Exploring the potential of administrative benefits data to evaluate the impact of legal services

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Executive Summary – June 2026

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Executive Summary

The evidence gap on legal assistance

The United Kingdom has been a pioneer in mapping the legal problems people face, yet surprisingly little causal evidence shows how access to legal assistance changes outcomes. Practitioners and a substantial body of qualitative research point to legal help as transformative for people unable to navigate the legal system on their own. Yet, the evaluation research demonstrating how, and for whom, it matters most remains scarce (Sandefur and Burnett, 2023). The gap is narrower and more specific: we lack robust *causal* evidence showing the impact of providing or withholding publicly funded legal assistance. This is the kind of evidence needed to support cost-benefit analysis and investment decisions in a way that is now routine in healthcare, education, and employment policy.

Since 1949, legal aid has funded legal advice and representation for people who cannot afford a lawyer, and the UK has invested heavily in understanding who needs it. Following the landmark *Paths to Justice* survey (Genn, 1999), the government commissioned a series of national surveys to map the legal problems people encounter and how they try to resolve them (Pleasence et al., 2004a; 2006; 2010), a tradition continued today by the biennial Legal Needs Survey (Legal Services Board and The Law Society, 2024). This body of research has established that people on low incomes are disproportionately likely to experience clusters of interrelated legal problems (Pleasence et al., 2004b). These problems tend to concentrate around everyday issues most closely tied to poverty and material hardship: housing, debt, and welfare benefits, areas commonly referred to by practitioners as social welfare or poverty law. Left unresolved, these 'mounting problems' tend not to stay contained. Instead, they cascade into worsening housing insecurity, deteriorating health, reduced capacity for work, and deepening poverty (Pleasence et al., 2007).

Despite this strong grasp of the problem, the extent to which timely assistance can interrupt these pathways and prevent problems from escalating remains largely unquantified. This matters not only for the individuals directly affected but also for designing optimal policy. When legal problems worsen, responsibility and costs are often transferred elsewhere in the public sector. A housing problem that ends in eviction, for example, may trigger local authorities' statutory duties around homelessness prevention and temporary accommodation, often at far greater public expense. Yet there is little evidence on the scale of these downstream, knock-on costs when legal assistance is unavailable (Sandefur, 2016). Successive government reviews and independent evaluations have drawn attention to this gap (National Audit Office, 2014; 2024). As a result, legal assistance, and early legal intervention in particular, has been funded, reformed, and debated largely in the absence of evidence about what it achieves for the people who receive it and the wider consequences for public spending.

The difficulty is not simply that evidence is missing, but that the forms of evidence most trusted by policymakers are especially difficult to generate in the access-to-justice context. Funding decisions increasingly privilege quantified, causal, and ideally monetised estimates of impact (Miller, 2001). Yet legal assistance often intervenes at moments of acute crisis, when instability and displacement make experimental evaluation challenging. Services typically collect little information about people they are unable to assist, making comparison groups difficult to construct and follow over time. Ethical and professional objections to randomising access to services, as well as high attrition and limited sample sizes, have repeatedly left such trials underpowered, and in some cases unable to proceed at all (Pleasence, 2008; Greiner and Matthews, 2016). More fundamentally, legal assistance is a highly responsive intervention, addressing overlapping legal and social problems

rather than delivering a standardised treatment that can easily be isolated and tested (Sandefur and Albiston, 2013). These challenges help explain why robust evidence remains scarce despite longstanding recognition of its importance.

A decade of unfulfilled calls for evidence

The consequences of the evidence gap became particularly visible following the 2010-13 funding cuts to civil legal aid in England and Wales. Because legal assistance lacked the kind of causal evidence increasingly expected in other areas of public spending, the sector was especially vulnerable when fiscal pressures intensified. In 2012, the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act (LASPO) removed large areas of civil law from the scope of publicly funded legal aid. Housing, debt, employment, and welfare benefits were among the areas taken largely out of scope. The reform, driven by a fiscal objective, succeeded in reducing expenditure: government spending on legal aid fell by £728 million in real terms between 2012–13 and 2022–23 (National Audit Office, 2024). In particular, LASPO removed funding for much of the early legal intervention that helps people resolve problems before they escalate to crisis or court proceedings.

The reforms reshaped the boundaries of publicly funded legal assistance. By removing funding for specialist early legal intervention, LASPO reinforced a distinction between legal aid, concentrated on crisis-stage court representation, and a fragmented landscape of charitable and local-authority funded support expected to address problems earlier. This left an increasingly uncertain position for organisations operating at the interface between the two, including many law centres. Over time, early support became more readily associated with generic advice, information, and signposting, while specialist legal assistance, aimed at diagnosing a person's specific problem and resolving it before it reached crisis point, became harder to fund and sustain (Westminster Commission, 2021). This divide was consolidated in the Ministry's framing of 'legal support' (Ministry of Justice, 2019a), a spectrum on which information and signposting marked the early stage, and specialist advice and representation the other, leaving early intervention identified with the lighter-touch end. Yet a substantial share of legal problems can be resolved without full representation, requiring instead a timely, targeted intervention by someone with sufficient legal expertise to prevent escalation.

Responsibility for providing early support increasingly shifted towards charitable organisations and local authorities, often without the funding or infrastructure needed to meet the demand. This happened despite warnings that the advice sector was already under severe financial strain, facing simultaneous reductions in local authority funding and other key income streams (Morris and Barr, 2013). A year after the Act came into force, the National Audit Office (NAO) found that the Ministry had not estimated the wider costs that might arise from the reforms, did not have a good understanding of how people would respond, and had not assessed whether the charitable sector could absorb the demand it was displacing. The majority of third-sector providers told the NAO they were unable to meet even half of that demand (National Audit Office, 2014).

The evidence gap has become self-reinforcing. In the absence of robust evidence about the impact and wider public benefits of legal assistance, provision was exposed to cuts. The cuts themselves then reinforced demands for evidence that remained difficult to produce. The Ministry's post-implementation review acknowledged concerns that funding for early advice and multi-domain intervention had been reduced without adequate evidence about the potential displacement of costs into other public services. However, it also concluded that 'a more robust evidence base' was needed before either could be brought back within scope (Ministry of Justice, 2019b). The same evidence gap that weakened the case for preserving provision therefore also weakened the case for restoring it. A decade after LASPO, the NAO returned to the issue and found that neither gap had been filled (National Audit Office, 2024). The Public Accounts Committee reached the same conclusion, finding

that MoJ's attempts to understand the costs and benefits of providing early advice had been ‘unsuccessful to date’, despite the department acknowledging the likely shift of costs to other parts of the public sector (House of Commons Public Accounts Committee, 2024a).

The most ambitious attempt to break this cycle was the Early Legal Advice Pilot (ELAP), a £5 million HM Treasury Shared Outcomes Fund trial that had to be stopped early after failing to engage participants. Following through on a commitment the Ministry had signalled in its Legal Support Action Plan (Ministry of Justice, 2019a), ELAP was designed as a randomised controlled trial testing whether reintroducing publicly funded early advice on housing, debt, and welfare benefits would produce measurable improvements in outcomes and savings for the public sector. Running from November 2022 to March 2023, the pilot encountered severe recruitment problems. Over 20,000 invitation letters were sent to residents in council tax arrears, but only five individuals ultimately accessed the advice service. The failure attracted parliamentary scrutiny, with MoJ officials later acknowledging that they had ‘failed fast’ (House of Commons Public Accounts Committee, 2024b). Yet the evaluation made a recommendation directly relevant to this study: future efforts should give serious consideration to evaluating *existing* advice services, with established referral pathways and client relationships, rather than constructing new interventions from scratch (NatCen et al., 2024). This is precisely the bottom-up, collaborative approach adopted here.

The present study: the first UK attempt to trace the welfare impact of legal assistance through administrative data linkage

This study asked whether the impacts of legal assistance can be observed using data that public bodies already hold. The aim was to test whether the data of an existing advice provider could be securely linked to local authority administrative data in order to track what happens to households before and after they receive legal assistance. This project was therefore designed in 2019 as a response to the Ministry's call to demonstrate the value of early advice in social welfare law. Conceived initially as a proof of concept study, it puts into practice the approach endorsed by ELAP’s evaluators. Its primary contribution is to demonstrate a new method for evaluating legal assistance through existing local partnerships. The findings reported below matter not only for what they reveal about client outcomes, but because they show that meaningful changes triggered by legal interventions can be captured through administrative data routinely processed for local welfare schemes. This opens the way for further research that makes better use of existing data.

Law centres offer a distinctive holistic model of legal assistance making them uniquely informative settings in which to test this approach. As non-profit legal practices, they provide free advice and representation to people in their communities, and in many areas, now serve as the last remaining source of specialist legal support following the closure of other providers (Riaz, 2022). Unlike organisations focused on a single issue, law centres often combine expertise across housing, welfare benefits, and other areas of civil law, reflecting how legal problems cluster in the lives of low-income households. They are also among the few organisations that bridge the divide created by LASPO, combining specialist legal aid work with forms of early intervention that are no longer routinely funded through legal aid. As a result, the boundaries of support are shaped by the client’s needs rather than by the funding stream attached to a particular legal problem (Law Centres Network, 2024). This people-centred approach cuts across the artificial distinction between 'early' and 'late' advice that structures current policy frameworks. Studying what this model achieves therefore sheds light not only on the work of one law centre, but on what a differently designed legal aid system could deliver.

Housing provides a particularly strong test of whether legal assistance leaves a detectable imprint in administrative data. Legal needs research has consistently shown that housing problems

are more likely than other legal problems to trigger cascading difficulties across debt, benefits, health, and employment, especially for low-income households (Pleasence and Balmer 2007; Balmer, 2025). It is also the area in which the withdrawal of early intervention for other social welfare legal problems from legal aid has had some of the most severe consequences, with unresolved benefits issues reported to unfold into rent arrears and eviction cases (House of Commons Justice Committee, 2015). The combination of specialist advice, legal representation, and intensive support that law centres typically provide in housing cases is therefore especially likely to generate changes in household circumstances that can be observed across multiple administrative datasets, beginning with tenure. Housing legal assistance thus offers a powerful opportunity to test whether legal interventions produce measurable changes across multiple domains of people's lives within a relatively short timeframe.

The study is built on an innovative data-sharing partnership between Coventry City Council, the Central England Law Centre, and Policy in Practice. Central England Law Centre is the largest law centre in the country and one of the few that continues to deliver the full law centre model at scale. It has retained specialist legal aid contracts across several areas of social welfare law, while sustained core funding from Coventry City Council has enabled it to maintain a flexible model of assistance that bridges legal aid and early intervention (Mulqueen and Wintersteiger, 2025). This year marks fifty years of collaboration between the law centre and the council. That long-standing relationship of trust made it possible, for research purposes, to share and link sensitive administrative data from the council's local welfare schemes with case management data provided by the law centre following informed client consent. This partnership provided a rare opportunity to test what is possible when legal assistance providers and public bodies work together to understand the impact of support on low-income households. The study therefore demonstrates what a relatively well-resourced law centre, operating within an unusually collaborative institutional environment, can achieve.

Policy in Practice acted as the trusted intermediary that made the data linkage and independent evaluation possible. Drawing on its experience supporting local authorities through the Low Income Family Tracker (LIFT) platform, it led the research design and implementation. It matched the law centre client data to the council's administrative benefits data, removed identifying information once the linkage was complete, and analysed the resulting anonymised dataset. The law centre's case management data provided information on the type of legal problem clients presented with and the form of legal assistance they received. The linked council's data cover Housing Benefit, Council Tax Reduction, and Universal Credit, the principal means-tested benefits administered or processed by local authorities. These administrative data make it possible to track claimants' trajectories through the welfare system over time and to identify measurable changes in financial circumstances following legal assistance.

The study produced what is, to our knowledge, the first UK dataset linking legal assistance recipients to longitudinal data on their welfare trajectories. Administrative data linkage in the justice domain has received considerable attention through ADR UK's Data First programme (ADR UK, 2025), and the related Better Outcomes through Linked Data (BOLD) partnership (Ministry of Justice, 2026), which links justice data across government datasets. Neither, however, has linked legal aid or advice-provider casework data to welfare data held by local authorities or the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), having focused on court and offender data rather than civil advice. This project drew on an existing law centre's caseload and a long-established local partnership to build a dataset that, though modest in size, demonstrates that such a linkage is both feasible and informative, and that it could be replicated at scale. The matched dataset comprises 110 law centre clients whose income, benefits, and housing circumstances can be tracked from twelve months before to twenty-four months after receiving legal advice.

The linked administrative data could be used to construct a comparison group of low-income households who had not received law centre support. Using machine learning techniques, Policy in Practice identified the characteristics and patterns of vulnerability that most strongly predicted contact with the law centre. These insights were then used to match each client with comparable households drawn from the same local authority's administrative records. Although this approach does not replicate the conditions of a randomised trial, it provides a meaningful counterfactual for assessing whether the trajectories of law centre clients differ from those of comparable low-income households in the same local authority. It also demonstrates what can be achieved through local collaboration and data sharing for less than five per cent of ELAP's £5 million budget.

Informed by a co-participatory design, the project evolved into a mixed-methods study that moved beyond data linkage to examine the mechanisms through which change occurred. The Central England Law Centre's active involvement in the collaborative research process helped identify questions that could not be answered through administrative data alone. The quantitative data linkage was complemented by qualitative fieldwork, interviews with law centre staff and clients, and an original survey of past clients. The fieldwork helped interpret the institutional processes through which support was delivered and outcomes were generated, while the survey captured dimensions of experience that are largely invisible in administrative data, including mental health, confidence, legal capability, and clients' own perceptions of how law centre support shaped changes in their circumstances. Together, these methods provide a more complete account of impact than any single source could offer, combining evidence of what changed with insights into how and why change occurred.

Main findings

This study demonstrates that linked administrative data can be used to trace the welfare trajectories of legal assistance recipients in the UK. It establishes that data linkage is both feasible and informative. Of 311 law centre clients who consented to participate, 151 (48.6%) were successfully linked to at least one administrative dataset. Matching rates were substantially higher where consent was collected directly by law centre staff (65.8%) than through an online survey of former clients (29.9%), reflecting differences in data quality, geographic coverage, and client characteristics. Of those linked, 110 clients had sufficient observations to be tracked both before and after receiving legal assistance, forming the longitudinal sample used in the analysis. The study therefore demonstrates that meaningful evaluation can be built from data already collected by local authorities and advice providers, creating a practical alternative to large-scale experimental approaches.

The data reveals that law centre clients face multiple and overlapping forms of disadvantage. Compared with the wider population of benefit recipients, they are disproportionately single adults and lone parents, with larger families on average. They live in precarious housing, overwhelmingly in social rented or temporary accommodation, and face housing costs that absorb a large share of already limited incomes. Disability is prevalent and closely associated with labour market exclusion. Most households are of working age but not in paid work, and benefits constitute the near-entirety of income for the majority of the sample. More than half live below the poverty line, and nearly one in four are financially vulnerable, with little income remaining after meeting essential costs.

Legal assistance is associated with meaningful and sustained improvements in household income and poverty. Relative to matched comparison households, law centre clients experienced an increase of approximately £153 per month in equivalised income, adjusted for household size and composition. These gains accumulated gradually and reached statistical significance between 18 and 24 months after the first contact with the law centre, reflecting the cumulative effect of benefit

reassessments, appeals, discretionary housing payments, and other administrative processes. Legal assistance was also associated with a reduction of approximately £50 per month in the poverty gap, drawing households closer to the poverty line. Taken together, these findings suggest that legal assistance functions not only as crisis support but also as an anti-poverty intervention with measurable economic effects.

These gains were realised primarily through the welfare system. Legal assistance increased household resources chiefly by correcting benefit entitlements, challenging incorrect decisions, securing additional support, and ensuring that households received the assistance to which they were legally entitled. Part of the observed increase reflects additional housing support received by households entering temporary accommodation. However, even setting that component aside, this specific group still saw real purchasing-power gains of around £54 per month after housing costs. The findings therefore point to the law centre operating as a mechanism through which people are able to access existing rights and entitlements that would otherwise remain unrealised.

The study traces three distinct channels through which legal assistance produces change. The first is *crisis management:* when displacement cannot be prevented, legal assistance secures housing and comprehensive benefit packages during the transition into temporary accommodation. The second is *gradual income maximisation and stabilisation*: households whose housing remained stable saw emerging income gains over 18–24 months as legal assistance maintained correct benefit coverage through a period of disruption and secured previously unclaimed entitlements. The third is *tenancy preservation,* which is likely present but essentially invisible in the data, since success means nothing changes in the administrative record. National court data shows that roughly seven in ten eviction claims do not proceed to bailiff eviction (MoJ Mortgage and Landlord possession statistics, 2023-24), but it does not allow the impacts to be examined by tenure, nor whether some households left their homes through other routes. Local authorities' administrative data makes it possible to observe a richer account of residential mobility. For example, among social housing tenants facing eviction, 83 per cent retained their tenancy throughout the observation period. The equivalent figure for private renters in the study is 48 per cent, a gap that reflects both the different legal protections available and the stage at which assistance was accessed.

The effects are not confined to intensive casework. A substantial share of law centre clients received one-off specialist advice without receiving full representation, yet this group still showed positive effects on income and poverty. This one-off advice is not generic signposting: it is tailored to the client's circumstances, may involve several interactions with the law centre, and differs from full casework mainly in that the law centre does not take over conduct of the case or act on the client's behalf. Its effectiveness depends on the wider structure behind it: advisers can draw on the wider specialist team, identify linked legal and welfare issues, and provide concrete advice rather than simply referring clients elsewhere. The value of this model is underscored by the absence of substitutes: among clients the law centre had to refer elsewhere because of capacity constraints, only around one in five received help from the service they were sent to.

Legal advisers act as critical navigators of the welfare state, not only as legal representatives. Alongside specialist representation, advisers identify unclaimed entitlements, challenge wrongful benefit decisions, and use information gathered during a legal case to connect people with healthcare, housing, and social services, often working with the council or other community services. Half of survey respondents received at least one form of additional support across benefits, healthcare, counselling, and housing. Among those whose legal problem remained unresolved, this wider support was often most extensive, suggesting that advisers intensify their navigational role precisely when formal legal remedies are limited. The survey reveals that advisers identify

opportunities for income maximisation. For a fifth to a quarter of respondents, the law centre's assistance was decisive in securing benefits they would not otherwise have received.

The breadth of the impacts documented here depends on an integrated model that mixed funding makes possible. Specialist legal expertise across housing, immigration, welfare, and social work is co-located within a single organisation, while core funding from the council sustains the early advice, triage, one-off advice, and wraparound support that legal aid does not cover. This mixed funding model is what makes holistic, cross-domain support possible. Legal advisers identify and act on needs beyond the presenting problem as a routine part of casework, whether through an internal referral to other specialist teams, identifying wrongful benefit decisions, or making warm connections to non legal-services. The income gains and multidimensional impacts documented here are a product of that holistic, people-centred model, and would be less likely under narrowly focused short-term project funding.

The qualitative evidence reveals important impacts that the administrative data alone would miss. Clients described arriving at the law centre in states of acute distress and consistently reported an immediate psychological shift at the point of first contact, often weeks or months before their legal problem was resolved. More than survey respondents reported feeling anxious, stressed, or depressed before contacting the law centre, while three quarters of those receiving intensive support reported improvements in their wellbeing afterwards. Legal confidence also increased substantially. Although these gains were partly linked to the continued availability of the service, respondents reported greater confidence in knowing where to turn for help, suggesting an increased capacity to re-engage with legal support when needed.

The study's design is likely to understate impact. The comparison group was built to resemble law centre clients on observable characteristics and tracked over the same period, but the design does not isolate the causal effect of legal assistance as a randomised trial would. Two features push the estimates downward. First, treated households were, by definition, experiencing a legal crisis that most comparison households were not, and the groups could not be matched on the experience of a legal problem itself. Any measured gain therefore emerges *despite* the disruption caused by that crisis. Second, for the most complex casework clients, the absence of measurable differences from comparison households may itself indicate success: it is consistent with legal assistance preventing further deterioration, an effect administrative data cannot distinguish from a true null. The findings presented here are therefore best understood as plausible lower-bound estimates of impact, pending the richer data infrastructure that this report calls for.

Policy implications

The findings carry five implications for how legal assistance is funded, delivered, and evaluated.

First, legal assistance works, but current funding arrangements are insufficient to enable providers to meet the level and complexity of legal need and demand. The law centre studied here is the sole provider of specialist housing legal aid in Coventry. It produces measurable returns, yet it cannot meet current demand. A people-centred, holistic approach requires flexible, stable funding that allows advisers to tailor support to the person’s situation, rather than stopping assistance at the boundary of a grant, legal category, or service specification. Without this flexibility, advice providers are forced to ration support, narrow access, or rely on staff working beyond their paid hours. Core funding and the stability it offers is also necessary to recruit, train, and retain specialist advisers, maintain outcome-oriented data infrastructure, and build the long-term organisational capacity required to deliver holistic legal assistance. The cost of unmet legal need

falls instead on individuals, families, local authorities, and other areas of public spending, including temporary accommodation, homelessness services, health, and social security.

Second, early, responsive, cross-domain legal assistance should be funded alongside the partnerships between advice providers and local authorities that make it more effective. The navigational role documented in this study depends on co-located legal and welfare expertise, and on the relationships between providers and councils that allow cases to move forward. Funding should enable advice centres to address overlapping housing issues, benefit challenges, and the financial pressures that often accompany them together, at the point they arise, not only when residents reach crisis point or qualify for a narrowly defined project. Temporary accommodation, rent arrears, homelessness applications, immigration advice and wrongful benefit sanctions are all areas where flexible, coordinated support could improve outcomes for residents and reduce costs for public services. A more integrated approach can also help maximise household income by ensuring residents receive their full benefit entitlements and by correcting erroneous benefit decisions that may otherwise undermine housing and financial stability.

Third, administrative data should be used to make the case and improve the response. The data governance framework developed for this project is documented and replicable. Access to full Universal Credit records held by the central government would be the single most impactful improvement, expanding coverage to all working-age benefit recipients and enabling this analysis at national scale. Data sharing gateways should explicitly recognise homelessness prevention as a legitimate basis for linkage between local authorities and advice providers. Beyond evaluation, linked administrative data could support earlier identification of residents at risk of homelessness and other legal crises, enabling proactive intervention before problems escalate. As reforms such as the Renters' Rights Act place greater emphasis on enforcing housing rights, local authorities may increasingly need data-enabled approaches to identify vulnerable residents, in order to ensure they can access their legal entitlements and stay in their homes.

Fourth, evaluation frameworks for legal assistance need to account for the operating realities of the sector. This project was delivered at a fraction of ELAP's cost and produced findings that a £5 million randomised controlled trial could not. Working with existing services and administrative data, rather than constructing new interventions, is more likely to succeed in contexts of spiralling demand and capacity shortages. Mixed-method designs and observation windows of at least 24 months should be standard.

Fifth, there is much more to learn, and the tools to learn it now exist. The governance templates, matching methodology, co-design framework, and survey instruments developed for this project are all documented in this report for others to use. Extending this work across more providers, more local authorities, and more areas of law, with access to richer datasets, would allow the full impact of legal assistance to be captured. The evidence gaps to assess whether legal assistance delivers value for money are not inevitable. This project shows that the relevant data infrastructure and governance can be established, an approach that can be expanded to evaluate different advice models. We hope that this project is just a starting point when using administrative data to quantify the impact on advice provision.

Structure of this report

This report presents the findings of the data linkage between legal assistance, and welfare outcomes, the methods developed to produce it, and the lessons learned along the way. The introductory chapter sets out the policy context in which the study is situated, reviews the existing

literature on the impacts of legal assistance, and presents the research questions and objectives that guided the analysis.

Chapter 1 documents the data-sharing journey that made this project possible, including the governance framework, the challenges encountered across two successive partnerships over seven years, and the lessons learned in navigating them. These lessons are not incidental to the research. They constitute a practical framework for replicating this type of data linkage with other local authorities and advice provision, particularly as the governance framework slowly becomes more enabling. Chapter 2 describes the data linkage itself, how law centre client data were matched to administrative benefits data, the resulting match rates, and the constraints on tracking clients over time. Chapter 3 depicts the co-design framework behind this study and how practitioners' knowledge shaped the mixed-design evaluation components to complement administrative benefits data. Chapter 4 examines what the law centre's own casework data reveals about the patterns of legal need and support among its clients.

Chapters 5 to 7 form the analytical core of the report. Chapter 5 profiles law centre clients within the local authorities' administrative benefits data and tracks how their circumstances change over time. Chapter 6 describes the methods used to construct a plausible comparison, including statistical matching and difference-in-differences estimation, to approximate what an impact evaluation of legal assistance could look like with this kind of data. Chapter 7 is where the main findings lie. It compares the trajectories of law centre clients to those of similar low-income households who did not receive help from the law centre, draws on all available evidence to assess how well administrative data captures the multifaceted impact of legal assistance, and identifies where its limits lie.

Chapter 8 presents the specific additional findings from the original client survey and the qualitative fieldwork, capturing outcomes and experiences that the administrative data cannot reflect. Chapter 9 draws together the key lessons from the project as a whole. Chapter 10 sets out policy recommendations on data quality and linkage, data sharing for targeted interventions, and the relationship between evaluation and funding fragility.