



23 April 2026

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Our ref: OIA 131266

Tēnā koe

Official Information Act request: Refugee and Asylum seekers legal aid

Thank you for your email of 24 March 2026 to the Ministry of Justice (the Ministry), in which you request information held on legal aid for refugee and asylum seekers. Specifically, you requested:

I request disclosure of the following information pursuant to the Official Information Act 1982.

This request concerns only refugee and protection legal aid matters and related lawyers, and is limited only to the RSU initial stage.

In this request, “active refugee/protection legal aid lawyer” means a legal aid provider / lawyer who, during the relevant reporting period, handled at least 1 refugee and/or protection legal aid matter at the RSU initial stage.

Time period requested:

Please provide the data for the complete financial years 2018/19, 2020/21, 2023/24, and 2024/25, by financial year (from 1 July to 30 June).

If you do not keep the information by financial year, please provide it according to the statistical period you actually use, and state the statistical basis used.

The information requested is as follows:

1. Number of active lawyers and caseload Please provide for each financial year:

1.1 the number of active refugee/protection legal aid lawyers;

1.2 the median number of RSU initial-stage refugee/protection legal aid matters handled by each active lawyer.

2. Data on checking whether lawyers genuinely reviewed applicant evidence Please provide the following data for each financial year:

2.1 the number of cases in which you checked, spot-checked, audited, or reviewed the hours claimed by asylum legal aid lawyers for reviewing applicant evidence and supporting documents;

2.2 among the above cases, the number of cases in which, after checking, it was determined that the hours claimed by the lawyer for reviewing applicant evidence and supporting documents needed to be adjusted.

3. Data on whether there was verification with asylum applicants Please provide the following data for each financial year:

3.1 the number of cases in which you verified, with legally aided asylum applicants, the hours claimed by asylum legal aid lawyers;

3.2 among the above verifications, the number of cases in which it was found that the hours claimed by the lawyer were inconsistent with the applicant's account.

4. Data relating to legal aid lawyers applying for increased evidence translation/interpreting budget Please provide the following data for each financial year:

4.1 the number of cases in which legal aid lawyers applied for an increase in the budget for translation/interpreting of evidence and supporting documents;

4.2 among the above applications, the number of cases that were approved;

4.3 the median translation/interpreting cost for evidence and supporting documents across all RSU initial-stage asylum legal aid cases.

Your request has been referred to me for a response, as it falls within my responsibilities as Legal Services Commissioner (LSC) and is being managed in accordance with the provisions of the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act).

I understand your request relates to Civil Refugee and Immigration matters including asylum.

Please note that this response is being provided in tranches. Following an initial review, it was identified that further information relevant to questions 2 and 4 may be able to be sourced. As a result, additional work is now underway to identify and collate that information. This means responses to those questions will not be available by the original due date.

The information in response to questions 1 and 3 are therefore provided first, with responses to questions 2 and 4 to be released in a subsequent tranche.

Turning to your questions, in response to question 1, please refer to Tables 1 and 2 below, as set out in Appendix One.

In relation to question 3, the Ministry does not record information on whether verification was carried out with legally aided applicants regarding the hours claimed by their lawyers. <https://www.justice.govt.nz/about/lawyers-and-service-providers/legal-aid-lawyers/quality-assurance-framework/audits-and-checks/> Therefore, I am refusing question 3 of your request under section 18(g)(i) of the Act, as the information requested is not held by the Ministry and there are no grounds for believing it is held by another agency subject to the Act.

Please note that this response, with your personal details removed, may be published on the Ministry website at: [Official Information Act responses | New Zealand Ministry of Justice](#).

If you are not satisfied with this response, you have the right to make a complaint to the Ombudsman under section 28 of the Act. The Office of the Ombudsman may be contacted by phone on: 0800 802 602, by email at: info@ombudsman.parliament.nz, or via the webform: [Make a complaint \(for members of the public\) | Ombudsman New Zealand](#).

Nāku noa, nā



Tracey Baguley
Legal Services Commissioner

Appendix One

Table 1: The number of legal aid providers approved to receive legal aid for Civil Refugee and Immigration matters and of which how many were assigned refugee and immigration cases, split by financial year, from 1 July 2018 to 30 June 2025

Providers	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Approved to receive legal aid for Refugee and Immigration matters	38	36	37	37	35	35	35
Assigned refugee and immigration cases	19	15	17	16	20	22	21

Notes for Table 1:

- This data is extracted from a live dataset and as such is subject to change. This data was extracted as at 9 April 2026.
- Public Defence Service (PDS) providers are excluded from this data.
- This data counts total approved providers and out of that total the number with assigned cases for Refugee and Immigration law legal aid matters, by financial year.
- This data only includes Standard legal aid provider approvals and therefore excludes One Off, Limited and Temporary provider approvals.
- This data is limited to providers with provider approvals effective to at least 30 June ending at each of the financial year periods.
- This data is limited to providers where area of law approval is 'Civil Refugee & Immigration' only.
- Assigned refugee and immigration cases refers to the distinct number of legal aid providers with at least one assigned case where the case matter type is 'ref status appeal auth', 'refugee and protection status', or 'refugee status'.

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Table 2: The median number of legal aid cases for Civil Refugee and Immigration matters, split by financial year, from 1 July 2018 to 30 June 2025

Financial year	Median number of cases
2018/19	9
2019/20	14
2020/21	9
2021/22	6
2022/23	10
2023/24	41
2024/25	39

Notes for Table 2:

- This data is extracted from a live dataset and as such is subject to change. This data was extracted as at 9 April 2026.
- Public Defence Service (PDS) providers are excluded from this data.
- This data only includes Standard legal aid provider approvals and therefore excludes One Off, Limited and Temporary provider approvals.
- This data is limited to providers with provider approvals effective to at least 30 June ending at each of the financial year periods.
- This data is limited to providers where area of law approval is 'Civil Refugee & Immigration' only.
- Median number of cases refers to the median of the number of assigned cases per legal aid provider, limited to cases with the matter types 'ref status appeal auth', 'refugee and protection status', or 'refugee status'.

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