

LASS Main Grants 2026 – Guidance for Applicants

About London Legal Support Trust (LLST)

The London Legal Support Trust works to strengthen access to justice by supporting free legal advice organisations across London and the South East. We raise funds through our flagship events, individual challenge events and partnerships with funders, and invest these resources in the sector through grants, consultancy, training and peer learning.

About the Legal Advice Sustainability Scheme (LASS)

The Legal Advice Sustainability Scheme (LASS) is delivered by London Legal Support Trust (LLST) to support the long-term sustainability of free specialist legal advice organisations across London and the South East.

The LASS programme builds on more than ten years of experience delivering the Centres of Excellence (COEx) programme. Through a combination of unrestricted funding, tailored organisational support, training and peer learning, the programme aims to help advice agencies strengthen their organisations, adapt to change and continue delivering high-quality support to communities who need it most.

The 2026 Main Grants Round will be the first open funding round delivered under the LASS programme and will operate as a pilot, allowing LLST to learn and refine the model over future years.

What funding and support is available?

Through this round, LLST expects to award up to five Main Grants, each consisting of:

- £75,000 of unrestricted funding over five years:
 - Years 1–3: £20,000 per year
 - Year 4: £10,000
 - Year 5: £5,000
- Tailored organisational consultancy and development support
- Access to LASS training, peer learning and sector forums

The funding is unrestricted, allowing organisations to use it flexibly in support of their charitable purposes and where it will have the greatest impact on their sustainability and capacity.

Monitoring and evaluation commitments:

LLST is committed to learning and sharing information about what works and what does not – whether in relation to frontline service delivery or our own approach to how funding and other support are provided.

We recognise the burden that unnecessary reporting can create and will aim to ensure that monitoring, evaluation and learning requirements are proportionate to the level of funding and support provided and align with our commitment to IVAR's Open and Trusting grant making principles.

Our monitoring, evaluation and learning approach will include:

- Submission of the organisation's latest annual report
- Completion of a short annual survey, including:
 - Feedback on LLST support and funding received during the previous year
 - Identification of any potential areas for support in the following year
- An annual 1:1 check-in with LLST staff
- Participation in periodic cohort learning and storytelling sessions to reflect on change, learning and experience.

We may also invite partners to participate in other learning opportunities throughout the year, but these will be optional.

Who can apply?

This funding round is focused on smaller, locally rooted organisations delivering free specialist legal advice in areas where LLST does not currently have a funded partner.

Applicant organisations must:

- Be a registered, exempt or excepted charity, CIO or CIC (limited by guarantee)
- Deliver free specialist legal advice as their primary purpose
- Have an annual income between £50k and £1m
- Have been delivering free specialist legal advice and/or representation for at least one year
- Hold a recognised quality mark (e.g. Lexcel, AQS) or be regulated by a relevant professional body (e.g. IAA, Law Society, BSB) — or be actively working towards this
- Be based in, and deliver the majority of their services to residents in one or more of the following counties:
 - Berkshire
 - Oxfordshire
 - Hampshire (including the Isle of Wight)
 - Surrey
- We particularly welcome applications from organisations that:
 - Deliver advice locally rather than nationally
 - Have limited access to unrestricted or core funding

- Work with marginalised or underserved communities

Who cannot apply?

We will not fund:

- Organisations whose work does not advance LLST's charitable purposes, including the prevention and relief of poverty and other general charitable purposes. For this programme, this means supporting the development and sustainability of free legal advice agencies in London and the South East to help ensure everyone has fair access to justice.
- Organisations whose main work falls outside civil or social welfare law
- Organisations primarily delivering commercial, criminal or environmental law (unless alongside other areas of civil law)
- Infrastructure, umbrella or pro bono organisations that do not provide free legal advice
- Organisations with fewer than three trustees, directors or partners

Organisations are also unlikely to be funded if they:

- Are in serious financial deficit with no clear recovery plan
- Do not pay staff at least the Living Wage
- Hold significantly higher reserves than set out in their reserves policy

Application process

Stage 1: Eligibility Check

Applicants are advised to complete a simple, self-guided eligibility checklist. This is designed to help you decide whether this round is right for your organisation.

Eligibility checks will not be verified before submission; however, all applications will be checked for eligibility by LLST staff and ineligible applications will not be progressed.

Stage 2: Application Form

Eligible organisations can complete a short application which should be submitted along with the following supporting documents:

- Their governing document
- Their most recent annual accounts

The application form:

The standard application form will be available online. We will also provide a downloadable version which can be completed and returned by email.

Audio or video applications can also be submitted by email. We will provide guidance to support a fair and consistent process.

For emailed applications, alternative formats or any accessibility requirements, please contact grants@llst.org.uk.

Within your preferred format, you will be asked to respond to the following questions, each of which has a 250-word limit (For audio or video applications, each response should be no longer than 2 minutes):

1. Please tell us about the communities you serve, including the challenges and opportunities they face.
2. What is your organisation's approach to ensuring your services are accessible and inclusive for marginalised communities?
3. What are the main challenges and opportunities facing your organisation?
4. What is your leadership's approach to mitigating the challenges facing the advice sector?
5. What are the most significant changes the funding and support could help you achieve over the next five years?
6. How will you enable staff to have the time and capacity to engage with the support on offer?
7. Is there anything else you think we should know? This optional question is not scored.

What we're looking for:

We are looking for organisations that can demonstrate:

- a clear understanding of the needs and barriers faced by the communities they serve, and how they respond to them
- a clear and realistic understanding of the key challenges and opportunities facing their organisation
- a clear case for the difference the funding and support on offer will make to their organisation and the people it serves
- their capacity and commitment to engage with the support offered in a way that is realistic and proportionate to their size and circumstances

How decisions will be made

- Applications will be reviewed by members of the LLST Sector Support and Grants team for eligibility, due diligence and alignment with the aims of LASS, to produce a shortlist for consideration.

- Shortlisted applications will then be assessed against a scoring matrix (a copy of which is available in Annex 1) by an independent panel made up of funder, advice sector and regional representatives. The panel will produce a final shortlist of up to five organisations recommended for support.
- Recommendations will then go to LLST's Grants Committee for final approval.
- All applicants will be notified of the outcome. Unsuccessful applicants will be offered feedback where requested.

Application support:

We hope these guidelines help potential applicants understand the process and decide whether to apply. We also recognise that you may have additional questions about your individual application.

LLST will run open drop-in sessions during the application window to answer general questions. We are also happy to arrange short 1:1 sessions for anyone who would like to discuss their application privately.

Open sessions will take place on:

- Monday 7 September, 11am–12pm – please [click here to book](#).
- Monday 5 October, 11am–12pm – please [click here to book](#).
- Wednesday 21 October, 11am–12pm – please [click here to book](#).

To arrange a private 1:1 conversation, please email grants@llst.org.uk.

Timeline:

- Applications open: Tuesday 1 September 2026
- Application deadline: Sunday 1 November 2026
- Decisions communicated to applicants by mid- December 2026
- Payments made and support starts: January 2027

FAQs:

What do you mean by 'specialist legal advice'?

To provide consistency within the sector, we use the definition from the [Value of Justice for All](#) report, published in August 2024:

Providers of specialist legal advice are considered to be those with a proven track record of delivering legal advice both:

- In one or more of the following areas of law: asylum, community care, debt, disability discrimination, education, employment, housing, immigration, mental health, public and administrative law and welfare benefits; and
- At a specialist level, including carrying out end-to-end casework for clients, representing clients in a court or tribunal and/or holding Legal Aid contracts. The advice must relate to a legal problem or its resolution.

Different types of organisations provide specialist advice in different ways. Specialist legal advice providers may provide one or more of the following:

- Advice, including providing information, identifying options, giving basic assistance such as completing forms, and signposting. In these cases, the client is responsible for any further action.
- Casework, including acting on the client's behalf to progress the case, for example by negotiating with third parties or advocating for the client.
- Representation, including acting for and representing the client in court or tribunal proceedings.

Annex 1: Scoring Matrix

Shortlisted applications will be assessed against the following scoring matrix:

Category	Scoring Category	Primary question	Scale	Weighting	What assessors will be looking for
1	How well do they know and respond to the needs of the communities they serve	1 & 2	1-5	30%	A clear understanding of who they support and why support is needed A clear understanding of barriers to accessing support How services are designed, adapted and delivered in response
2	How well do they understand and approach the challenges and opportunities facing their organisation	3 & 4	1-5	30%	Awareness of internal and external factors and risks facing their organisation Identification of opportunities and possible solutions, not just problems or challenges A people-centred approach to problem-solving, involving key stakeholders in decision-making where possible Evidence of reflection and learning Adaptability and willingness to change and develop Clear and realistic plans rather than vague aspirations
3	What difference could the funding and support on offer make to their organisation and the people it serves	5	1-5	20%	A clear explanation of why the funding is needed, for example to enable greater reach, better quality or greater stability How this will translate into benefits for the people they serve A realistic view of the impact the funding and support could have A clear sense of the change the support could help achieve over five years

Category	Scoring Category	Primary question	Scale	Weighting	What assessors will be looking for
4	What is their capacity and commitment to engage with the support offered, in a way that is realistic and proportionate to size and circumstances	6	1-5	20%	A clear idea of who may be able to engage The time and resources they can commit to staff and organisational development A willingness to learn and collaborate as part of a cohort Openness to learning and sharing with other organisations A realistic understanding of capacity and any barriers to engagement A plan for addressing those barriers or identifying additional support they may need

Question 7 – Is there anything else you think we should know?

- This optional question allows the organisation to provide additional context or relevant information if they wish. It will not be used as part of the final scoring.