

## GREC response to parliamentary report on Legal Aid

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GREC welcomes the recently published [Report on the Equalities, Human Rights and Civil Justice Committee inquiry into Civil Legal Assistance in Scotland](#). After hearing from a number of professional bodies, academics, and human rights organisations, the Committee has highlighted an urgent need for both immediate and long-term reform to civil legal assistance.

In our response to the inquiry, GREC brought up concerns we have found impinge the effectiveness of the legal aid system, including the postcode lottery of legal aid solicitors, a recruitment crisis in the sector brought on by systemic financial and educational issues, eligibility coverage gaps for accessing legal aid, and inadequate service provided by overstretched legal aid solicitors. We also suggested potential remedies for these issues: increasing funding for legal aid, reforming legal education and addressing financial barriers to training, increasing the number of legal aid solicitors outwith the Central Belt, and allowing public interest and community litigation proceedings to access legal aid.

While many of these were noted by the Committee in their report, we would like to re-emphasise the need for examining how educational reform might ease the recruitment crisis, in particular by creating more outcome parity between commercial law and other fields of law, such as human rights. Additionally, our suggestion of a comparative analysis between the Scottish civil legal assistance system and other jurisdictions would enable Scotland to benchmark progress and outcomes on an international scale.

We share the Committee's disappointment in the lack of new legislation on this issue this session. We hope the Scottish Government will continue to prioritise legal aid reform in order to ensure a fairer, more just Scotland for all.