



THE
ACCESS
TO JUSTICE
FOUNDATION

Impact Report 2024

Our grants are funding organisations across the UK.

A third of our funded partners are located in London. Many offer services UK wide, including Scotland.



The Access to Justice Foundation is the only funder in the UK dedicated to increasing free legal support, advice and representation for everyone who needs it.

We work with other funders and individuals to increase the money available for free legal advice, while working directly with community organisations supporting people who are less likely to know about or be able to access legal help.

When we talk about access to justice we're talking about people like David - people walking a fine line between managing a setback and facing a life-shattering crisis.

We exist to make sure everyone has someone to turn to, like the advisers at David's local Citizens Advice and Law Centre.

Our approach

In this report, you'll see how we work with advice-providing charities, funders, and organisations to make better decisions and champion better practices.

If you are interested in finding out more, please get in touch.

Case study

Why our work matters:

When David, an adult at risk, lost his ID and phone, he couldn't access his online bank account. Without funds to pay rent or buy food, he was evicted and had to rely on food banks. David turned to the Citizens Advice Bradford & Airedale and Bradford Law Centre for help.

With the help of an adviser, he was eventually able to open a new bank account and transfer his funds.

Able to pay rent for his own home again and being less reliant on charitable help or food banks helped David feel more independent and empowered.



If you are interested in doing more to help people like David, please donate.

We focus on three key priorities:

Funding where need is the greatest

Funding the most effective ways to deliver legal advice

Gaining and sharing knowledge

Funding where need is the greatest

Your ability to get good legal advice shouldn't depend on how much money you have or where you live. But it does.

There are huge disparities of access to free legal advice across the UK.

In many parts of the country, particularly rural areas, people have nowhere to turn when facing life-changing legal problems.

These “advice deserts” leave communities isolated from crucial support. Even with public transport to local towns, they often find no one there who can offer free advice.

For marginalised communities such as travellers and refugees this isolation runs deeper. They need organisations that understand their unique experience and provide safe spaces to address issues like housing, immigration and other crucial issues.

We direct our funding where it creates the greatest impact, funding effective charities serving communities with the most pressing needs.

Too often, the communities most in need of legal advice have the hardest time accessing it. Disabled people, for instance, might have difficulty reaching an advice agency. Yet they are also more likely to need help with benefits applications, housing problems and employment challenges.

That's why in 2024, we made grants to organisations working to improve their free legal advice provision to clients with disabilities.

One of our funded partners, Citizens Advice Braintree and South Essex, is using their grant to improve access to their services by providing sign language interpreters, using new technology, and partnering with disability advocacy groups. Read more [here](#).



12.45m

people in England live in legal aid deserts for housing.

LexisNexis Legal Aid Deserts report. 2022

Case study

The Women’s Centre, Cornwall

Led by women, many of whom have survived violence themselves, The Women’s Centre provides vital services to women and girls dealing with the aftermath of sexual and domestic abuse.

The Centre supports women facing complex challenges including homelessness and discrimination, as well as women with learning disabilities and migrant women who often encounter additional barriers to getting help.

Their doors are open to women across Cornwall, Devon, Dorset, and to those in HMP Eastwood Park.

Our funding is supporting the Centre’s ambition to build a legal advice partnership, training staff, local lawyers and practitioners, to ensure they can deliver services sensitive to the needs and experience of the women they serve. The aim is to radically improve survivors’ access to justice, particularly for the most excluded and marginalised women.

Jackie May, CEO, said:

“A few years ago housing was the biggest issue. Now it is the impact of getting good legal advice. Our closest Law Centre is 150 miles away in Bristol.

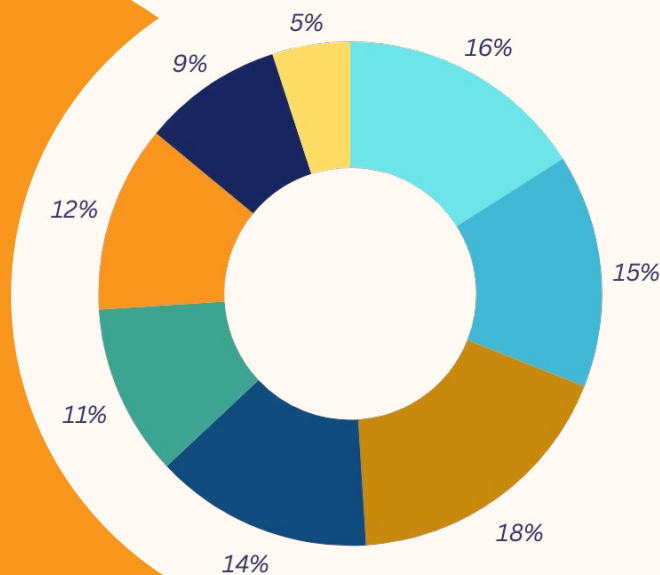
The five year core cost grant from The Access to Justice Foundation means we can use our resources where they are most needed. It has given us hope.”



If you are interested in doing more to help, please donate.

We support the provision of free legal advice that goes to the heart of people’s daily lives. Below is a breakdown of the beneficiary needs met by our funded partners:

We awarded £34.8m in multi-year grants in 2024 and made payments of £14.6m



- Benefits and social welfare
- Employment and work
- Housing and homelessness
- Asylum and immigration
- Family and children
- Debt and money
- Health and social care
- Domestic abuse

Funding the most effective ways to deliver legal advice

Getting legal advice in a way that works for you is essential for true access to justice.

The traditional in-person office-based setting for legal advice has long since given way to a myriad of methods including informal, drop-in, community-based settings and online chat functions.

These new methods break down barriers, but we need to know which ones truly work best for people in need. This creates three key challenges

- **Legal advice agencies develop creative ways to reach people but struggle to measure their effectiveness,**
- **Agencies struggle to demonstrate their impact to funders like us**

And most critically

- **Communities might miss out on receiving advice in ways that better suit their specific needs.**



We are committed to strengthening advice agencies by building their resources, skills, and capacity. This helps them identify the best approaches for their communities and gather meaningful data about what works.

The evidence on advice service impact remains incomplete. That's why we are working with others to tap into expertise and fill these knowledge gaps.

We share what we learn through our website and forums, creating resources that benefits the entire sector.

Throughout this work, we are mindful of how we interact with advice agencies — only asking for data that serves a clear purpose and drives real improvement.

74,897
people were helped
in 2024

Data from Ministry of Justice
funded projects

Case study

FISCUS

Based in Sunderland's most deprived ward FISCUS North delivers welfare, benefits and debt advice to more than 1400 people facing significant barriers.

Working through weekly outreach advice sessions at 14 foodbanks, they have responded to a 300% rise in demand in recent years. They meet people dealing with deepening poverty, mental health challenges, and increasingly complex needs that require comprehensive support.

FISCUS is a truly community based charity proudly offering "more than advice" with a Baby Bank, Clothes Bank and a Young Mammie's Home Economics Project alongside their advice service. The safe and welcoming spaces they provide help people to open up and share problems.

Our grant has enabled the organisation to offer full-time positions to experienced staff who were previously part-time and ensuring critical projects continue rather than closing down due to lack of funding.

CEO Anita Heskett-Saddington said:



This funding has given me breathing space as a leader, time to focus on other issues and given space for other ideas."



If you are interested in doing more to help, [please donate.](#)

Learning together, achieving more

Shared learning is core to our values and in autumn 2024 we brought frontline organisations, funders, and the legal community together for the official launch of our five year core funding programme, [Improving Lives Through Advice](#).

We were joined by Phil Chamberlain, England Director at The National Lottery Community Fund, and Farah Ziaulla, from the Ministry of Justice. Both spoke about a unified approach and long-term vision for improving access to justice.

Funded partners from across the country, including FISCUS, shared powerful insights about their community impact. Their success stories highlighted common themes: the importance of advisers with lived experience, meeting people in accessible locations like foodbanks rather than expecting them to visit offices, and building relationships founded on trust and empowerment.

Our long-term core funding transforms what's possible for these organisations. It helps them attract and keep talented staff, invest confidently in innovative approaches, increase access to specialist legal advice, and provide holistic solutions to complex needs.



Sharing knowledge and resources

The chronic under-funding in the social justice sector is too big for any single organisation to solve alone. We work with charities, funders and other organisations that share the same aims. By joining forces we will create stronger solutions and better outcomes for everyone who needs free legal advice while continuing to make the case to government for better funded social welfare advice.

Our collaborative approach drove a project with the Solicitors Regulation Authority and The Law Society of England and Wales to explore how Online Dispute Resolution (ODR) can address unmet legal needs.

We identified and highlighted the essential role free legal advice providers play in connecting people to dispute resolution services through a series of activities and events over 18 months

We brought together more than 120 experts representing the frontline, legal profession, technology, regulatory, and government sectors interested in resolving disputes at an early stage.

This diverse expertise helped us pinpoint not just barriers to effective ODR services, but solutions to overcome them.

Our work delivered:

- Strategic recommendations for successfully embedding solutions,
- Best practice guidance for developing new solutions, and
- Clear evidence showing the value of funding frontline advice services to resolve disputes earlier and quicker.

This collaborative approach drives everything we do. Visit our website to see more examples of how we're bringing people together to increase access to justice.

[Read more.](#)

“ I am so glad ATJF are bringing together such a great cross section of the sector. There is so much expertise and genuine insight in the sector, if we just came together more, we could really crack it!”

Free legal advice provider, Online Dispute Resolution Workshop

Case study

Access Social Care

Delivering to a vulnerable and underserved community, Access Social Care provide free legal advice and support for people with social care needs to ensure they get the care they are entitled to.

With over 850,000 people potentially needing legal advice to enforce their rights the charity has pioneered the use of technology and AI to ensure their services remain effective and accessible.

We know that developing new technology takes time and involves risks that often deter funders. That's why we provide long-term core funding—allowing Access Social Care to confidently invest in innovative approaches while continuing to meet their communities' immediate needs.

CEO and Founder Kari Gerstheimer said:

“According to NHS data, in 2023/24 only 41% of people who requested social care received it. At least 1.5 million people are living without the social care they need.”

Kari Gerstheimer

“Our online legal information service, AccessAva contains more than 200 legal letters which can be personalised.

“We know disabled people, older people, and carers use it to navigate through the system more smoothly, and solve problems early on, improving social care outcomes. By hosting it on more than 30 partner websites, we are able to reach marginalised communities and gather powerful data.

“Transitioning from a minimum viable product to a sustainable service can sometimes feel like pushing a boulder up a big hill - long term funding from the Access to Justice Foundation enables us to take the calculated risks necessary when developing a tech product.”



Building stronger leadership for greater impact

The organisations we partner with often pour all their resources into frontline services, leaving little capacity for developing management skills. We believe great advice charities need both exceptional services and strong leadership. That's why we go beyond just funding. We're actively strengthening 59 charities through:

▶ Management and leadership training

▶ Tailored consultancy support

▶ A vibrant peer support network

“ Supporting effective management, leadership and governance is critical to maintaining and building a resilient, accessible, and high-quality specialist advice sector. Strengthen the managers and you strengthen the organisations they manage.”

Matthew Howgate FCMI,
Director of the LAPG
Management & Leadership Hub



59

charities are
being supported
by Funder Plus

Our convened groups

We're committed to working collaboratively with others across the sector to ensure everyone can make the best use of the experience, expertise, and learning generated by our collective knowledge.

We openly share our data, insights, and learning because we believe collaboration strengthens everyone's work. When more people have access to quality information, we all make a bigger impact.

Our open groups create dynamic spaces where people share opportunities, tackle challenges together, and build powerful partnerships:



The Justice and Innovation Group is our flagship 550 strong cross-sector community group dedicated to using innovative approaches to deliver better justice services to clients. Members identify and discuss key issues facing innovation and the use of technology in the access to justice community.



Insights and Learning Sessions dive deep into research, evidence, and projects that matter. These sessions help us all translate valuable information into practical action, identifying the resources we need to make real change happen.



The Social Justice Funders Group connects 80 funders committed to addressing inequalities and building a fairer society. Our quarterly meetings facilitate knowledge exchange and create opportunities for coordinated action on shared priorities.

“The Access to Justice Foundation plays a vital role in tackling the twin challenge of unmet legal need and championing the importance of access to justice. Through its work to support the sector to develop the evidence base about legal advice, it has been a driving force in convening stakeholders to focus their attention on improving the collection of data and use of research.”

Ash Patel, Programme Head – Justice,
Nuffield Foundation



[Want to be part of these conversations?](#)

[Please get in touch.](#)

Thank you

Our work to increase access to justice is only possible thanks to donations.

Special thanks to the Ministry of Justice, The National Lottery Community Fund and The Stewarts Foundation for multi-year transformational funding of free legal advice.

Thank you to all who have given – including those who wish to remain anonymous and all those who organise and take part in fundraising events.

Addleshaw Goddard, AK Law, Alexander Bennett Solicitors, Ashley James Solicitors, Ashurst LLP, Baring Foundation, Baker McKenzie, Blaser Mills Solicitors, Bolt Burdon Solicitors, Brick Court Chambers, Brighouses Solicitors, Bryan Cave Leighton Paisner LLP, Burges Salmon, Burnett Barker Solicitors, Caswell Jones Solicitors, Central England Law Centre (CELC), Clifford Chance, Clyde & Co, CMS Cameron McKenna Nabarro, Olswang LLP, Cohen & Gresser, Cooley Ltd, Crowd Justice, DAC Beachcroft LLP, David Gray Solicitors, Debevoise & Plimpton LLP, Dechert LLP, DGM Solicitors, Diligent Law, DMA Law, Expatriate Law, Fried Frank, Goodwin Proctor, Gowling WLG, Hague & Dixon, Helen Robbins Solicitors, Hogan Lovells International LLP, Horsey Lightly Solicitors, Investor Compensation (UK) Ltd, Ives & Co, Jomati Foundation, Kort Ltd, Lanyon Bowdler, Leeds Beckett Law School, Leigh Day & Co, LexisNexis, Lewis Silkin, Linklaters LLP, Malcolm Foy & Co, Meadows Ryan Solicitors, Milburns Solicitors, Mishcon de Reya, Morr & Co, Pockex Tax Ltd, Preston Incorporated Law Society, Redkite Solicitors, Reed Smith LLP, Rees Page Solicitors, Relative Connections, Scott + Scott, Shoosmiths, Simmons & Simmons, Simpson Millar, Solicitors Regulation Authority, Squire Patton Boggs Charitable Trust, The Bar Council, The Law Society of England & Wales, Thompsons Solicitors, Watson Farley & Williams, Wiggin LLP, Windeatts Solicitors, Womble Bond Dickinson, Woolliscrofts Solicitors

We would like to recognise the work of pro bono lawyers who not only successfully represent their clients but also obtain Pro Bono Costs Orders which go on to help many more people have access to pro bono legal advice.

Pépin Aslett of St Johns Buildings, Maxim Cardew of Maitland Chambers, Toby Chandler of Crown Office Chambers, Reuben Comiskey of Radcliffe Chambers, Cecily Crampin of Falcon Chambers, Nicole Davis of Edwin Coe LLP, Ian Denham of Outer Temple Chambers, Siobhan Duncan of Temple Tax Chambers, Harry Eccles-Williams of Mishcon de Reya, Benjamin Faulkner of Wilberforce Chambers, Christine Howard of Weil Gotshal and Manges, Edward Kemp KC of Matrix Chambers, Daniel Kessler of 4 Stone Buildings, Josh Lewison of Radcliffe Chambers, Cathryn McGahey KC of Temple Garden Chambers, Andrew Judge of Westgate Chambers, Sarah Parker of 3 Verulam Buildings, Georgina Peters of South Square Chambers, Brad Pomfret KC of 23 Essex Street, Rhiannon Phelps of Eversheds Sutherland, Rebecca Scammell of Bevirs Law, Harry Stratton of One Essex Court, Kate Traynor of Landmark Chambers, Verity Taylor of Mishcon de Reya, James Watthey of 4 Pump Court

Get involved

You can join us by:

- Making a regular personal donation
- Demonstrating your company's commitment to justice through a donation
- Donating your Residual Client Balances
- Obtaining a Pro Bono Costs Order
- Sponsoring and taking part in a fundraising event

If you are passionate about increasing access to justice, please get in touch.

↪ Visit www.atjf.org.uk/support-us

● Contact
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THE
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