



Legal Aid
Agency

Dame Meg Hillier MP
Chair of the Committee of Public Accounts
House of Commons
Palace of Westminster
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Jane Harbottle
Chief Executive
Legal Aid Agency

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Dear Chair,

Re: Public Accounts Committee Value for Money from Legal Aid – 25 March oral evidence follow up

The information in this letter is intended to respond to the Committee's question (Q.59) at the 25 March oral evidence hearing whereby the Legal Aid Agency (LAA) was asked if it could extrapolate the costs of administering the Exceptional Case Funding (ECF) process because it is a process which requires decisions to be taken by caseworkers in the Agency.

The LAA does not hold data about the time spent administering each individual application. However, to provide a comparison we have carried out a high-level analysis to show the costs of determining ECF applications, complex civil cases and standard applications handled by the Agency.

Application type	2022/23 applications volume	Staff cost	Average case cost
ECF	3,311	£671,906	£203
Complex civil applications	7,714	£1,521,011	£197
Standard applications (excluding cases that have no merits and means test)	78,985	£2,703,800	£34

The costs provided exclude the costs of the means assessment process and of paying claims. They also exclude the operational support costs involved in administering the system, for example in managing workflow, maintaining e-folders, customer telephone service etc.

A simple methodology has been used to estimate staff costs per case based on a calculation involving the costs of the relevant teams being divided by the number of applications of the different case types.

It should be noted that complex civil applications are determined by the Exceptional and Complex Cases Team (of which the ECF work forms a part). The work of this team also includes in-scope civil complex cases such as immigration, clinical negligence, child abuse claims, claims against public authorities and the most complex

family, mental health, housing, and other in-scope civil matters.

The data comparison provided here uses the LAA's best estimate of staff time for individuals who carry out work for both ECF and complex in-scope civil applications. The information reflects the higher time standard associated with determining more complex applications and the higher grades of the staff.

I hope the information contained within this letter assists but please do not hesitate to contact me if I can provide any further information or clarity.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "J Harbottle".

Jane Harbottle
Chief Executive