical, personal injury, small claims, windrush.*

Clients in focus: demographics and trends

Client demographics

As part of our annual data collection, LawWorks requests demographic information from clinics regarding the clients they support. This data is instrumental in enabling both LawWorks and participating clinics to analyse the reach and impact of pro bono legal services. Moreover, it plays an important role in enabling evaluation of the extent to which individuals from communities with protected characteristics, as defined under the Equality Act 2010, are able to access such services.

Consistent with previous years, in 2024 clinics continued to encounter difficulties in collecting comprehensive demographic data. Disability was the least reported category, with only 43% of clinics providing this information, followed by ethnicity at 56%. Gender had the highest response rate, with 69% of clinics reporting this data, followed by age at 62%.

The following comments from clinics reflect the difficulties they encounter in collecting demographic data from clients, as well as other factors that mean they are not able to provide this data to LawWorks:

“Our EDI data is largely derived from our equal opportunities form which we ask clients to complete, but many clients choose not to do so despite us encouraging them to do so.”

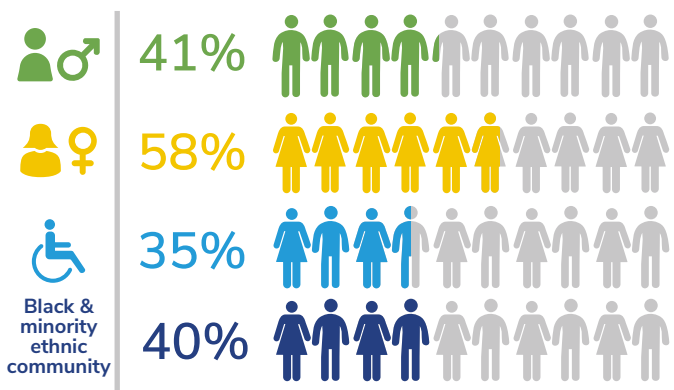
“The questions about the client’s sexual orientation, age and race are something that we do not ask when booking the appointment.”

“Data about age, ethnicity and disability conditions were not collected because we offer the advice remotely.”

“The clinic does not collect all of the demographic data that has been described in this survey. If the client offers the information, then we record it, but this is mostly related to sexuality rather than gender.”

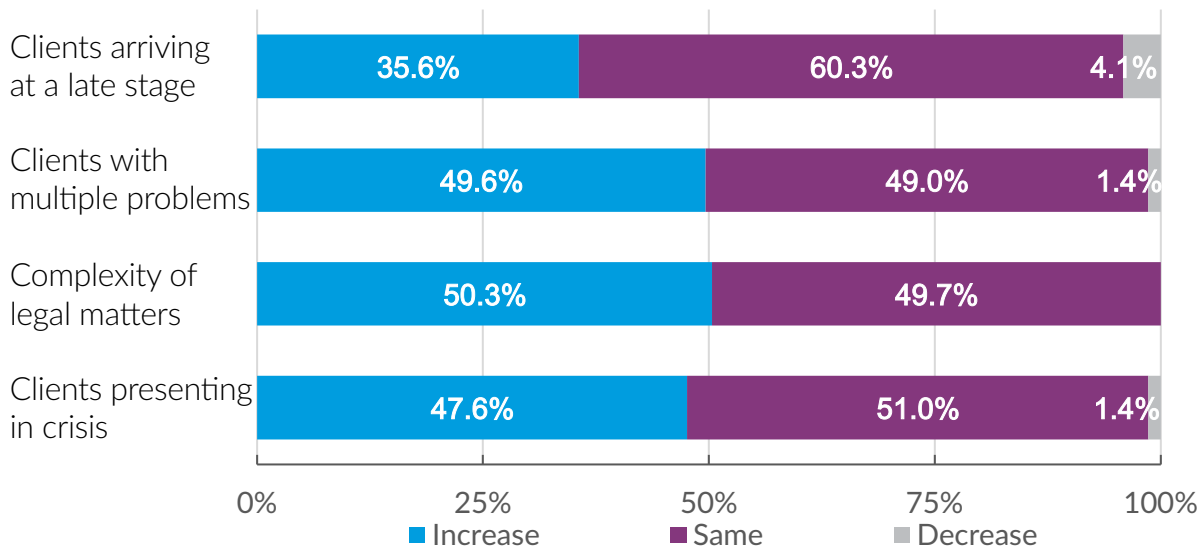
Among the clinics that reported client ethnicity data, 40% of clients identified as being from black and minority ethnic communities – a very slight decrease from 40.3% in 2023. The proportion of clients aged 18 to 65 remained consistent at 92% in both 2023 and 2024, as did the gender distribution (41% male, 58% female). The most notable demographic shift in 2024 was a marked rise in the proportion of clients reporting a disability, long-term illness, or health condition, increasing from 27% in 2023 to 35% in 2024.

Figure 10: Client demographics



Trends identified

Figure 11: Four trends identified



Clients arriving at a later stage

35.6% of clinics reported an increase in clients seeking legal advice at a late stage in their legal matters during 2024. This trend poses significant challenges for clinics as they often only provide initial advice and, due to high demand and long waiting lists for appointments, are unable to assist clients with urgent legal deadlines.

“Clients reaching out at a later stage and we are unable to assist due to deadlines being very soon.”

“Clients have deadlines which mean we cannot help them in time (given the time lag between first contact and letter of advice afforded by the clinic model). We are considering revisiting our model to enable advice to be provided more quickly than the approximate 1 month between query and letter of advice.”

University of Sussex Law Clinic

We are often contacted by people who have attempted to manage their own legal problem (or simply ignore it in the hope of it going away). These people all become more desperate when they realise how serious things can be; how they may have made things worse.

To have people reaching out late in the day, desperate for answers, means we are often on the receiving end of their frustrations when we cannot help.

Our appointments are often booked up weeks in advance, so having enquiries come in that are ‘urgent’ doesn’t really work for us in terms of processes. Some of our students towards the end of the year are able to help with such matters, having a bit more experience, but it is up to the supervisors whether we do so, and often this means increasing everyone’s workload to fit that person in.

University of Chester Legal Advice Centre

We have seen an increase in clients with employment law-related queries coming to us very close to the three-month deadline to enter early conciliation (which is a pre-requisite for submitting a claim to the employment tribunal). We have been unable to offer appointments to those clients, because given the approximately 4-week period between the first client contact and the

client receiving a letter of advice (produced by students following a fact finding meeting and supervised by an external volunteer solicitor), the deadline for entering early conciliation would in many cases have passed before they received their letter. We have signposted such clients to other agencies, helplines and clinics which offer on-the-spot advice to ensure they get the advice they need within the timeframe it is needed.

Clients with multiple problems

In 2024, 49.6% of clinics reported an increase in clients presenting with multiple, often interrelated, legal issues. This trend presents challenges in terms of clinic capacity and resources. Clients facing problems across different areas of law typically require multiple appointments to receive advice from solicitors with the relevant specialisms. In some cases, clinics may not cover all the necessary legal areas and will spend time referring clients to alternative sources of support.

Free Legal Advice Group for Domestic Violence (FLAG DV)

FLAG DV continues to see a year-on-year increase in clients presenting with multiple, interconnected issues directly linked to their experiences of domestic abuse. While our charity is limited to providing legal advice on family law matters, we are increasingly encountering clients with complex needs that fall outside our remit.

One of the most pressing and frequently occurring issues is related to immigration status. We also regularly see needs around tenancy law and challenges in accessing legal aid, including eligibility and representation. In addition to these legal concerns, many clients require support with non-legal needs such as children & family support services, debt & financial support, mental health support and food banks.

Unfortunately, despite our commitment to supporting survivors holistically, our ability to signpost to relevant services is often limited by the scarcity of accessible and specialist support in these areas. For many of our clients, navigating multiple unresolved legal and social issues is not only overwhelming but deeply traumatic.

Veterans Legal Link Clinic

Over 60% of our clients have a recognised mental disorder, primarily this is PTSD but there can be other issues as well. By the time they reach us they have reached a critical stage and their mental health has broken down, and often have multiple issues ongoing (we most routinely see crime, family and employment together). Some of these issues they don't immediately tell us about and we discover things through direct work with the client.

This causes some issues for the clinic. We count '1' client, but of course that client has needed 3 years' worth of help and assistance across multiple areas of law touching almost every aspect of their life, and that is both very hard to quantify and also managing demand is extremely difficult at times when their mental health is extremely poor. I would say over 50% of our clients since 2015 have used our service for more than one issue.

Complexity of legal matters

50.3% of clinics reported an increase in the complexity of legal matters brought by clients in 2024 - a slight decrease from 51% in 2023. These highly complex cases are more time-consuming to address, limiting the number of clients clinics can support overall. Additionally, the rising complexity places further strain on clinics to source volunteer solicitors with the necessary specialist expertise.

"Matters are becoming more complicated as clients can access basic advice and want advice on complex matters such as tax."

"Due to complexity of cases, we were not able to take on many new cases."

"Increased complexity in legal work, cases taking up more time and increased Judicial Reviews reducing capacity for other legal work."

"Increase in the volume of cases with complex issues involving children services and Police."

"Given the complexities of the cases that are in litigation, as well as the one-off advice interviews (which sometimes eventually end up in litigation too), we are struggling to assist every single person who contacts us."

Clients presenting in crisis

Ongoing financial pressures from the cost of living crisis, combined with experiencing increasingly complex and numerous legal issues, have contributed to 47.6% of clinics reporting a rise in clients presenting in crisis in 2024 - closely mirroring the 47% reported in 2023. The continued high number of crisis presentations remains a serious concern and is having a considerable impact on the wellbeing of clinic volunteers.

"Clients seem more distressed and it's been a challenge to manage their expectations of what our clinic can do for them."

"We are seeing an increase in distressed clients, and the distressing nature of enquires is also increasing, which has affected some of our staff's wellbeing and they have needed to take time out of work for this."

"All our clients are in crisis with the majority fleeing or about to flee abusive relationships and having to consider how this will impact on their ability to support themselves and any children."

"Students are dealing with more harrowing problems and we are receiving more enquiries from detention and removal centres."

Islington Legal Advice Centre

Legal advisers at Islington Legal Advice Centre have noticed an increase in clients presenting in crisis or distress. This seems to have been an ongoing trend since services resumed after covid and may be because it is increasingly difficult to find free or affordable legal advice.

Clients are often, understandably, extremely anxious about their situation and we have noticed an increase in the level of tension even between clients while they wait to be seen or how often clients weep or become angry and frustrated when they get a chance to talk to an adviser.

We also try to support legal advisers who are dealing with these clients as it can be hard to remain calm and professional at all times.

Literacy or digital exclusion

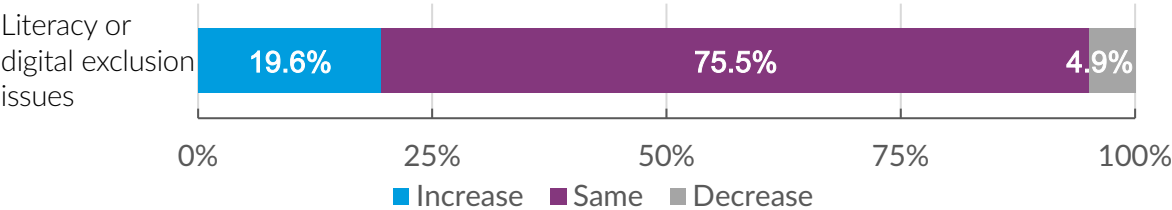
19.6% of clinics reported an increase in literacy or digital exclusion in 2024. This is an increase on the 14% of clinics in 2023. Although 19.6% of clinics reported an increase, only one clinic provided a specific comment about this when asked about the challenges they faced in 2024.

As previously outlined in this report, the sustained presence of hybrid clinics within the LawWorks Clinics Network (54%) plays a vital role in enabling individuals who face digital exclusion to access pro bono legal support.

Arden University Consumer Law Clinic

One of the key challenges we have encountered at Arden University Consumer Advice Clinic in 2024 has been client inexperience with technology, particularly when accessing online appointments via Microsoft Teams. A number of clients have missed scheduled interviews simply because they were unsure what Teams was or how to use it. This has created barriers to accessing our services, especially for those with limited digital literacy or confidence using online platforms. To address this, we now send all clients clear, step-by-step instructions on how to access their appointments, including guidance on downloading and joining a Teams meeting, as well as who to contact if they need support. This approach has helped reduce missed appointments and made the clinic more accessible to a wider range of clients.

Figure 12: Literacy or digital exclusion



Conclusions

The findings from the 2024 data collection clearly evidence the significant pressures faced by clinics on the LawWorks Clinics Network throughout the year. In 2024, clinics responded to unprecedented levels of demand, exacerbated by the cost of living crisis, widespread legal aid gaps, and increasing client vulnerability. Clinics not only supported over 61,000 individuals but also navigated a growing number of clients presenting at a later stage in their matter, tighter resources, and significant volunteer recruitment challenges.

Despite these pressures, the resilience and commitment of clinic coordinators, volunteers, and partner organisations remain remarkable. Their efforts have ensured that thousands of people - many of whom would otherwise face legal issues alone - have received vital free legal support. At the same time, the increase in clients presenting with multiple legal issues, and the continued high level of clients presenting in crisis, highlights the urgent need for sustainable funding, greater systemic support, and continued collaboration to expand capacity and reach.

While the average number of enquiries per clinic declined slightly compared to the previous year, 2024 saw a significant rise in the proportion of clients reporting a disability, long-term illness, or health condition - from 27% in 2023 to 33.6% in 2024. This shift can be viewed in both a positive and negative light: positively, it may indicate that more individuals from this group are accessing vital pro bono legal support; negatively, it may reflect a growing need for legal assistance among an already disadvantaged community. Given the ongoing financial pressures experienced by the public in 2024 - and the consistently high number of clients presenting in crisis - the rise in clients reporting physical or mental disabilities, long-term illnesses, or health conditions, while concerning, is perhaps unsurprising.

While we were pleased that that 91% of clinics on our network submitted their 2024 data, we acknowledge that our data does not reflect the full extent of legal need, but rather the opportunities available to access free legal support. The persistently high demand for family and employment law advice - highlighted by a 7.3% rise in family law cases this year - is a growing concern. We will continue to offer our data to policymakers as a valuable indicator of the legal issues people are bringing forward across England and Wales.

LawWorks is proud to support this network, and remains committed to fostering partnerships and equipping clinics with the tools they need to thrive. As we reflect on 2024 and look ahead, it is clear that pro bono legal clinics will continue to be a lifeline for many, and their work deserves recognition, investment, and long-term backing.

We would like to extend our sincere thanks to all clinics (coordinators, administrators and volunteers) for continuing to provide access to justice to those who otherwise would not be able to access free legal advice and for continuing to share their data and trends identified with us.

LawWorks Clinics Programme: 2024 at a glance

“LawWorks is the only umbrella organisation that has the best interest of law clinics at its heart. The services that LawWorks provides are unique and support our service delivery.”

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New pro bono legal advice clinics developed with support from LawWorks

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InfoExchanges held for clinic supervisors, coordinators & administrators

“LawWorks has been pivotal in launching the Legal Advice Bureau. The support from the outset in terms of advice, guidance, facilitating contacts as well as the continued assistance has been invaluable.”

Produced a refreshed version of the ‘Induction and training for law student clinic volunteers’ resource

Hosted training sessions on legal aid & dealing with disrepair issues in social landlord properties

“Via the monthly newsletters, direct introductions, regional meetings, networks, roundtables, training and conferences, LawWorks is tireless at providing opportunities for collaboration, best practice sharing and sector support.”

Arranged free access to Intralinks VDR Pro for clinics on the LawWorks Clinics Network

Hub meetings launched in the Southwest and Southeast; and re-launched in the East, North East and Yorkshire & Humberside

“LawWorks is a great organisation with a great ethos and have been really helpful in assisting us setting up the clinic.”

“The support LawWorks provides our clinicians enables us to run our clinics better and offer a better service to our clients.”



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

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