

LawWorks Clinics Network Report

Analysis of clinic activity between January 2023 – December 2023

October 2024

Contents

Introduction	1
Methodology	2
A network in increasing demand	3
A volunteering network	6
Clinics in focus: enquiries and advice	8
Number of enquiries	9
Number of people helped1	0
Areas of law1	1
Law school clinics1	2
Clients in focus: demographics and trends1	3
Client demographics1	3
Trends identified1	4
Clients arriving at a late stage1	4
Clients with multiple problems1	5
Complexity of legal matters1	6
Literacy or digital exclusion1	8
Reflecting on the last four years1	9
Conclusions2	0

Introduction

For many people, when they think of LawWorks, they think of the work of the LawWorks Clinics Network; the network of independent pro bono clinics which operate across England and Wales, in different cities and towns, online and in person, across legal subject matters and client groups. LawWorks has spent two decades championing, supporting and developing free legal advice clinics across England and Wales as a key element of helping to achieve access to justice in our communities.

This report covers the calendar year 2023, a year which saw an increasing numbers of clients and increasing complexity of need. In 2023, 70% of clinics reported an increase in demand for their services, compared to 64% in 2022, with 70,432 enquiries received in 2023. Enquiry numbers have still not returned to the pre-pandemic level of over 77,000 enquiries in 2019, and we continue to work with clinics to understand the causes behind these figures.

Clinics continue to show great adaptability and resilience, and to put the clients' needs at the centre of their planning. We continue to see the prevalence of hybrid clinics (up from 49% in 2022 to 54% in 2023) post COVID; creating flexibility for both the clients and the volunteers.

Despite the many challenges they face, which include lack of capacity, lack of funding and increased complexity of issues, the 64% of clinics who returned the data survey, reported that they were able to provide advice, information or signposting to over 60,798 people in 2023. The need for more volunteers, particularly in specialist areas of law, remains a barrier to clinics expanding, and reflects the growing challenges in recruiting and retaining lawyers in social welfare and housing law, and adds to the increasing concerns about advice deserts.

Although not a replacement for a properly funded legal aid system, pro bono work is another way to provide additional ad-hoc support and LawWorks has seen a growing awareness in the legal community of the impact pro bono work can have. Here at LawWorks, we believe that pro bono efforts do not only enhance the availability of legal advice but also help to foster a sense of social responsibility within the legal profession.

The work of the clinics and the LawWorks Network, remains a vital part of our legal support landscape, and we are proud to have collaborated with so many advice agencies, law schools, law firms and individual solicitors, to support the work that is captured within this report.

Thank you to everyone who has provided data and insight to this report, and thank you to all the pro bono solicitors, students and advisers who give of their time to help support those in legal need.

Rebecca Wilkinson Chief Executive

Methodology

Every January LawWorks collects data from its network of clinics for the previous twelve-month period between January and December. Both quantitative and qualitative data is gathered through a survey and helps LawWorks create a national picture of the invaluable help being provided by pro bono services and volunteers and also helps us with our policy work to develop the evidence base for pro bono and adequate funding of legal aid.

The survey covers a range of aspects of each clinic's pro bono activities, including the number of enquiries received, the number of clients advised, in which areas of law the advice was provided, volunteer numbers and client demographics. We also ask clinics how the demand for their service has changed during the reporting period and to provide information on trends their clinic has experienced during the previous year including complexity of legal matters clients are bringing to the clinic and the number of clients coming to the clinic at a later stage in their legal matter.

We understand that not all clinics are able to provide all the requested data and it is often particularly difficult for clinics to collect client demographic data. Some of the reasons provided were low return rates by clients, lack of resources and some clinics only collect demographic data from those clients for whom they are actually able to provide advice.

The overall reporting rate this year is lower than last year, with a return rate of 64%. This may well be linked to some of the commonly reported challenges faced by clinics in 2023; funding and staffing issues.

Despite being another challenging year for clinics with an ever-increasing demand for their services, clinics have continued to collect and provide data about their essential work across England and Wales. We would like to thank all those who collected and supplied the data. We recognise that this is a task that requires significant time and effort from everyone involved, and we are committed to ensuring that we only collect essential data.

A network in increasing demand

In 2023 LawWorks continued to support and develop a thriving and resilient network of local independent pro bono advice clinics across England and Wales. In 2023 there were 297 clinics registered on the LawWorks Clinics Network. This is a slight reduction in the number of clinics on the network in 2022, due to clinic closures owing to funding and staff changes, as well as the streamlining of a number of clinics.

As highlighted by the Law Society's Legal aid deserts campaign, reductions in legal aid has meant that in numerous areas across England and Wales individuals who cannot afford to pay for legal advice are not able to receive the free legal advice they are legally entitled to and desperately need. The reduction in legal aid coupled with the continued cost of living crisis has meant that the demand on pro bono advice clinics continued to rise in 2023.

Figure 1 below shows that in 2023, as with previous years, clinics in the LawWorks Clinics Network indicate an increased demand for their services. In 2023 70% of clinics on the Network reported an increase in demand for their services compared to 64.2% in 2022.

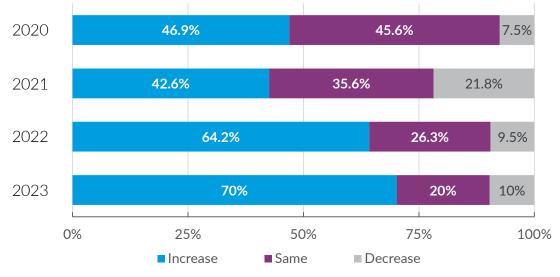


Figure 1: Increase in demand for service

From the clinics that provided data about their method of delivery, 54% operate a hybrid model and 36% operate a purely remote model. This is an increase on the 49% of clinics who reported operating a hybrid model in 2022. The increase in hybrid clinics and the flexibility this brings helps to expand the reach of clinics to individuals in rural areas who do not have a local clinic they can physically attend and to people who are not able to travel at the same time as ensuring that inperson appointments remain an option for those who are digitally excluded.

Figure 2 below sets out what services are offered by clinics. These figures are very similar to 2022. The initial advice service offered by 89% of the clinics on the network continues to be an important opportunity for clients to be guided about whether they are eligible for legal aid.

Figure 2: Types of clinic service

5.	89% Offer initial advice
	59% Offer written advice
	34% Offer form filling
-	22% Offer casework
	15% Offer representatio

These figures do not add up to 100% as some clinics offer more than service.

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



From the map above, it is clear that clinics on the LawWorks Network are spread across England & Wales. There remain areas where there are very few or no pro

bono advice clinics registered as part of the LawWorks Clinic Network, and we continue to prioritise work in Wales and more rural areas. The increase of online pro bono, and more 'national' pro bono offerings are not taken into account by the map, and offer an example of how pro bono can try to provide access to legal advice to those living outside key legal hubs.

	Court based	Law Centre	Law Firm	Law School	Local Citizens Advice	Other	Other non- profit	Total
East			2	15	4	1	5	27
East Midlands			2	12	1	2		17
Greater London	1	25	7	32	6	4	43	118
North East		2		8			1	11
North West		1	2	21			2	26
South East				19			3	22
South West		1		11	1	1	3	17
Wales	1	1	2	6			6	16
West Midlands	1		1	19		2	4	27
Yorkshire			1	14			1	16
Total	3	30	17	157	30	10	68	297

Figure 4: Number of clinics by region and setting

As set out in figure 4 above, over 50% of the clinics on the network are attached to university law schools.

A volunteering network

Although the type of service offered by the clinics and the setting within which they are based varies, one thing that all clinics in the LawWorks Network have in common is the importance of their volunteers. The clinics are supported by a wide range of volunteers including students, trainees, paralegals, solicitors, barristers and administrators. By giving up their time and sharing their legal skills and knowledge, the volunteers are helping to support some of the most vulnerable individuals across England & Wales who may



Figure 5: Number of volunteers

otherwise be unable to access much needed free legal advice.

LawWorks remains committed to facilitating pro bono volunteering by providing ongoing information and support, training and resources for clinic volunteers and coordinators and working with stakeholders to develop new clinics.

In 2023 over 10,420 volunteers supported clinics in the network across England & Wales. Despite being an incredibly high number, there was a reduction in volunteers in 2023 – compared to over 11,400 in 2022. A number of clinics specifically mentioned loss of volunteers as one of the main challenges they have faced this year. Below are some of the comments given by clinics about volunteering levels in 2023:

"We have been short of one of the four contributing firms, so have run fewer clinics for the last 8 months. We are hoping to rectify this in 2024."

"We faced a high number of solicitors stepping down from volunteering with us & we struggled to recruit more."

"Volunteer engagement is still lower than it was pre-pandemic."

"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".

"The number of volunteers able to advise at the clinics has decreased."

"The biggest challenge for the employment clinic was the supply of volunteers as employment clinic had to be suspended part way through the year as the law firm that originally provided volunteer advisers ceased to provide volunteers. Fortunately, a new pro bono partner was identified and is now providing volunteers and the employment clinic resumed again in August 2023."

	Law Centre	Law Firm	Law School	Local Citizens Advice	Other	Other non- profit	Total
East			436	56		127	619
East Midlands		36	578		19		633
Greater London	700	514	2034	454	64	757	4523
North East			415				415
North West		1	1278				1279
South East			142			37	179
South West			814				814
Wales	30		296			53	379
West Midlands			273		77	17	367
Yorkshire			1213				1213
Total	730	551	7479	510	160	991	10421

Figure 6: Number of volunteers by region and setting

Clinics in focus: enquiries and advice

In 2023, clinics across the Network received over 70,000 enquiries and helped over 60,000 people.

Figure 7: Enquiries and how they are dealt with



The figures above clearly demonstrate the significant impact that pro bono advice clinics have on access to justice and LawWorks hopes that this report will not only publicise that impact but also celebrate it.

It is important to note that these statistics do not provide an entirely complete picture, there are variations and outliers in the datasets that can impact the overall numbers. For example, different clinics use different intake forms that record varying client information, and subsequently coding methods and recording systems.

Number of enquiries

The 70,432 enquiries received by clinics in 2023 is an increase on the 68,883 received in 2022. However, enquiry numbers have still not returned to the prepandemic level of over 77,000 enquiries in 2019.

	Enquiries	Provided advice	Given information or referred
Court-based	354	354	
Law Centre	8438	6658	1216
Law firm	1240	1112	49
Law school /college	26606	7947	12235
Local Citizens Advice	13246	5357	7889
Non-Profit (Other)	20146	12581	5147
Other	402	217	36
Total	70432	34226	26572

Figure 8: Enquiries and total number of people helped by clinic setting

Figure 9: Enquiries and total number of people helped by region

	Enquiries	Provided advice	Given information or referred
National	14850	6639	7737
East	6375	4018	1306
East Midlands	2290	844	1440
Greater London	28552	15921	9593
North East	1527	225	238
North West	4588	1219	3085
South East	1606	663	746
South West	1658	494	500
West Midlands	3439	1910	848
Yorkshire & Humber	3504	1038	828
Wales	2043	1255	251
Total	70432	34226	26572

Number of people helped

It is evident that despite not being able to provide legal advice to every person who contacts them, clinics across the network work extremely hard to ensure clients are supported as much as possible whether that is by offering information, guidance or being referred to other services where appropriate. In 2023, clinics across the Network were able to provide advice, information or signpost 60,798 individuals which is over 9,000 more people than in 2022.

Despite the clear dedication and constant hard work of all clinics and volunteers across the Network, clinics reported being unable to assist 9,634 people. Although this will be disappointing for clinics, this figure is significantly smaller than the approximately 17,700 clients that clinics were unable to assist in 2022.

As previously mentioned, volunteer numbers were one factor affecting the capacity of some clinics in 2023. Below are some of the comments provided by clinics demonstrating other reasons why they are not able to help everyone who contacts them:

"Clients make queries, we request further information but they do not respond."

"Clients got referred to us even though we don't offer the law advice they needed."

"We have found it hard to respond to all of the enquiries that were sent to us - although we are usually able to deal with most of the enquiries that are made to our face-to-face clinic it is harder to deal with the volume of online queries that come in. We still need more employment, housing and family lawyers but find that it is hard to recruit in those areas."

"Not being able to find enough volunteers able to advise in specialist areas such as housing and civil litigation".

"As a student-led clinic, we only operate during academic term time: October to December, then January to April. We often receive enquiries over the summer months that we can't help until October onwards."

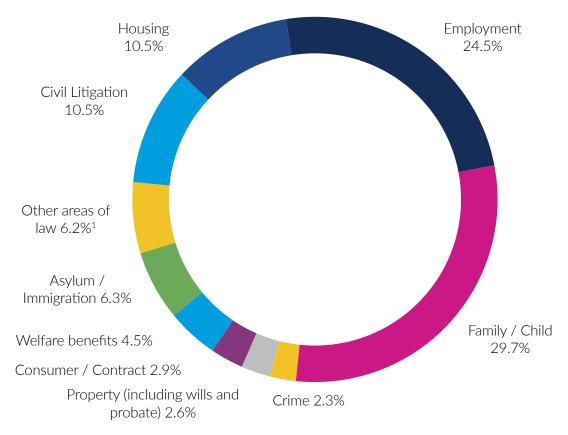
"Due to lack of funding we had to cut back our resources and stop taking new referrals for 3 months."

"Increased demand- at times we have had to shut to new clients as our waiting list has been so long."

Areas of law

The legal issues that clients bring to pro bono clinics can vary greatly but the majority are social welfare and family law matters. The areas of law covered by a clinic are decided by the individual clinic and will be determined by factors such as the expertise or volunteers and / or supervisors, local legal need and the clinic's own aims and priorities. Some clinics take a more 'generalist' approach covering a wide variety of legal areas and other clinics take a more 'specialist' approach providing more in-depth advice in one or two legal areas.

Figure 10: Enquiries by area of law



Due to the number, variety and different models of clinics, most areas of law are covered by services across the network.

The most advised area of law is family (29.7%) with employment following as a close second (24.5%) together totally over half of the total cases advised on. Joint third are housing and civil litigation (10.5%). This pattern has stayed mostly consistent for the last 5 years.

Figure 11: Most advised area of law



Law school clinics

As set out in figure 4, over 50% (157) of clinics on the LawWorks network are attached to university law schools. Although the clinic model adopted by law schools varies, for example what role the students have, the model of supervision and whether clinic activities are extra-curricular, part of an assessed module or both, all law school clinics have the common aims of providing students with an experiential learning opportunity and improving access to justice for those who cannot afford to pay for legal advice.

In terms of an experiential learning opportunity, depending on the model of clinic adopted by a law school, students working in a clinic can gain a wide range of essential skills including researching, drafting, interviewing, note-taking, formfilling, client care, active listening and team work. Working in a clinic also assists students to enhance their substantive legal knowledge and put what they learn during their taught modules into practice.

It is clear that law school clinics are making an important and valuable contribution to access to justice. As set out in figure 8, law school clinics on the LawWorks network helped 20,182 clients in 2023 (advised 7947 clients and gave information or referral information to 12,235 clients). Of the responding clinics, 74% indicated they provide more than one type of service.

Figure 12: Type of service provided by law school clinics



Clients in focus: demographics and trends

Client demographics

Part of the data LawWorks annually requests from clinics is demographic information about the clients they assist. This data helps LawWorks and the individual clinics to understand who is benefitting from pro bono clinic services and it also plays a vital role in assessing the extent to which communities with protected characteristics (as defined by the Equality Act 2010) can access pro bono legal advice. As with previous years, collection of client demographic data remained challenging for clinics in 2023. 66% of clinics who responded to the survey were able to provide some information on client demographics, however only 29% of clinics were able to complete all the categories. Ethnicity was the category that received the least responses followed by age.

From those clinics that were able to provide data about client ethnicity, 40% of clients were from black & minority ethnic communities in 2023. This is a significant decrease from the 59% in 2021 and a slight decrease from the 47% in 2022. However, this may be because the number of clinics able to provide demographic data in 2023 (66%) was less than in 2022 (72%).

The comments below show some feedback received from clinics about the challenges they face collecting client data or other reasons why they are not able to collect this data:

"Many of our queries are one-offs or resolved fairly quickly in which case we do not get an opportunity/it's unnecessary to ask their age".

"Clients not wishing to divulge information".

"We do not collect equality data as a matter of course."

"We are trying to work out a way to collate data on ethnicity. We count our stats in relation to gender and sexual orientation. We do not include age in our statistics, but it is something we will consider."

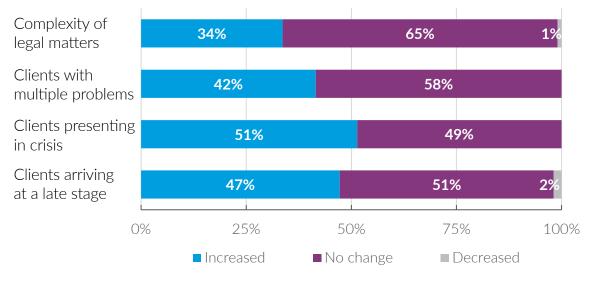
"This information is based on our Equal Opportunities form. We only receive a very small number of completed forms, so the sample is very limited and not necessarily representative of our client base. Despite our efforts to increase the number of completed forms, whilst we have received more than in previous years, it's still a very low percentage of total clients."

Figure 13: Client demographics



Trends identified

Figure 14: Four trends identified



Clients arriving at a late stage

In 2023 34% of clinics indicated an increase in clients that were approaching them at a late stage in their legal issue. This presents an additional challenge for pro bono clinics who often only provide initial advice and, due to capacity issues, cannot deal with urgent matters.

"We are not able to provide urgent advice as a student led clinic and we aim to provide early legal advice, so we are trying to signpost and not sure if those enquirers receive timely advice". "The deadlines faced by our enquirers mean we often cannot help as we cannot work with short deadlines."

Macmillan Work Support Service Clinic

At Macmillan Cancer Support, we have observed a growing number of cancer patients and their carers seeking advice on employment rights, often in the later stages of their employment journey. This typically occurs at the conclusion of a Grievance & Disciplinary process, with all appeals exhausted. Some individuals have initiated contact with ACAS Early Conciliation or have claims advancing through the Employment Tribunal. Unfortunately, once matters reach this stage, it is difficult to provide assistance through our clinic. Recently we have observed clients failing to promptly challenge changes to their contracts, which can have detrimental impacts on potential breach of contract claims.

Moreover, barriers to accessing free or affordable legal support deter some clients from seeking early intervention due to concerns about potential costs. Additionally, many clients are unaware of their eligibility for legal aid. As a result, they may approach our clinic only after missing critical appeal deadlines or time limits, complicating their ability to file late claims. For cancer patients, managing work-related issues alongside their diagnosis and treatment can be an overwhelming burden. As more cancer patients return to and remain in the workforce following a cancer diagnosis, it is imperative that we reach them as early as possible to provide the support they need.

Liverpool John Moores University Legal Advice Centre

Half of the clients seen in the LJMU Exceptional Case Funding (ECF) Clinic who required support with making an application for ECF in a private family law matter were already involved in active proceedings. In a fifth of those cases proceedings were very far advanced with either a finding of fact or final hearing already listed. This puts significant pressure on the Clinic to try to get ECF in place in time for the next hearing and, where necessary, assist the client in seeking an adjournment.

Clients with multiple problems

42% of clinics reported an increase in the number of clients approaching them with multiple legal issues compared to the previous year.

University of Essex Law Clinic

As a clinic providing predominately family, housing and immigration law services, we are seeing increasingly complex client cases involving overlapping issues. Clients often present with a need for advice in two or all of these areas requiring a need for the facts to be carefully unpicked by staff supervisors to work out how best to advise the client. This is particularly in light of the fact that even the order of the provision of the advice needs to be considered as the advice provided in one area can impact on the advice needed in another. For example, a number of our clients experiencing domestic abuse, are also migrants at risk of destitution and have no recourse to public funds. This is one example of a client with a family law, housing and immigration element. There are several other cases of overlap across our core advice provision, and we expect to see an increase in these sorts of cases.

Complexity of legal matters

In 2023 51% of clinics indicated an increase in the complexity of legal matters that clients were bringing to them. This is an increase on the 47% of clinics who indicated such an increase in 2022.

"This year, there have been some requests for business legal support that have been difficult to service due to the nature of the business involved. For example, one business is trading in cryptocurrency, an industry in which the volunteers do not have regulatory or industry expertise."

The increase in the complexity of legal matters being brought to pro bono clinics means that clinics face the challenge of trying to find volunteer lawyers with certain areas of specialism.

"Not being able to find enough volunteers able to advise in specialist areas such as housing and civil litigation".

"We still need more employment, housing and family lawyers but find that it is hard to recruit in those areas."

"We are planning to provide immigration advice; however, we have been unable to connect with a firm of immigration solicitors who are able to provide a pro bono solicitor volunteer to assist with this".

Norfolk Community Law Service

Over the last 2 years we have seen an increase in the complexity of our issues advised on at our Free Legal Advice Clinics. Client's often present with multiple, interlinked issues which need more than one advice appointment. Clients who could have previously afforded to pay solicitors for ongoing assistance can no longer do this, so return to us for multiple sessions whilst they do their best to navigate legal processes without representation. We are also seeing an increase in clients who have been the victim of domestic abuse, and/or have mental health problems, these people often require greater support from the moment they first contact us until we have provided the advice.

Dads House Family Law Clinic

At Dads House Family Law Clinic, we help dads and mums who are struggling to see their children due to parental conflict and safeguarding issues. We see over 800 clients and recently have been honoured as Advocate's Pro Bono Initiative of the Year at the 2024 Bar Pro Bono Awards.

Despite the leaps we have made as a clinic, the situation for our clients and the legal complexity is ever increasing. We receive around 5,200 phone calls and 2,500 email enquiries, all from dads, mums and other primary carers that need legal advice. Naturally we cannot assist all those clients but we help where can seeing over 800 clients.

Since 2020 the legal complexity of cases that we assist with as a pro bono clinic has increased from simpler child arrangement cases to international and internal removal cases, cases where high level allegations are raised, alienation, complex gender identity matters, LGBTQ+ cases and many more. In one matter we have assisted with 9 hearings in the High Court, ensuring pro bono advice and court representation throughout. If the client had to pay fees, it would have cost them over £100,000.00

However, legal complexity is not just one determining factor in child arrangement cases in the family jurisdiction. As the amount of clients where the overarching complexity of the case has increased has been noted by all those who advise at Dads House Family Law Clinic, whether that is emotional complexity, economic complexity and vulnerability due to the cost of living crisis, food poverty and social isolation. This is why we at Dads House truly believe in the Dads House holistic method. Through our approach, we support all our clients not only with expert legal and mediation advice that amounts to £228,217.50 per annum but food from our food bank, emotional support from Dads Table, our emotional support provided expert support coaches within our legal clinics and our clubs for Dads whether that is guitar, yoga and football sessions.

Clients presenting in crisis

Considering the trends identified above, in addition to the continuing cost of living crisis, it is not surprising that 47% of clinics indicated an increase in the number of clients presenting in crisis in 2023. An increase in the number of clients presenting in crisis has created an additional challenge for clinic volunteers.

"Mental health challenges for our advisers in dealing with traumatic and difficult calls"

"The complexity of clients' queries and their distress take up most the team's mental and emotional energy....people are facing multiple problems and distress is increasing and dealing with this on a daily basis can impact advisers' resilience, need for time off, sickness absence, etc".

Queen Mary Legal Advice Centre

In recent years we have observed a trend of significantly more clients presenting in crisis across all of our clinics. Shortfalls in service delivery impacting all facets of client's lives have led to them presenting in anxious, stressed, and agitated states with increased severity and frequency, and with more urgent and complex legal issues. Supporting this influx of clients in crisis has created additional challenges for staff and students and has stretched the Centre's resources. The Centre is now working to become a more traumainformed practice.

Literacy or digital exclusion

14% of clinics reported an increase in literacy or digital exclusion in 2023 in comparison to 16% of clinics in 2022. Despite 14% of clinics reporting an increase, no clinics provided specific comments about this challenge in the 2023 data survey whereas in previous years some clinics specifically reflected on this challenge.

It is positive that each year more clinics are offering a hybrid service (54% in 2023) and therefore able to assist those who are digitally excluded.

Mary Ward Legal Centre Free Legal Advice Clinics

We do have a high number of clients with literacy and digital exclusion issues. We have seen this increase in clients since we moved to online forms. Clients are able to call to access our services, but we have noticed an increase in clients calling to let us know they are unable to complete our online forms due to literacy and digital exclusion. The challenge we face is that the Access to Legal Services Team are spending more time assisting clients with completing forms to enable the client to gain access to our services.

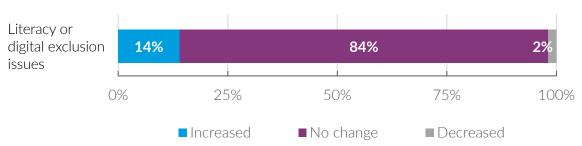
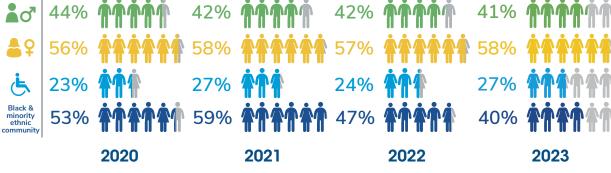


Figure 15: Literacy or digital exclusion

Reflecting on the last four years

Number of Volunteers in clinics

[↑] [↑] [↑] [↑] [↑] [↑] [↑] [↑] [↑] [↑] [↑] ↑ ↑ ↑ ↑ ↑ ↑ ↑ ↑ ↑ ↑	† 5 †	<pre></pre>	[↑] ↑ † † † † † † † †	**************************************	* * * * * * * * * * * * * * * 10,421				
2020		2021	2	022	2023				
Clinic client enquiries									
Total number of enquiries		49,651	64,194	68,883	70,432				
Number of people helped		43.018	48,477	51,061	60,798				
Number of people receiving legal advice		27,648	32,881	31,464	34,226				
Number of people give information or referred to other services	n I	15,370	15,596	19,597	26,572				
to other services	>	2020	2021	2022	2023				
	Types	of clinic s	ervice						
Offer initial advice	5.	90%	89%	90%	89%				
Offer written advice		55%	52%	56%	59%				
Offer form filling		33%	30%	34%	34%				
Offer casework	-	21%	18%	21%	22%				
Offer representation		16%	13%	17%	15%				
		2020	2021	2022	2023				
Clinic client demographics									
▲♂ 44% *****	42%	፟፟፟፟፟፟፟፟፟፟ዀ፟ዀ፞ዀ፞	42%	***	% **** *				



Conclusions

It is evident that clinics across the LawWorks Network continued to face increasing demand for their services in 2023. Coupled with the increased demand for services, a number of clinics faced additional challenges including a reduction in the number of volunteers, an increase in the complexity of legal issues and an increase in the number of clients presenting at clinics at a later stage in their legal issue. Despite these significant challenges, clinics continued to show their resilience and commitment to supporting some of the most vulnerable members of society either by the provision of free legal advice or by providing information or referrals to other services.

It is clear from the comparison on the previous page, of figures and trends across the last four years, that more people were helped in 2023 with an increase of over 9,000 clients being signposted and an increase of over 2,700 clients receiving legal advice. Despite these notable increases, the number of clients from black and minority ethnic communities fell for a second year running. This may, however, be due to the reduced number of clinics able to collect and provide demographic data in 2023 than in previous years.

We have also seen a fall in clinics returning any data, and we will continue to work with clinics to understand how we can streamline our data requests to ensure we are able to capture this vital data without unduly burdening the clinics and taking up their valuable resources.

We know that our data does not represent need, it cannot, but rather opportunities to access free legal support. We do not fall into the trap of thinking that correlation equals causation; and yet we will continue to highlight the growing need for family and employment advice that is seen across the clinics and to offer our data to policy makers as a reflection of legal needs being presented across England and Wales.

LawWorks remains committed to providing practical and strategic support to clinics in the Clinics Network . We will continue to work with advice agencies, charities, law schools and lawyers to support the development of new clinics that can help meet unmet legal need.

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.

Endnotes

1 Other areas of law includes: Business / Charity Services, Civil liberties, community care, competition law, data protection, debt / insolvency, discrimination, education, IP Law, medical, personal Injury, small claims, windrush

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.



www.lawworks.org.uk Registered charity number 1064274

