



## News Release

15 December 2009

### Satisfaction with civil legal aid high and improved

An independent survey for the Scottish Legal Aid Board into people's experience of the civil legal aid system has shown high and increasing levels of satisfaction since the last major survey in 2007.

The survey involved phone interviews with 765 applicants of civil legal assistance and sought to measure levels of satisfaction with both the Scottish Legal Aid Board and the services provided by people's solicitors. The survey was also intended to help understand how people identify legal problems and find solicitors. The information will be used to further develop and improve legal aid policy, practices and procedures.

Findings included:

- 91% of applicants were satisfied with the ease of starting to use the legal aid system and getting legal advice and assistance (of the remainder 5% did not express a view, whilst 3% expressed some dissatisfaction)
- 85% of applicants were satisfied with the work of the Board (up from 78% in 2007 - 9% did not express a view, 6% expressed dissatisfaction)
- 84% of applicants indicated that they were satisfied with the overall experience of the full legal aid system (up from 61% in 2007, only 3% were actually dissatisfied)
- 97% of applicants would be likely to recommend legal aid to a friend
- 87% were satisfied with the service provided by their solicitor (6% did not express a view, 8% were dissatisfied)
- Only 5% of applicants said they had difficulty finding a legal aid solicitor

Lindsay Montgomery, C.B.E., Chief Executive of the Scottish Legal Aid Board commented, "The results are encouraging and a strong indication that we are enabling access to justice. Given that applicants for civil legal assistance are often involved in difficult and challenging situations the survey is a very positive reflection on civil legal aid solicitors, who provide this important service. Overall there are very high levels of satisfaction with the service received and very small numbers expressing dissatisfaction. We will be using the detailed findings of the survey to identify specific areas for the Board or solicitors to further improve the civil legal assistance system."

A briefing on the research and the full report (from Progressive Partnership) are available on the Board's website at: [http://www.slab.org.uk/about\\_us/research/Stakeholderengagement.htm](http://www.slab.org.uk/about_us/research/Stakeholderengagement.htm).

In 2008-2009 the cost of civil legal assistance to the taxpayer was £42.6 million with 89,571 grants of civil advice and assistance and 10,981 grants of civil legal aid.

**Ends**

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**Notes for editors**

1. Civil legal aid provides help towards the costs of legal advice and representation, for those who qualify, paid for out of public funds. It is designed to help individuals on low and modest incomes gain access to the legal system. There are two main types of legal assistance: advice and assistance and legal aid. Together these are called legal assistance. Legal aid may be free, or someone may have to pay towards the cost of their case, for example through paying a contribution or from the money or property that they win or keep as a result of their legal action. Legal aid is accessed through a solicitor.
2. The vast majority of civil legal aid is provided through solicitors in private practice, with some through law centres and solicitors employed by the Board.