



Chapter 4

Customer Services

The Department is committed to developing and maintaining a highly-motivated, caring and responsive workforce and keeps finding ways to better its performance through a customer-focused approach when delivering its services.

Performance Pledges

Processing of Applications

In 2022, the Department's actual performance in meeting the various targets set for processing time is set out below:

Types of Applications	Standard Processing Time	Performance Targets	Actual Performance in 2022
Civil Legal Aid	Within 3 months from the date of application	85%	85%
Criminal Legal Aid			
- Appeal against sentence	Within 2 months from the date of application	90%	89%
- Appeal against conviction	Within 3 months from the date of application	90%	86%
Trials in the Court of First Instance of the High Court / District Court	Within 10 working days from the date of application	90%	84%
Committal proceedings	Within 8 working days from the date of application	90%	79%

Payment to Aided Persons and Service Providers

In 2022-2023, the Department paid out \$1,158.6 million to lawyers / experts / other parties and \$1,171.1 million to legally aided persons. During the year, the Department met/exceeded all performance targets on payment:

Payment Targets	Service Delivery Standard	Performance Targets	Actual Performance in 2022
Aided Persons	Interim Payment Within 1 month from receipt of monies due to the aided person and / or receipt of estimation of costs from the assigned solicitor, whichever is appropriate.	95%	95%
	Final Payment Within 6 weeks from date of agreement of all costs and disbursements related to the case, and receipt of all monies due to the aided person and the Director of Legal Aid.	95%	99%
Lawyers / Experts / Other Parties	Advance Payment Within 6 weeks from receipt of bill.	95%	99%
	Balance Payment Within 6 weeks from date of agreement of all costs and disbursements related to the case, or receipts of all monies due to the aided person and the Director of Legal Aid, whichever is later.	95%	99%

Analysis of Legal Aid Costs by Nature of Expenditure

Nature of Expenditure	2021-2022 (\$M)	2022-2023 (\$M)
Solicitors Costs	585.3	644.8
Counsel Fees	336.7	379.7
Doctors Fees	9.0	9.2
Opposite Party Costs	36.8	59.9
Others ^(Note)	67.5	65.0
Total	1,035.3	1,158.6

Note: These include expenses for land and company searches, court fees and taxing fees, law costs draftsman fees, expert fees, copying charges, bank charges and miscellaneous expenses.

Customer Feedback

With a view to enhancing our provision of services to the public, the Department regularly conducts comprehensive surveys on customer feedback on different aspects of the legal aid services. The surveys cover application and processing procedures for legal aid and the Department's in-house litigation services. Different methodologies such as on the spot collection and mail surveys have been used depending on the points of contact and on the stages and types of services rendered to customers. The overall customer satisfaction level remained high in 2022. The charts at [Appendix 2](#) illustrate the major findings of the survey on customer feedback.

Customer Service Initiatives

Enquiries, Complaints and Representations

The Department places great importance on enquiries, complaints and representations received from our customers. Customers' concerns and suggestions are viewed by the Department as a means of improving its service and ensuring the fulfilment of its statutory functions. The Departmental Customer Service Manager, who is a senior directorate, would meet with a team of Assistant Customer Service Managers and Officers regularly to review feedback on our services and recommend follow up actions where necessary.

Complaints

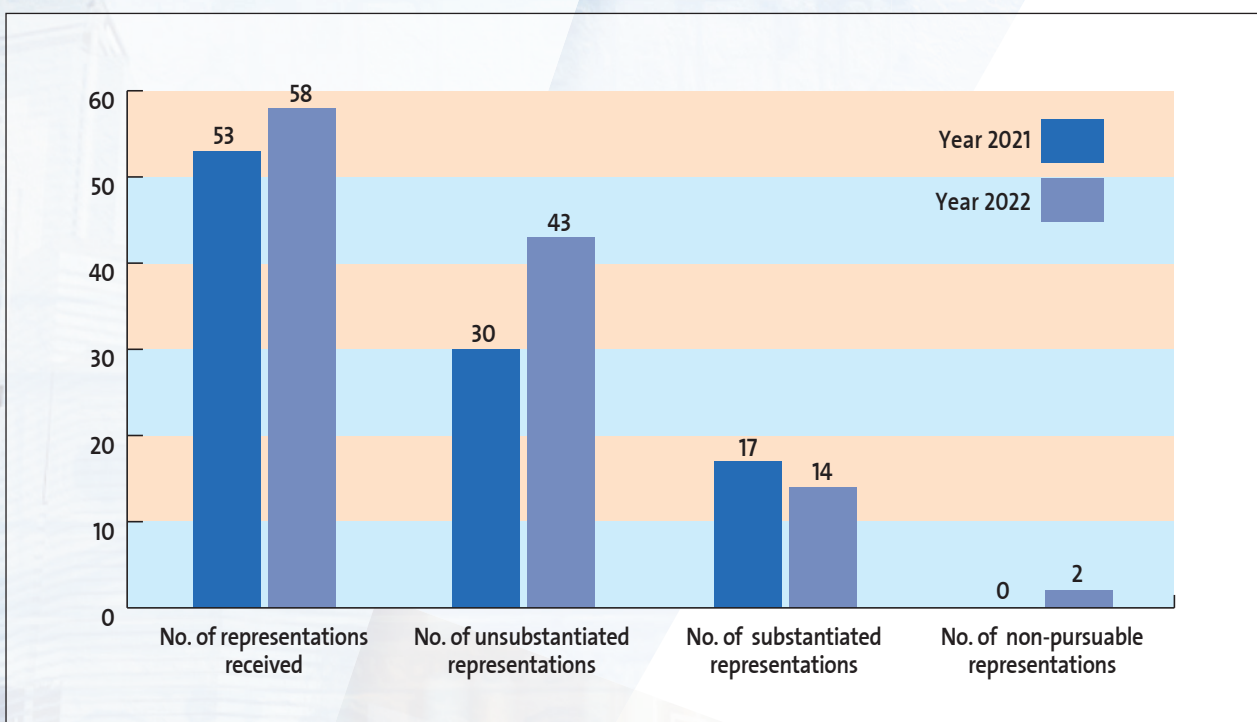
The Assistant Director of Legal Aid (Policy and Development) is the designated Complaint Liaison Officer to coordinate the handling of all the complaints received. Members of the public may lodge complaints in person with the Customer Service Officers of individual sections or by telephone or in writing to the Department by post, email or by fax. All complaints received will be handled according to the Department's complaint handling mechanism which is in compliance with the Government's general complaint handling guidelines. The Department will investigate and handle all complaints impartially and expeditiously. In general, an interim reply will be given within 10 days after the receipt of a complaint, and a substantive reply will be given within 30 days.

Representations

To qualify for legal aid, applicants must pass both the means and merits tests. If anyone believes that a person should not have been given legal aid on means and / or merits, he can write to us and let us know the reasons. The Application and Processing Division is responsible for conducting review of representations against grant of legal aid on merits. Representations against grant of legal aid on means are handled by the Special Duties and Research Unit. The Department has published a leaflet to explain the investigation system and to address frequently asked questions. Please visit https://www.lad.gov.hk/eng/documents/ppr/publication/Not_Happy_en.pdf to view the leaflet.

In 2022, the Special Duties and Research Unit received 58 representations against grants of legal aid on means and completed investigation in 59 cases. 16 cases were referred to the police for investigation as to whether any offence was committed under Section 23 of the Legal Aid Ordinance, Cap. 91, and under Section 18A of the Theft Ordinance, Cap. 210 and / or Section 36 of the Crimes Ordinance, Cap. 200.

Means Representations Received and Outcome of Investigations Concluded in 2021 and 2022:



LAD’s Hotline Service - the Interactive Voice Response System

The Department's hotline service provides a fast and convenient means for the public to learn about the legal aid services. It has pre-recorded messages in Cantonese, Putonghua and English on different aspects of legal aid services. The popular ones are application procedures, eligibility criteria for civil and criminal legal aid, the aided person's liability to contribute towards the costs of aided proceedings etc. For further information, callers can speak to a staff member of the Department who will answer their enquiries concerning legal aid during office hours.