

ANNUAL REPORT 2024/25



2024/25 Annual Report

INTRODUCTION

This Annual Report to the year end 31 March 2025 gives a synopsis of the thousands of successful outcomes we achieve for clients each year, helping them with a difficult moment in their lives or securing legal rights that will keep them safe.

This report highlights our additional value for Scotland, by our wider strategic public interest litigation, policy and law reform work; all of which helps improve the legal rights and wellbeing of many vulnerable citizens across Scotland.

ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE

Legal case work

For the period of 2024-2025, the impact of services provided by GLC across Scotland was:

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- A large, solid blue triangle pointing to the right, positioned to the left of the first three bullet points.
- handled 5,392 Type 1, 2 & 3 cases
 - assisted 1,835 new clients in Type 2 case work
 - assisted 902 new clients in Type 3 case work
 - 793 homelessness cases resolved
 - GLC's Education Law Unit opened 221 new files; 186 references to the Tribunal and handled 1,117 enquiries to our national Helpline
 - £678,576 client financial gains
 - £50,440 non-housing debt managed for clients
 - £1,756,903 housing debt managed for clients
 - £43,891 council tax arrears under negotiation
 - 89% of our core client group in Glasgow has an income of less than £6,000 per annum; over half experienced homelessness or were threatened with homelessness; and almost one third had a disability including mental illness, physical impairment or long term illness.

Key achievements

During the year we have delivered a number of services and projects throughout the city. We provide a wide range of legal, welfare rights and money advice services across the South West, South East and North East of Glasgow from our main offices in Govan and Govanhill; and services from our partner agency's offices in Easterhouse. Our national Education Law Unit provides services across Scotland.

We provide outreach services in partnership with a wide range of grass roots charities in the city centre, including women's groups, carers' groups and various homeless and refugee charities.

Our outcomes are focused on preventing or resolving homelessness; defending evictions and repossessions; tackling housing disrepair and unsuitable housing for clients; maximising client finances through welfare rights and money advice; challenging discrimination and cuts to non-residential social care packages.



One of our aims was to progress the law on the equality impact assessments and compliance with the public sector equality duty. There are few reported Equality Act 2010 cases in Scotland. We have pursued a number of Court of Session cases in that regard. We undertake a significant number of judicial review cases for our relatively modest size; which enables us to make a much bigger impact.

Over the last year we have undertaken strategic litigation including the UK Supreme Court case of *Glasgow City Council v. X* [2025] UKSC 13 which although unsuccessful has clarified the rights of homeless persons constructively in relation to suitable temporary accommodation in Scotland.



In handing down the Court's Opinion, Lady Simler held that there were "certain irreducible minimum requirements that must always be met for accommodation to be suitable" and set these out with helpful precision. We believe we can use this decision to benefit many of our clients.

Earlier this year, our Firm Partner at Govanhill Law Centre became the instructing solicitor in the Scottish winter fuel payment (WFP) test case against the UK and Scottish governments. Our Coatbridge clients – like over 10 million other people of pensionable age in the UK had lost their entitlement to the WFP this winter.

The substantive case was heard over three days in the Court of Session in March 2025 – after several contentious procedural hearings. The WFP case has been an intensive major piece of Scottish civil litigation with Joanna Cherry KC as our senior counsel and our Principal Solicitor appearing as junior counsel.

Govanhill's Firm Partner had to ingather very complex evidence and liaise with a legal team in London who are pursuing a separate High Court challenge to the UK government – that case was stayed in May 2025 for the outcome of our clients' case. The civil procedure involved complex and contentious amendments to the written pleadings.



The case attracted high profile media interest; and we received considerable interest from pensioners across the UK.

The case was heard over three days in the Court of Session and a decision from Lady Hood in *Fanning & Fanning v. the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions and the Scottish Ministers* is expected shortly.

We have been able to deliver our services for clients through our Prevention of Homeless Service; Govanhill Law Centre; Education Law Unit; Women's Rights Project; Pathways from Poverty (Threehills Community Supermarket) Project; Public Interest Litigation Unit; and our Ayrshire Housing and Prevention Project.

We have engaged with the current Housing (Scotland) Bill to provide our experience in respect of this and to call upon ministers to include protective provisions for these vulnerable tenants in terms of clear and more effective controls against rent increases.

In September 2024, we joined with the Aberlour Children's Charity to call upon MSPs to make transformational changes to the way public debt is collected in Scotland to help end child poverty.

We held a joint Parliamentary event on 11th September 2024, to set out and support a transformational law reform bill which would include radical initiatives to change the way public bodies in Scotland collect debt to ensure children are not trapped in, or pushed into, poverty. The initiative was well received on a cross-party basis.

Preventing homelessness

The demand for assistance with housing and homelessness case was up from 294 clients in 2023/24 to 782 client cases in 2024/25. The most significant driver was a substantial rise in rough sleeping cases and unsuitable homelessness accommodation cases in Glasgow.



Clients were and are having to sleep on the streets or in emergency shelters and are therefore very vulnerable, requiring immediate advice, assistance and representation by our solicitors and caseworkers. Legal staff attend outreaches across the city to provide assistance. This has affected our other work as emergency interventions are required.

Our prevention of homelessness services receive client referrals from the Scottish Refugee Council, Simon Community, Shelter Scotland, Homeless Project Scotland, the Marie Trust and the Lodging House Mission. We have secured temporary accommodation for 793 homeless clients in the last year by negotiation and, in many cases, preparing judicial reviews to obtain temporary housing for the clients and to get them off the street. This has been intensive but extremely rewarding work.

Over the last year our in-house solicitor advocate has drafted 40 homeless petitions for judicial review in the Court of Session; with an additional 13 petitions involving strategic challenges by way of judicial review in Scotland's supreme court.

From last June, we have led a campaign To End the Homeless Hotel Shame in Glasgow with the Glasgow Times newspaper: <https://govanlawcentre.org/2024/06/06/end-the-homeless-hotel-shame-new-campaign-from-govan-law-centre-the-glasgow-times/>

National Education Law Unit

Our Education Law Unit (ELU) acts on behalf of children and young people with Additional Support Needs across the country. Many of the cases are based on discriminatory treatment and the refusal to provide suitable education provision to the child or young person. With the tightening of local education authorities' budgets, the demand for this service has grown exponentially over the last several years.

In the last 12 months, ELU opened 221 new files and handled 1,177 enquiries to our Helpline. Unfortunately, many more cases are now progressing to hearings in the health & education tribunal causing delays in children and young people receiving the best education. There are ongoing discussions concerning this with ELU, Scottish Government and the Tribunal Office. Our ELU Policy and Strategic Litigation project works closely with Scottish Government and

like-minded groups to influence the preparation and implementation of legislation. Representatives of ELU sit on many national groups highlighting areas of concern for our client group.

This project also raises strategic litigation cases which, when successful, have a positive impact on a group rather than an individual child.

We were delighted to secure the Scottish Government competitive tender to deliver our national advice service for children and young persons with additional support needs – Let’s Talk – for a three year contractual period.



Govanhill Law Centre

Govanhill Law Centre (GhLC) has partnered with the Scottish Refugee Council with legal services being made available to refugees at risk of homelessness or with housing problems. This will enable us to leverage up our impact in Govanhill for vulnerable clients.

Our Govanhill office attracts a lot of emergency housing evictions and homelessness enquiries given its position in the community. After Covid we noted a lot of organisations including housing associations opening their doors by appointment only, however GhLC is open to the public to enquire after services and we believe this is an important provision in the area, particularly appreciated for those who do not speak English as a first language.

Govanhill has specific and complex legal issues. The area has a higher percentage of private rented accommodation; a higher number of those who do not speak English and clients who live in small flats with large families. As such, there are challenges redolent with this: illegal evictions, no fault evictions and unfair practices by letting agents.

Given the numbers of PRS cases, we have had to restrict our services to those requiring representation at tribunal only. With the diminution of PRS rights after the Covid protections ended including restrictions on rent increases, and eviction, we have noticed a surge in rent increases and evictions lodged. Including, increasing numbers of repossession of landlords and evictions for financial reasons, due to the cost of living crisis.

We have had much success in defending PRS evictions, and or delaying eviction to allow clients to secure alternatives. Due to the nature of the Private Rented Tribunal, cases are often raised without the correct grounds and process and there is much opportunity to defend these cases. The majority of these cases would go undefended if it were not for GhLC representing them- the language barrier and levels of illiteracy mean that, despite the errors in the case, there would be

no challenge to the landlord's case and eviction would be granted.

Overall, GhLC has a higher number of clients who require an interpreter, and in particular for our PRS work, it means the casework is often more complex and challenging. The problems in the housing market and the PRS sector are displayed starkly in Govanhill: overall the properties are in terrible states of disrepair, rents are overinflated and waiting lists for the housing associations are many years long, particularly in Govanhill where families are looking for larger properties which simply do not exist.



Where we have gaps is in welfare rights and homelessness we have created a homelessness prevention Govanhill post and have taken steps to linking up with local mosque and community groups like Amina and Milk Women's café. The local Mosque in particular often houses families in emergency situations when they have been refused emergency accommodation by Glasgow City Council. This is the most important and urgent work that GhLC can be doing and it should be prioritised and we have taken steps to direct our capacity there.

Our homelessness worker lives in Govanhill and has done so for many years; she has now started in post and is working with the Scottish Refugee Council on homelessness casework. They are also currently covering the North East housing advice work whilst we go through recruitment. When we have our full provision of staff we will be in a position to direct our capacity to where it is needed most and to work on establishing these important links in the community.

Women's Rights Project

Our dedicated team of female solicitors provide emergency interventions to women experiencing domestic abuse and/or controlling behaviour from their partners.

Within this project, a considerable amount of work is through women's support groups and outreach services are provided on a regular basis. Over 100 women have been supported by this specialist team in the last year.

Earlier this year, our Women's Rights Project submitted written evidence to the Social Justice and Social Security Committee's Inquiry into financial considerations when leaving an abusive relationship; our Project Solicitor, Sophie Berry, gave oral evidence in the Scottish Parliament on these issues in May 2025.

Woman facing homelessness?
Govan Law Centre can help.

If you are, or any woman you know is facing:

- Abuse from a partner
- Controlling behaviour
- Fleeing violence
- Victim of crime or exploitation
- Facing homelessness
- Unsuitable accommodation

Call us free: 0800 043 0306
for confidential legal advice.

GOVAN LAW CENTRE

Our evidence is published here: <https://govanlawcentre.org/2025/02/27/financial-considerations-when-leaving-an-abusive-relationship-glc-evidence-to-scottish-parliament/>

Ayrshire Homelessness and Prevention Project (AHAP)

Our funding from the Scottish Legal Aid Board for our well-established partnership project with CHAP in Ayrshire has been extended to March 2026. Our solicitors Laura Simpson and Holly Sloey work closely with advisers from CHAP to provide a seamless combination of money and legal advice to homeowners in mortgage arrears who are facing repossession.

This year has seen numerous successful outcomes for clients and their families, with our solicitors appearing on their behalf at court hearings in Kilmarnock and Ayr Sheriff Courts. With our help, multiple cases were continued or sisted to allow defenders to obtain money advice from our partners at CHAP, and to address the arrears.



We have also assisted a number of clients whose cases have ultimately been dismissed from court, whether this is due to them clearing the arrears, or due to our solicitors highlighting procedural issues with the actions. In cases where the lender is at fault, we have held them to account and ensured that no legal fees are charged to our clients.

The assistance we provide is vital to allow those going through an already difficult situation some breathing room, as well as the support and advice they need. Even where defenders are unable to resolve the arrears, good legal advice is important to ensure that all avenues have been explored. In these circumstances, we have been able to obtain further time from the court to allow the transition to alternative accommodation to go as smoothly as possible.

The project were delighted to welcome Siobhan Brown MSP, Minister for Victims and Community Safety, to Govan Law Centre to discuss our successes. She was keen to hear about the assistance we provide, and to offer her support. She has agreed to contact the relevant court officials and our funders at SLAB to discuss how best to ensure that our project is accessible as possible to those who are in need of our free legal assistance, so we hope that the year to come will be even more successful.

Pathways from Poverty - Threehills Community Supermarket Project

In October 2024, we launched an exciting new partnership with Threehills Community Supermarket and Café in Greater Pollok, Glasgow. Our free money, debt and legal advice surgery is based at Threehills Community Supermarket every Wednesday from 10am to 4pm, beginning on Wednesday 30th October. We are working on rolling out this service to other food

ladders across the city.

Free weekly drop-in surgery for money & legal advice at Threehills every Wednesday 10am-4pm

We can help with:

- Benefit enquiries
- Debt
- Council tax
- Evictions and repossession
- Housing and disrepair
- Homelessness

Threehills Community Supermarket, 409B Nitshill Road, Glasgow, G53 7BN

If you have money or housing worries, why not drop in to our free advice surgery for confidential advice?

Talk with Govan Law Centre's solicitor and qualified money & debt adviser for free.

GOVAN LAW CENTRE Debt navigator

THREEHILLS

The partnership between Govan Law Centre and Good Food Scotland is an important opportunity to provide services to people who are struggling with money issues and legal matters and may otherwise not be aware of or able to present to the law centre.

By being present within the community supermarket, we can provide direct access to free and confidential money and debt advice as well as legal representation without the need to attend an office.

The impact of money and debt issues on mental health is huge and seeking advice can be difficult. Threehills community supermarket provides a safe place within the community where people can feel comfortable to discuss sensitive matters. Services being available within the supermarket will help maintain privacy and dignity to those seeking advice and assistance.

In the first 6 months of operation, our money adviser has secured around £50,000 of financial gains for supermarket customers. We secured financial gains for our clients of almost £700,000 in the last year.

Adults with incapacity casework at GLC

We continue with our Adults with Incapacity work including providing pro bono legal work by way of Power of Attorneys for vulnerable older people, and Court representation at Glasgow Sheriff Court in terms of Summary Application for Guardianship.

This predominantly represents older people with applications for guardianship for partners suffering from dementia or similar; and parents applying to be Guardian of young adults who do not have capacity. This work is increasingly complex and time consuming with increasingly stringent court requirements, and accordingly we have had to restrict how much time we can dedicate to this.

We believe it is important to remain offering this work as it is some of our most vulnerable in society and it ties in with our work around the Equality Act 2010 and strategic cases challenging discrimination. We receive a lot of enquiries about Judicial Review surrounding care decisions and we have to consider carefully what we have the capacity to take on, and where we can make the most difference.

Public interest strategic litigation

Over the reporting period, GLC, due to its national reputation, has been approached by local community groups throughout Scotland to provide assistance in the threatened closure or loss of local amenities. These closures will have a profound effect on communities long term and are the result of local government cutbacks.

The success of these cases has had a profound benefit to local communities to improve the standard of living in these areas. These cases have included challenging the closure of libraries, swimming pools, adult day centres for those with learning disabilities or autism and community centres and loss of green space parks and woodlands. The effect of closure will particularly affect those with disabilities, as well as younger and older people.



The Milldale Adult Day Care Centre for Renfrewshire remained open following our client's legal challenge in the Court of Session. In Aberdeen, Bucksburn Swimming Pool was saved from closure following our clients' petitions for judicial review.

A successful court challenge to the defunding of the Renfrewshire Head Injury Service in Paisley took place last year.

In June 2024, East Renfrewshire Council and the East Renfrewshire Integrated Joint Board decided to decommission and end the vital services provided by the Neighbourhood Networks East Renfrewshire service (NNER) to adults and young persons with learning disabilities and/or autism. NNER services were provided by the Scottish charity Neighbourhood Networks.



In October last year, our Firm Partner, Rachel Moon, at Govanhill Law Centre accepted instructions and raised proceedings for judicial review in the Court of Session on behalf of a client of the NNER. The service has now been reprieved with judicial expenses in favour of our client.

A library and community centre in Dundee's Kirkton were due to be decommissioned but following our clients' legal challenges in court, the local council agreed to reconsider its decision afresh. We have been successful in many cases by saving the service through a reconsideration

of the decision due to a failure to comply with the Equality Act 2010 or Scots common law.

STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE & MANAGEMENT

GLC is a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO, Scottish charity number SC047423). GLC is governed by an independent Board of Directors with a wide range of professional skills and life experience.

The Board meets monthly and monitors financial management and performance, strategic development and risk, service delivery and performance in relation to our charitable aims and legal obligations, and sets the policies of the organisation.

From June this year, Candy Walker and Chris Stephens joined our Board of Directors. Both have a vast experience in social welfare law and public service.

The Principal Solicitor has operational responsibility and accountability for the organisation's service and casework. Legal services are provided by the independent legal practice of Dailly, Moon & Co., Solicitors which is regulated by the Law Society of Scotland and subject to the quality assurance rules of the Scottish Legal Aid Board. All income of the legal practice is the property of the SCIO.

The Principal Solicitor is fully supported by a Senior Management Team (SMT) and Legal Service Managers. The SMT consists of Mike Dailly, Rachel Moon, Laura Simpson, Lorna Walker, Christine McKellar and Wendy Malloy.

GLC receives funding from the Scottish Government, the Oak Foundation, Glasgow City Council, the Robertson Trust, and others.

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