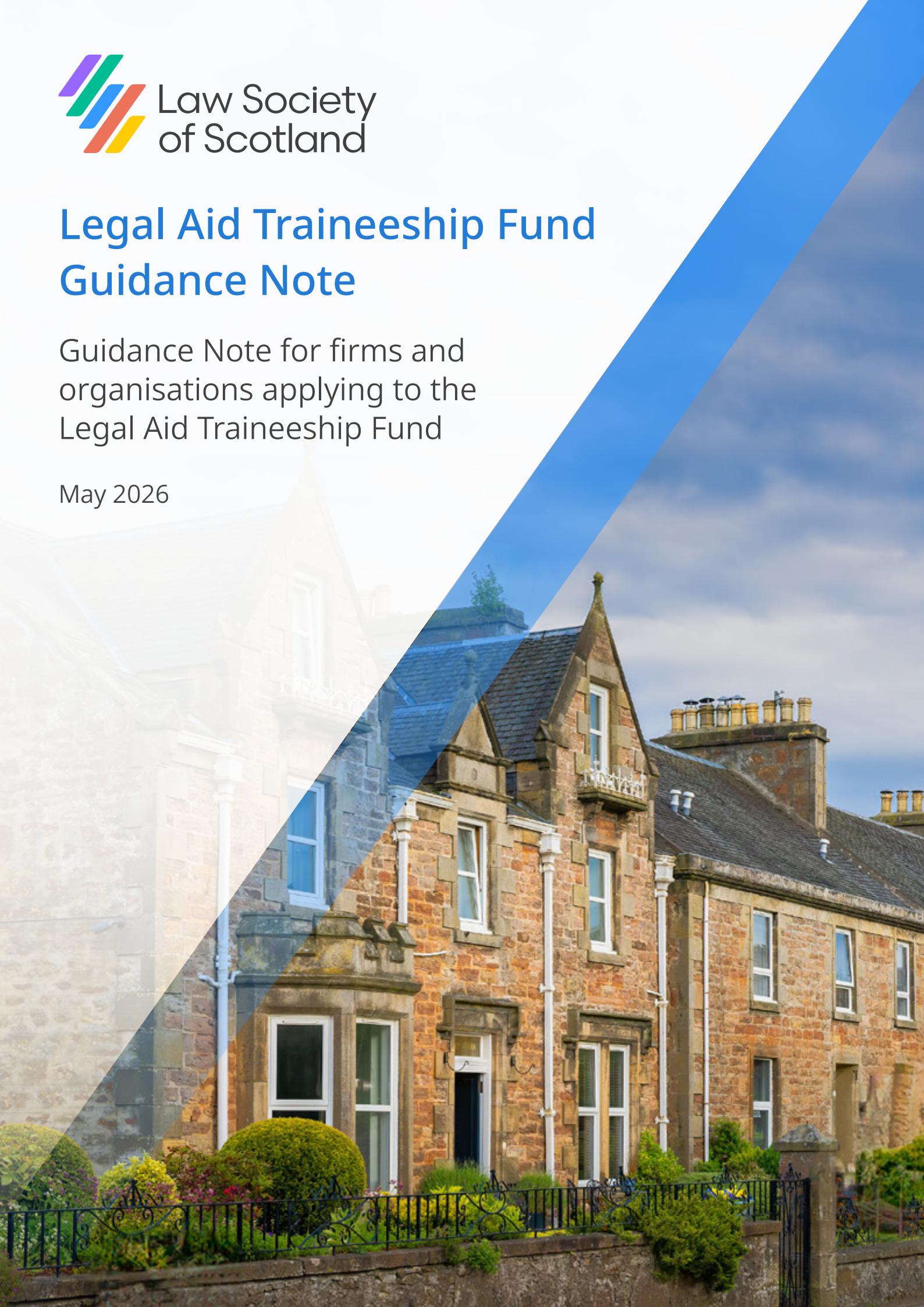


Legal Aid Traineeship Fund Guidance Note

Guidance Note for firms and
organisations applying to the
Legal Aid Traineeship Fund

May 2026





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This guidance note is for firms/organisations that are eligible to apply for the Legal Aid Traineeship Fund (“the Fund”), funded by the Scottish Government.

This information is to give firms/organisations applying to the Fund a full understanding of:

- The main objectives of the Fund
- Expectations of firms/organisations that take on a trainee
- The eligibility criteria in order to apply to the Fund
- How to apply to the Fund
- Timelines of the Fund
- Recruitment Guidance for successful applicants
- Financial commitments of the Fund

Main Objectives of the Fund and Context

The Scottish Government as part of their wider commitments to support the Legal Aid profession in Scotland announced on 28 January 2026 another Legal Aid Traineeship Fund. This £1.5 million Fund will support 40 new traineeships within the Legal Aid sector.

The Law Society of Scotland will deliver the purposes of the Fund by being the main point of contact, assessing applications, and making awards to successful firms/organisations.

The Law Society of Scotland and the Scottish Government have worked collaboratively, engaging and collecting research from stakeholders involved with the previous iteration of the Legal Aid Traineeship Fund. With consideration of this feedback and the wider needs Legal Aid profession in Scotland the application assessment and sifting process has been designed.

The Scottish Government have three main objectives for the Fund:

1. To increase the capacity and capability of the Legal Aid profession in Scotland.
2. To increase diversity and equality within the legal profession by the recruitment and retention of trainees from under-represented groups across the profession including people with a disability, from minority ethnic backgrounds, or from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds.
3. To provide employment and training opportunities for the purpose of supporting economic regeneration and development.



Eligibility

Legal firms/organisations will need to be able to evidence to the Law Society that 35% of their average turnover came from Legal Aid funding.

Applicants are required to vouch on the application form that Legal Aid work accounted for at least 35% of turnover over the last two years prior to application.

Applicants must also either:

- a) produce certified accounts for the two years before 1 April 2025 or such date as is appropriate for the relevant accounting period. From this information the Law Society of Scotland will calculate the proportion of Legal Aid work done, based on declared turnover divided by declared amount received from the Scottish Legal Aid Board (SLAB) in the relevant years.

or

- b) produce a certificate from their accountants for the relevant period demonstrating 35% of applicants' business turnover is derived from Legal Aid.

You will need to provide two years of accounts to be eligible for the fund. If your business is newly established, and therefore you cannot provide this, unfortunately, you will not be eligible to apply.

Please note, that meeting the eligibility threshold allows your application to proceed to assessment. It does not guarantee funding.

How to Apply

If your firm/organisation meets the 35% eligibility criteria, you can **apply through the online application form** (available on the Law Society's website from 1 June 2026). **You will then need to separately submit your firm's/organisation's accounts as part of the application process.**

Step 1: Application Form

The online application form can be found and submitted through our website during the application window 1 June 2026 – 15 June 2026. [Legal Aid Traineeship Fund: Firm/Organisation Application Form – Fill out form](#)

You will be asked about your firm/organisation when you fill out the application, and these areas will be considered when assessing your application. These areas will include.

- What local authority your firm/organisation is based in
- What type of Legal Aid your firm/organisation practices



- How much of the firm's/organisation's work is Legal Aid
- Whether your firm/organisation has previously taken on a trainee
- A 200-word statement on why the Legal Aid Traineeship Fund would make a difference to your firm/organisation.

These areas will be considered when assessing your application. Screenshots of the application form are provided so you can review and prepare before applying on the Law Society's website. ([Appendix 1](#))

Step 2: Submit your accounts

Once you have submitted the online application form, you will auto-receive a confirmation of this via email from traineeshipfund@lawscot.org.uk. In this email there will be a secure link provided with additional instructions in how to submit your account information to evidence your Legal Aid turnover. Please submit these documents immediately after submission of your application.

Failure to submit your firm/organisation accounts by 15 June 2026 will result in an incomplete application and therefore you will not be considered for the Fund.

Calculating and evidencing your Legal Aid percentage

The application form will ask you to set out the proportion of your turnover which is Legal Aid. This figure will be checked against your annual accounts and SLAB records.

To calculate the proportion of Legal Aid work done, take your declared turnover for the two years before 1 April 2025 or such date as is appropriate for the relevant accounting period and divide this by the declared amount received from the Scottish Legal Aid Board (SLAB) for the same period.

200-Word Statement

A strong 200-word statement should briefly explain why you're applying and what difference the Fund would make to you/your firm/organisation. You could include:

1. an outline your firm's/organisation's role in delivering Legal Aid locally (including the community/need you serve);
2. the capacity/capability gap you're trying to address (e.g., workload pressure, succession planning, ability to take on more legally aided cases) and how a trainee would help.



Timeline for the Traineeship Fund

Table 1: Application Timeline

Dates	Event	Information
1 June 2026	Applications Open	Application form will be launched on Law Society Website
15 June 2026 at Midday	Applications Close	Closure of form on Law Society Website. All applications and accounts must be submitted
w/c 13 July 2026	Application Decisions	Successful and unsuccessful applicants notified

Successful applicants should be prepared to comply with a timeline that offers limited flexibility for the recruitment of their new trainee. The intention is for the majority of the 40 funded trainees to be appointed and begin their roles prior to the end of 2026.

Table 2: Recruitment Timeline for Successful Applicants

Dates	Event	Information
10 August 2026	Window for Job Adverts Open	Successful Firms can launch their trainee job advert
4 October 2026	Window for Job Adverts Close	All firms must have advertised trainee job advert by this date
31 December 2026	Traineeships to be in post	All successful firms should aim to have confirmed a successful trainee and have them in post



Recruitment Guidance for Successful Applicants

Successful applicants are expected to run a fair and open recruitment process and to offer a traineeship that meets training requirements and provides meaningful exposure to Legal Aid work.

Traineeships eligible for funding under this Fund must be *new* traineeships. Therefore, they must commence after the fund's launch date of 1 June 2026 and meet the recruitment terms.

Successful firms/organisations must:

Advertise the traineeship within the recruitment window.

- Ensure recruitment is conducted in line with relevant equality and employment obligations (including making reasonable adjustments where required).
- Ensure the traineeship is a genuine training contract and that trainees are not used as a substitute for a newly qualified solicitor role.
- Pay the trainee no less than the Law Society of Scotland's [recommended rate](#) of remuneration for trainee solicitors.
- Provide appropriate supervision and support to the trainee, this could include a clear plan for the trainee's work and learning across the traineeship.

All trainees applying for a traineeship funded by this programme must submit an equality and diversity monitoring form.

There will be a pre drafted job description and job application that all successful firms/organisations must comply with. The traineeships must be advertised through LawScot Jobs.

From there, firms/organisations must comply with the Recruitment Timeline ([Table 2](#)). All firms/organisations should ensure that a trainee is recruited and fully prepared to commence their traineeship by the end of 2026.

Financial Commitment of Fund

The Fund provides financial support towards a traineeship in the Legal Aid sector. Full terms and conditions (including payment arrangements) will be set out and issued to successful applicants.

Each successful firm/organisation will receive funding equivalent to 50% of the eligible costs of employing a trainee over the two-year traineeship period.

Funding will contribute towards the cost of employing the trainee at the Law Society of Scotland's [recommended rate](#) of remuneration (and associated eligible on-costs and fees, as set out below).



How to claim

Funded organisations will submit a claim for funding monthly in arrears, providing details of the eligible actually incurred expense. Claims must be submitted using the claim form provided by the Law Society of Scotland. Subject to the terms and conditions of the fund.

Eligible costs

The following costs can be claimed under the Fund.

Total recurring costs

- Salary costs (at the recommended rate)
- Employer's National Insurance (15% of salary)
- Employer pension contribution (5% of salary)
- Practising Certificate fee
- Role Retention fee
- SLCC Levy

One-off costs

- Compulsory Advocacy Course
- LSS admission administration fee
- Notary fee (if applicable)
- SCTS court fees (payable at admission)
- Trainee CPD costs

Digital Support Fund

To support the trainee with digital technology, the Fund will provide a one-off payment of up to £400 towards a device selected by the firm/organisation, to suit its practice and IT set-up.

The device will be owned by the firm/organisation (not the trainee) and is for use by the trainee during the traineeship.

Expectations of Successful Firms/Organisations

A trainee can be a really important asset to your business and taking someone on to complete their training is an invaluable way of supporting the future of the legal profession. This is even more important within the Legal Aid sector. The traineeship is the two-year, work-based training which forms the final part of the route to qualification.



Do I need to fulfil any criteria to employ a trainee?

In order to provide a traineeship, your organisation will have to appoint a Training Manager. Training Managers must have held a practising certificate for a minimum of three years, and should not have had any restrictions on their practising certificate at any point. However, Training Managers should also have appropriate standing within the organisation.

For more information about who should be appointed as a Training Manager and their responsibilities, see the information on our website.

What documentation needs to be submitted to the Law Society before or during the traineeship?

- In order for a trainee to commence a traineeship, they must have a valid [entrance certificate](#), issued by us. This should be applied for at least four weeks before the start of training.
- Most organisations will also apply for their trainee to be [admitted as a solicitor](#) at some point during the traineeship (although this can also happen at the end)
- Both the trainee and the firm should complete a [training contract](#) and return it to us within 28 days of the start of training.
- At the end of the training, the training manager must [discharge the training contract](#).



Appendix 1

Legal Aid Traineeship Fund: Firm/Organisation Application Form

Please complete the following questions regarding your firm/organisation. This information will be used to assess your eligibility for the Legal Aid Traineeship Fund.

All firms/organisations should have fully read the Legal Aid Traineeship Fund Guidance Note on the website which explains fully how to fill out this application form.

GDPR

We process personal data to administer this grant funding scheme. This includes assessing applications, determining eligibility, awarding and paying funding, monitoring compliance and outcomes, and preventing fraud or misuse of public funds. The lawful basis for this processing is that it is necessary for the performance of a task carried out in the public interest and in the exercise of official authority vested in us (Article 6(1)(e) UK GDPR).

Where necessary, we also process personal data to comply with legal obligations, including audit, equality and financial reporting requirements (Article 6(1)(c) UK GDPR). Where we process special category personal data, this is necessary for reasons of substantial public interest, including promoting equality of opportunity and ensuring fair access to grant funding. This processing is carried out in accordance with Article 9(2)(g) UK GDPR and Schedule 1 of the Data Protection Act 2018, with appropriate safeguards in place.

We roll out this grant funding on behalf of the Scottish Government and will share anonymised/aggregate data with them. Due to the nature and quantity of the data shared it may still be possible to indirectly identify an individual.

1. Firm/Organisation *

2. Email Address *

3. Training Manager *

4. Training Manager email address *

5. Firm/Organisation principal office address *



6. Is your organisation a Law Centre?

- Yes
- No

7. Does your organisation offer Criminal Legal Aid? *

- Yes
- No

8. Does your organisation offer Civil Legal Aid? *

- Yes
- No

9. Does your organisation offer Children's Legal Aid? *

- Yes
- No

10. Which area best reflects your firm's *primary* legal aid provision? *

(Select one)

- Children
- Civil
- Criminal

11. Please indicate the percentage of your firm/organisation's turnover that is Legal Aid. Please do not enter the percentage sign just the number (e.g. 35)

12. Please outline your history of trainees? Please select the option which fits your firm situation best *

- Have employed a trainee within the past 5 years
- Have employed a trainee in the past but NOT over the past 5 years
- Have never taken on a trainee



13. What local authority area is your firm primarily based in? *

- Aberdeen City
- Aberdeenshire
- Angus
- Argyll & Bute
- Clackmannanshire
- Dumfries & Galloway
- Dundee City
- East Ayrshire
- East Dunbartonshire
- East Lothian
- East Renfrewshire
- Edinburgh City
- Falkirk
- Fife
- Glasgow City
- Highland
- Inverclyde
- Midlothian
- Moray
- Na h-Eileanan Siar
- North Ayrshire
- North Lanarkshire
- Orkney Islands
- Perth & Kinross
- Renfrewshire
- Scottish Borders
- Shetland Islands
- South Ayrshire
- South Lanarkshire
- Stirling
- West Dunbartonshire
- West Lothian



14. Please outline why the Legal Aid Traineeship Fund would make a difference to your firm and its needs specifically? (max 200 words)

15. Were you successful in getting funding in the previous iteration of the Legal Aid Traineeship Fund?

Yes

No

16. In order to apply for the Legal Aid Traineeship Fund, you must submit the Law Society a copy of your current accounts (2 year history) which will be checked against SLAB records. This is to ensure that your Legal Aid turnover meets the eligibility criteria. Failure to provide the Law Society with this information will result in the removal of the firm/organisation from the Fund's consideration.

I can confirm I will submit a copy of my firm's/organisation's accounts through the secure link I will receive on completion of this application form. I accept that these will be checked against SLAB records to confirm the percentage of Legal Aid turnover the firm/organisation undertakes

This content is neither created nor endorsed by Microsoft. The data you submit will be sent to the form owner.





For further information, please contact:

Traineeship Fund Team
Law Society of Scotland
traineeshipfund@lawscot.org.uk