

Learning the Lessons of LASPO

THE BAR of
NORTHERN
IRELAND

The Legal Aid, Sentencing, and Punishment of Offenders Act (LASPO) came into effect in England and Wales in 2012. LASPO cut large areas from legal aid, meaning that fewer people could access legal support. The Bar is highlighting the generational harm that LASPO caused in England and Wales to ensure that the mistakes are not repeated in this jurisdiction.

1. The Justice Gap – Impact of LASPO on Citizens

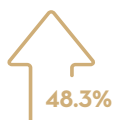


The number of civil legal aid providers in England and Wales has dropped from **3,896 in 2012 to 2,172 in March 2024**.¹



In 2021, it was estimated that **3.6 million people** in England and Wales had an unmet legal need each year.²

3. The volume and complexity of casework is also increasing...⁴



48.3% of MPs surveyed in 2018 believed that the volume of casework they received increased in the 12 months prior.



53% of MPs surveyed in 2018 believed that the complexity of casework had increased in the 12 months prior.

2. Displaced Demand – Impact of LASPO on Members of Parliament

Since the introduction of LASPO, the nature of MPs casework has changed, with a sharp rise in demand from constituents for support on legal matters.³



38.4% of casework was legal in nature in 2012.



89% of casework was legal in nature in 2016.



75% of casework was legal in nature in 2023.

4. The most common legal issues brought by constituents to MPs are...⁵

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Housing



Immigration



Welfare Benefits



Family

¹ Ministry of Justice and Legal Aid Agency, "Legal Aid Provider Dashboards" cited in the Law Society and Frontier economics, "Research on the Sustainability of Civil Legal Aid: Final Report" (May 2024)

² Written evidence from The Legal Services Board produced in House of Commons Justice Committee "The Future of Legal Aid" 3rd Report of Session 2021-22 HC 70 (July 2021)

³ Young Legal Aid Lawyers, "Nowhere else to turn: The impact of legal aid cuts on MPs' ability to help their constituents" (March 2012)

All Party Parliamentary Group on Pro Bono and Hogan Lovells, "Mind the gap: an assessment of unmet legal need in London: A Survey of MPs' Surgeries" (Oct-Nov 2016)

Hogan Lovells and LawWorks, "Mind the Gap: The unmet need for legal advice in England and Wales" (June 2023)

⁴ All-Party Parliamentary Group on Legal Aid, "MP Casework Survey - Findings - September 2018" (Legal Aid Practitioners Group, 2018)

⁵ See studies above.
See also: Daniel Newman and Jon Robins, "Access to justice and the role of parliamentarians: what happens to those who fall through the justice gap?" (2023) Journal of Legal Studies 1(21)