

Annual Review 2013/14





“To no one will we sell, to no one deny... Justice’, clause 40 of magna carta promised nearly 800 years ago. A society without access to justice defaults on this promise. We are not even close to realising it. Instead, we are moving towards a state where most people are entirely incapable of securing the benefits the law promises. Can they be expected to continue to shoulder its burdens?”

**Dr Frederick Wilmot-Smith, ‘Necessity or Ideology?’
London Review of Books, 6 November 2014**

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Chair's and Director's Comment

Since the implementation of the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act (LASPO), which took effect in April 2013, ten Law Centres have been forced to close. Many others have had to reduce the services they provide and can now help fewer people. We estimate that only one in three people seeking assistance now gets the help they need. In spite of this, 2014 has seen some fabulous new initiatives at Law Centres.

Julie Bishop, Director



Cheryl Weston, Chair



In Derby the Law Centre is working in partnership with the local prison to provide training and work skills for pre-release prisoners. Coventry Law Centre is working closely with the local council's Troubled Families team. In Nottingham the Law Centre's Preventing Homelessness Project works alongside the Housing Possession Court Duty Scheme to help anyone facing possession proceedings.

Strange to tell, the uptake of legal aid remaining in scope has been lower than expected. We know from the legal needs studies that have been done in the UK over the last few years that the need for legal assistance has not diminished. In fact, known trigger events have increased, meaning that the need for legal aid is likely to have increased as well.

What is going on? What is happening to people unable to resolve their legal problems? What is the knock-on effect at community level and the cost to the public purse?

The Justice Select Committee is currently considering the impact of LASPO. The National Audit Office is examining the cost impact of the changes. Yet, we have been told that regardless there will be further cuts – a bleak prospect for the future.

We at LCN have refocused our work to ensure that those funds we receive have the deepest impact.

Our priorities for 2014 and the coming year are

- obtaining more funding for Law Centres including at the European level
- training Law Centre staff so their skills are best suited to their work
- increasing collaboration between Law Centres and a new focus on working with non-legal agencies
- more strategic work with our pro-bono partners and Law Schools, and
- developing new strategic projects for Law Centres such as the Welfare Benefits Upper Tribunal Service.

We are determined to make policy makers aware of the experience of Law Centres and their clients. We have responded to every relevant government consultation, given evidence to several national committees and joined in with a number of national campaigns such as the Justice Alliance and the Who Benefits Campaign.

This year 25% of our income was in the form of gifts in kind. For every £1 we received in funding we were able to do £1.25 worth of work. £200,000 income becomes £250,000, the cost equivalent of employing an extra staff member.

To our supporter Law Firms, enormous thanks for your generosity, in particular to Allen & Overy, Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer, DLA Piper, Hogan Lovells, Clifford Chance, Herbert Smith Freehills, Berwin Leighton Paisner and Garden Court Chambers.

To our funders, thank you for supporting our work during this time of change, enabling us to continue to support the work of Law Centres following the government's decision to cancel all its funding to LCN. Thank you to the Baring Foundation, the Legal Education Foundation, the London Legal Support Trust, the Trust for London, the AB Charitable Trust, Comic Relief, UnBound Philanthropy, the Paul Hamlyn Foundation, the Samuel Sebba Trust, the Law Society, London Councils, the Migration Foundation, the Metropolitan Support Trust, the Access to Justice Foundation, the Big Lottery Fund and the J, Paul Getty Jnr. Charitable Trust.

To our staff, thank you for remaining committed to our work, throughout a time of great change, and to the Executive Committee members, especially those that have agreed to be co-opted, for your skills, time and guidance.

To our colleagues across the legal sector who support the work of Law Centres by participating in your thousands in the regional legal walks every year, we thank you. The funds generated are a vital source of independent funds that assist Law Centres to continue to provide legal assistance in areas that are needed more than ever but are no longer within the scope of Legal Aid.

We urge you to help us further to grow independent funding sources by sending the unclaimed balances in your client accounts to the Access to Justice Foundation www.accesstojusticefoundation.org.uk/funds-in/client-balances/

This will enable desperately needed legal assistance to be provided to the thousands of destitute people with solvable legal problems who come to our doors each day but are turned away for lack of capacity.

That is the most heart breaking impact of LASPO – knowing that people could be helped if only there were funds to do so.

2015 will see more funding cuts and more policy changes that will impact on Law Centres and their clients. The work that has been done over the last three years will enable them to continue to serve their communities so that justice is done and vulnerable people still get their rights.

Total income for all Law Centres in 2012-13: £17.5 million, of which only £8.7 million was in legal aid. The net revenue benefits to the Exchequer: at least £48 million.



I've come in with an emergency #eviction. I've no phone to access any other service @BrentLawCentre

Nottingham Law Centre's GP Project

A survey of Nottingham Law Centre clients found that all clients interviewed reported that their health had worsened since the problem they took to the Law Centre started.

The impact of addressing legal problems on the health and wellbeing of clients stood out. The Law Centre began exploring options to provide services in a health setting.

The Law Centre ran a one-year pilot project with a consortium of local GPs, enabling them to refer patients with depression, anxiety and other health issues to the Law Centre. The patients were contacted within 48 hours of a referral being made. In the majority of cases, a generalist adviser from the Law Centre visited the person at home. If specialist assistance was required, people were referred to a Law Centre specialist adviser.

Many of the people seen through this project would not otherwise have attended a legal service. Some said they did not know that the Law Centre existed.



Nottingham Law Centre

"Even after the first interview quite often there was a huge difference."

"The GPs came to understand that advice can make a difference and can reduce the need for prescriptions and the need for appointments. Also they realised that the socio-economic issues that affect somebody's health can be tackled by the Law Centre."

Cheryl Weston, Law Centre Manager

Our impact: doing more with less

Our Vision

We strive for a just and equal society where everyone's rights are valued, defended and protected.

Our mission

We uphold justice for socially and economically disadvantaged members of society by supporting a national network of Law Centres, which use their legal expertise to defend the rights of people in their communities.

We represent Law Centres at all levels of government and national forums, we help Law Centres to maximise their potential as sustainable organisations, we initiate new Law Centre services for particularly vulnerable groups and we champion the Law Centre model of free and independent legal advice and representation.



Strategic Goals 2014

- Independent, sustainable and effective Law Centres equipped with the knowledge, skills and funds to effectively manage the increase in demand at the same time as restrictions in funding.
- To strengthen the Law Centres Network's core capabilities, so it can support and enhance Law Centres in their work for clients and communities.
- National recognition of the work and expertise of Law Centres, so that Law Centres can affect change to help their clients and communities.

The challenge this year has been to find ways of continuing to get the very best out of our funding so we can support Law Centres in these difficult times.

We decided that the best way for us to enhance what Law Centres are doing is by:

- Finding sources of new funding for Law Centres
- Taking the lead on attracting funding where appropriate, such as with European Union funding
- Forging new partnerships with non-legal agencies so that clients get a more holistic service

We are now more engaged with the pro bono community and are exploring the support they could give to develop and extend the services provided by Law Centres from their current funding.

This year 25% of our income was gifts-in-kind. For every £1 we received in funding we were able to do £1.25 worth of work. In total our £200,000 income became £250,000, the equivalent of an extra staff member.



Rising to the Challenge

Since the introduction of legal aid in 1949 it has not been so hard for people needing legal advice to get the help they need. In this environment of erosion of individuals' rights and drastic cut backs to the funding of organisations that can help them realise those rights, Law Centres are thinking creatively to find ways of doing more with less.

Keeping Law Centres up to date

The legal and policy environment in which Law Centres work is constantly changing. In order to provide an excellent service to the public staff must be fully aware of changes that might affect their clients.

Training

With the generous support of the Legal Education Foundation, we have been able to offer an extensive training programme in 2014 which will be continued through 2015 and 2016. Law Centres have requested that we provide training tailored to their specific needs. They regard this as a priority so their legal and management expertise is always of the highest quality so they maintain the best possible service to vulnerable people in their communities.

Workshops 2013-14 – attended by over 150 Law Centre staff

- Damages-Based Agreements and Conditional Fee arrangements
- Homeless Young People – Rights and responsibilities
- Discrimination
- Human trafficking
- Community Care Legal Update
- Principles to Practice Masterclass and Workshop
- Certificated Legal Aid Seminar
- Supervision and Managing Legal Aid Agency Contracts
- Introduction to Certificated Legal Aid work
- Four Fundraising Masterclasses
- Certificated Legal Aid Seminar
- Introduction to certificated Legal Aid housing work
- Welfare Benefits Upper Tribunal
- Certificated Legal Aid Billing.

Annual Conference and AGM

The Annual Conference, held in conjunction with the AGM, is Law Centres' main forum for collaboration, sharing of ideas and resources, networking and training.

The 2013 conference was generously hosted by DLA Piper and was held in Birmingham on 29 November 2013. Called "Sailing into the Wind", the conference was attended by 63 delegates. It was addressed by Carolyn Downs, Chief Executive at the Local Government Association, Chris Goulden, Head of Poverty Research at the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, Michele Leering, Executive Director at the Community Advocacy and Legal Centre Ontario, Canada, and Les Allamby, Chief Executive of the Law Centre (Northern Ireland).

This was followed by workshops and a pre-AGM discussion on the place of Law Centres in the future landscape of access to justice.



Information and Guidance for Law Centres

As funding becomes more restricted Law Centres have rightly chosen to target their resources on service delivery to their clients. This means that a greater role to play, briefing them on requirements, updating them on changes and notifying them of new opportunities.

We have

- produced guides on income generation models, requirements for new legal structures etc.
- produced a series of guides explaining the advantages and limitations of different business structures, setting up new charged-for services, fee rates, financial re-organising and credit control
- produced guidance on the use of Conditional Fee Arrangements (CFAs), complemented by one to one consultancy for Law Centres on when to use CFAs and Damage Based Agreements
- co-ordinated an online network forum for sharing practice and experience
- analysed and reported on obstacles and steps to be taken when Law Centres enter the uncharted territory of alternative business structures
- produced guides for Law Centre trustees on ethical and organisational values, regulatory aspects, governance etc.

- produced materials on developing new services such as community care advice
- produced information on funding, including generic materials for funding applications and ideas for new services that Law Centres can develop
- facilitated sharing of information by managers and other staff from Law Centres on new income generation schemes and tendering plans, via online networking, web-based guides and discussion forums

Our weekly e-bulletin continues to be highly valued by Law Centres. It provides regular updates on matters of interest including funding opportunities, legal aid news, training, events and job vacancies.

“Even just focusing on the pure fiscal benefits, Law Centres deliver benefits of at least twice the amount for which they are funded.”

**Joe Sunderland, ICF
International Report on Law Centres, November 2014**



Dynamic group of ppl attended @PRCBC1 + @MigrantChildren training on registration of #children as British @EalingLawCentre

Rising to the Challenge continued

Forums for Law Centres across England and Wales

- **Law Centre staff** Regular meetings were held for staff, including a separate one for senior supervising solicitors. These are always purposeful and productive forums for sharing knowledge, information about new resources, project development and above all, peer support for those working in a pressured environment.
- **Trustees** Four meetings for Law Centre trustees were held to enable them to meet each other and discuss common concerns. They were well received and we will continue to maintain our support to Trustees and Chairs as it is integral to Law Centre development.
- **Chairs of Trustees** Our members told us that they would like to see a dedicated forum for the Chairs of Law Centre management committees (ie. boards of trustees). This year we arranged them on a regional basis, helping to better connect Law Centres at governance level. The meetings were well-attended and feedback has been positive, so we look to continue and develop them.
- **Email discussion** We also moderate email discussion groups for Law Centres that are an agile way of sounding out peers, gauging responses to emerging trends and mobilising support for fast-moving collective initiatives.

Bringing Law Centres together is essential so the sector as a whole benefits from shared expertise.

Consultancy for Law Centres

Our staff help and advise Law Centres on matters ranging from day-to-day problems through to funding crises, including

- one-to-one guidance on issues such as practice management, quality marks, risk management, financial rules, reductions in service and Law Centre closures
- promotion and support of joint work among Law Centres
- assisting Law Centres to comply with multiple regulation regimes by monitoring essential statutory regulations impacting on Law Centres' governance and briefing Law Centres on requirements laid down by the Solicitors Regulation Authority, Legal Services Board, Companies House, Charities Commission and Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner etc.

- ensuring continuity for Law Centres' debt casework services by obtaining a transitional group consumer credit licence to provide continuous cover for Law Centres when responsibility transferred to the Financial Conduct Authority.
- supporting members to bid and take on publicly-funded work by analysing tender content and advising and assisting Law Centres to bid for Legal Aid Agency community care contracts. 12 contracts were subsequently awarded to Law Centres
- providing expertise, advice and support in financial, business and other matters to Law Centres experiencing both regular concerns and critical problems that have a severe impact on their sustainability.



Really good to have support from our @IslingtonLawCen friends at the Court of Appeal. @BhamLawCen

Julie Bishop at information sharing event with EU partners



Generating new income streams to sustain essential services

A key focus for us this year has been to help Law Centres to access new income streams.

Helping Law Centres to attract funding for areas of work no longer covered by legal aid is vital. We gave advice and support to Law Centres on new areas of funding and how to develop new business structures. As a result, Law Centres' business practice improved and they were better able to bid successfully for funding.

Funded by Trust for London and the Future Advice Fund, we worked with Law Centres to develop new income streams. As well as documenting and assisting those Law Centres that are exploring charged-for services, we are currently researching the market for such services as well as further developing the charging framework.

Alongside this work, we are exploring other services that do not directly charge clients and working with new organisations to develop more collaborative services. We are particularly focusing on working with non-legal organisations to strengthen Law Centres' multi-disciplined approach. Importantly, we have put significant resources into assisting Law Centres to improve their fundraising capacity.

We developed and ran four fundraising master classes. We also gave fundraising advice directly to Law Centres as well as helping with writing and submitting funding applications. We will continue this as a priority in 2015.

European Union (EU) Funding

We have been developing our expertise in accessing EU funding by being a partner on projects and developing and leading on projects with Law Centre participants. We also ran workshops on EU funding, set up a group of interested Law Centres and circulated information on possible projects. This year, the Future Advice Fund gave us funds to extend this work, to explore match funding possibilities, to research and establish a group of suitable partners in Europe and to develop bids to EU funding programmes on behalf of Law Centres.

One such project is *My Mobility Mentor*. Our work on this EU funded project highlighted a serious gap in frontline support services for EU nationals in the UK. We are therefore developing partnerships with non-legal agencies who serve the EU communities in the UK to ensure that

legal information on rights, advocacy and representation is available. Following on from this project we are working to secure resources to develop new projects targeting specific EU migrant groups in the UK to meet gaps in current service provision.

LCN and Islington Law Centre at London Legal Walk 2014



Rising to the Challenge continued

Grant funding for Law Centres

At the AGM we will launch a campaign to secure core grant funding for Law Centres, building on the findings of research by ricewaterhouseCoopers that said, "Direct grant funding from government... remains the 'best value for money' approach to public sector expenditure for most forms of service delivery."

We have commissioned a further paper which will argue the case for grant funding for Law Centres. This will be circulated to all Law Centres as well as key influencers as the first stage in building the campaign.

Cross sector collaboration

At a time of such restricted funding we have put great emphasis on how best to use our limited resources, the best ways to extend those resources and how to ensure their deepest impact. One way is for us to work closely with like-minded organisations to advance shared aims, learn from each other, and build on each other's projects, particularly to widen access to legal advice.

We are

- collaborating with other parts of the legal sector such as law firms, students and trainees to increase pro bono work in Law Centres
- producing a Practice Guide for Law Centres working with the pro bono community
- developing a programme to support, collaborate and share information and good practice with Law Centres running lawyer volunteer schemes.



Busy #employment law session + telephone #advice line at the Law Centre today.
@HackneyLawCentr

Round-table discussions

Working with Law Centres, or on their behalf, we have contributed to multi-agency professional forums

- with Law Centres, CABx, social welfare law firms and social enterprise companies on new income generation projects, delivering services at affordable rates to support or fund free services
- with Law Centres, the Immigration Law Practitioners' Association, other immigration providers and funders on filling the gaps in immigration advice left by the cuts to legal aid eg. by using pro bono, volunteers or new funding
- with Law Centres, the Equalities & Human Rights Commission, the Equality Advisory Support Service, South West TUC and other regional players on how best to provide a regional discrimination advice service in the South West.

South West Law Centres Community Interest Company

We are working with the three Law Centres in the South West; Avon & Bristol, Gloucester and Wiltshire. With funding from the Future Advice Fund, we are exploring how working more closely together we can achieve efficiencies, bid for additional grants and contracts and develop new ways of generating income to make the Law Centres sustainable into the future. (more on p28)

Derby Citizens Advice & Law Centre Breaking the cycle of re-offending

With funding from the Big Lottery, Derby Citizens Advice & Law Centre provides work experience and training for some 70 Category D prisoners at Sudbury Prison each year who are released on temporary licence.

“The best parts of it were helping people again... obviously you can't help everyone but it's being in a position where you can make a difference to someone's life... and secondary to that it gives you a bit more pride in yourself.”

Initially staff from the CAB & Law Centre and a partner organisation, Access2Advice, update the offenders' workplace skills in the prison. Once they are released on licence they are given transitional training at the Centre, including taking the Civil Service Quality Assurance Certificate, help with internet and telephone skills and further workplace training.

Many participants go on to further training to enable them to give face-to-face generalist advice to members of the public, using the CAB information system. Others go on to do Advice Session Supervisor Training so they can supervise the generalist advisers at the Centre.

The scheme is very successful

- 80% of participants are less likely to reoffend, with only 4.5% reoffending compared with 25% locally and 50% nationally.
- 72% of participants who completed the programme secured employment after approximately five interviews.
- £60.64 is saved for every pound spent on the scheme by avoiding the costs of unemployment and re-offending.

The scheme enables the Centre to extend its advice service and help more people with welfare benefits and other queries.



Trainee John receives his certificate of achievement from Peter Reynolds, Operations Manager at Derby Citizens Advice and Law Centre.

Rising to the Challenge continued

Policy and Profile

A key role for LCN is to serve as a voice for our clients and argue for vital safety-net provision of legal services.

This Policy and Profile building work has two aspects:

- to help individual Law Centres build their local reputation, engage with their stakeholders and advocate on behalf of their clients
- to serve as the national, collective voice of Law Centres as a grass-roots movement that pursues legal advice and social reform

It is sometimes difficult in these challenging times to find – and fund – the capacity to undertake this work. We are grateful to the Baring Foundation and the J Paul Getty Jr Charitable Trust for their contributions.

Communications and social media

Law Centres are local problem spotters. This role is particularly important now that so many public services are facing sweeping changes. Law Centres see trends as they emerge, such as increases in evictions due to arrears. They spot cracks, faults and inefficiencies in the system, such as the way benefit incomes increasingly lag behind the level of social rents and council tax.

Speaking from the coalface, Law Centres use their links with other local organisations and councils to alert policy makers before problems escalate. They tell of the consequences for people in poverty and propose solutions.

Last year we continued to highlight the effects of the legal aid cuts – compounded with welfare reform – on the disadvantaged and vulnerable people we serve. We argued that especially now, at a time of cuts and fiscal consolidation, we must maintain a basic ‘safety net’ of support for those most hard up. We seek to inform and shape the future provision of social welfare assistance, and to ensure that timely legal advice is an essential ingredient.

To do this we support Law Centres in their own publicity work. We amplify Law Centres’ local publicity by syndicating local stories nationally and by initiating our own network-wide publicity in news media and blogs.

As a result of our high profile we have had numerous enquiries from the BBC and Channel 4 asking for interviewees, case studies and background information for television and radio programmes about legal aid and social welfare issues.

Throughout the year several Law Centres contributed to the making of a forthcoming BBC Panorama programme about the effects of the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act (LASPO).

Several Law Centres were featured in a number of Radio 5 Live Investigates programmes. Following a suggestion from Bradford Law Centre, one programme related how successful appellants at Employment Tribunals were unable to obtain the compensation they were awarded, using an interview with a Bradford client and a solicitor from Avon & Bristol.

Julie Bishop has given interviews throughout the year for a number of publications for the legal and community sector, including Legal Voice, the Law Gazette and the Fabian Review.

We have a unique role to play in managing the collective Law Centre profile, reminding us that, just as a local Law Centre is an asset to the community, so its closure is a real and keenly felt loss to local people.



Achievements this year

– **A rise in Law Centre and LCN coverage in traditional media**

We were covered 76 times in the past year (an average of 1.5 times per week), of which 44 were in local/regional titles, 14 in the trade press and 18 in the national press, with nearly half of this coverage extended online.

– **A significant rise in our social media profile**

We have seen a 46% rise in direct Facebook followers and a 14% rise in total reach. Direct Twitter following has shot up by 77% with a great improvement in secondary reach, up to 19,000 readers per week.

– **Increased website visibility and integration**

Since last year the number of people arriving at our website through Facebook has doubled, and the number arriving through Twitter grew fourfold. Four of the past year's top ten landing pages on our website were Law Centre news stories.

Policy and public affairs

The dust refused to settle in the aftermath of LASPO. This piece of legislation, ushering in sweeping changes to the scope and accessibility of legal aid, was not the end of a change process but only the beginning. Immediately after LASPO came into effect in April 2013 the Ministry of Justice moved on to consult on other cuts affecting access to justice; restrictions to Judicial Review and criminal legal aid, and the introduction of an additional residence test for access to legal aid.

In this unsettled public policy context, it is important for Law Centres to be clear and consistent in speaking out about the damage done to Law Centres and the local support networks they are part of. This requires a dual approach; to highlight the problems arising and to take part in devising solutions to them.

We have told national policy-makers about the consequences of the cuts in public spending that created the current advice shortfalls. Several Law Centres have had to close and some to merge with other advice organisations.

We

- responded to several Ministry of Justice consultations and continued to liaise regularly with civil servants and ministers
- responded to other consultations including from the Solicitors Regulatory Authority and the Department for Business Innovation and Skills
- gave evidence to the Joint Committee on Human Rights' inquiry into LASPO's effect on human rights
- gave evidence to inquiries by Parliament's Justice Select Committee and by the National Audit Office into the Act's impact on access to justice.

To take these messages further we also took part in several collaborative campaigns such as the *Justice Alliance*, which seeks to maintain legal support for disadvantaged people, the *JustFair* consortium, which raises awareness of social and economic rights, and *Who Benefits?* which counters negative public discourse on welfare benefits which stigmatises many of our clients.

Looking ahead, we see the need to rethink the way that legal advice services are delivered to disadvantaged people in the light of reduced public funding.



We helped 5 families to avoid #homelessness at Court today, even more work to do at the office!
@WiltsLaw

Rising to the Challenge continued

We

- made extensive central and regional contributions to the Low Commission as it drew up its report on the future of advice and legal support
- prepared a blueprint for future public funding of Law Centres based on the social impact research undertaken for us by consultants PricewaterhouseCoopers
- collaborated with professional bodies, such as the Law Society and the National Council for Voluntary Organisations, as well as with advisory bodies such as the Civil Justice Council and the Social Security Advisory Council.
- explored alternatives by engaging with ‘idea generators’ such as the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and academic researchers at leading universities such as Warwick, Birmingham and UCL.

Achievements this year

- influencing central government through reasoned, evidence-based oral and written contributions to consultations and inquiries on behalf of Law Centres and their clients
- contributing to the Low Commission’s report, *Tackling the Advice Deficit*, a great example of the voluntary sector coming together to tackle social welfare provision and make concrete proposals to government
- collaborating with other organisations on campaigning for issues that matter to our clients; access to justice, access to social and economic rights, and tackling the baiting of people claiming benefits.

Showcasing Law Centres

We devote considerable resources to showcasing Law Centres, their work and the success they achieve for their clients and communities.

Website

Along with our public profile on news and social media, a primary platform is our website at www.lawcentres.org.uk now two years old in its present form. We have developed it considerably by adding content and functionality and improving on the original build. The members’ area for Law Centre staff has seen new resource sections added. The publications section was re-organised to showcase Law Centres’ work and LCN’s activities. The website as a whole is now better integrated, with new functions such as events publicity and registration.

Branding

Another way in which Law Centres stand out from the crowd is by taking on a bright new brand identity. This gives our members across the country a distinct visual mark that identifies them as part of a larger whole.

The past year has seen the largest annual surge in uptake of the brand to date. The brand identity has also been developed to encompass specific projects and units such as our Young People’s Programme and the joint Welfare Benefits Upper Tribunal service.

Achievements this year

- a more helpful and more visible website – use topped 190,000 sessions last year, with two in three sessions coming from new visitors, over half of whom have found us through search engines
- significant profile work in defiance of LASPO cuts – seven more Law Centres have taken on the new brand and five more are in the process of doing so
- brand development – along with increased uptake by members, the new brand identity has been applied to three discrete projects to associate them with Law Centres’ work.



Looking ahead

We plan to consolidate the successes of the past year and to build on them to further raise Law Centres' profiles, especially in these times of adversity.

- In this upcoming election year we will make a strong case to all parties for specialist legal help and early action as integral to local 'safety net' provisions.
- We will continue to explore with other stakeholders ways in which access to justice provisions can be expanded, bringing our experience and expertise to bear.
- We will improve the integration of Law Centres' public profile with other LCN core functions, such as fundraising, campaigning and service development.
- We will diversify our social media into new platforms, such as blogging and LinkedIn, and produce more visual material to support our messaging.
- We will hold a two-year review of the website and produce a development plan, with a view to increasing stakeholder and supporter engagement.



Our benefits guru Richard this week successfully challenged the tax credit office, securing £12,000 of back payments for a client @ABLC1



Equality and Human Rights Project

Law Centres are champions of the right to fair treatment. This is a crucial role at a time when the very concept of Human Rights is being challenged.

This year we have felt the full impact of the changes in the political and funding landscape for discrimination advice. Availability of frontline discrimination legal advice and representation continues to diminish at a notable rate, resulting in people in some parts of the UK being unable to access legal advice and representation on discrimination issues.

In spite of little funding for this area of work Law Centres, supported by LCN, have continued to assist people who are being treated unfairly and denied their basic rights.

We are working with Law Centres and other agencies in the equality sector to meet the challenges head on. We are devising new and imaginative strategies to ensure legal advice and representation is provided to vulnerable clients within the constraints of available resources, such as working with migrant communities to reach excluded people who have no other means of support.

With resources being so scarce it is vital that those working in the field of discrimination share their knowledge and keep their skills in excellent condition so that the advice given is of the very best quality.

Thanks to funding from The Law Society we have been able to provide support and consultancy to discrimination and employment workers in Law Centres. We produced training materials and ran training sessions in London and Manchester focusing on areas identified by the workers themselves. This ensured that staff are up to date with changing policy and procedures. They also had the opportunity to network and exchange information on new approaches to service provision in the light of the removal of grants for discrimination and employment advice and representation and the introduction of Employment Tribunal fees.

Caseworkers' meeting

Discrimination caseworkers also met in Birmingham with agencies such as the Advisory Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS), the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) and the Equality Advisory Support Service (EASS) present. The event enabled them to gain an update on developments in different areas of their work from the agencies concerned and to give feedback based on their experience.



Tonight our wheelchair bound client with COPD has new furnished home. Hospital discharged him with nothing – not even a wheelchair!
@CovLaw

Notable achievements in the year

Despite the difficult environment in which Law Centres have to operate, many successful cases taken by Law Centres have meant that people facing discrimination eventually got their rights.

Thanks to Sheffield Citizens Advice and Law Centre an autistic boy of 11 was awarded landmark compensation after being refused permission to join the Scouts although he had successfully been a member of the Beavers for four years. He has now been allowed to join a different Scout branch. The Scouts have said that they will take on board the lessons learned from the case.

Clare Coyne, the boy's mother said: "The financial compensation can't replace the friendships and experiences that my son has missed. We want lessons to be learned to avoid another family going through the distress that we have experienced."

In another Sheffield case South Yorkshire Transport was forced to reinstate cuts they had made to concessions for elderly and disabled people. The Law Centre intervened on behalf of a woman who uses a wheelchair and a partially-sighted man. The decision benefits over 260,000 concessionary pass holders in South Yorkshire.

Client Michelle Turner said, "The concession helps people with disabilities to overcome disadvantages arising from their disability. It enables mobility, tackles social isolation, supports access to training, employment, volunteering and caring, and enables independent living."

In the first time a case of transgender discrimination in the provision of goods and services has been heard in a British court, Kirklees Law Centre client Susan Brook won her claim of transgender discrimination against a pub which had refused to allow her to use the ladies' lavatories and barred her when she complained.

"This was not the first, or the most serious incident I have experienced, but I had just had enough. This is the first time a court has taken action against transgender discrimination and it sends out a strong message that this must stop. I hope it helps to reduce discrimination, not only for me but for all the other transgender people out there," said Susan.

Equality Advisory Support Service (EASS)

Since October 2012 LCN has been a partner in a consortium including Disability Rights UK, the British Institute of Human Rights, Voiceability and the former RAD Deaf Law Centre that established and successfully launched the Equality Advisory Support Service (EASS). The EASS was introduced by the government to provide non-legal support and information to members of the public on equality and discrimination issues.

Our role is to provide second tier support, technical expertise and help with training material. We also signpost clients to the service and take referrals in cases where litigation is necessary.

Participating in a national service such as EASS allows Law Centres to have a national presence in the equality arena so that we may continue to influence the national debate around equality policy and practice. It also helps to ensure some assistance is available for people who have been discriminated against or whose human rights have been ignored.

Since it started, the helpline has handled over 100,000 enquiries resulting in 60,000 discrimination complaints being identified.

Young People's Programme

Working with vulnerable young people who need legal advice remained an important focus of our work this year. We have continued to assist Law Centres to better tailor services targeted at young people and to obtain funds to continue this work.

Just Rights and the Manifesto for Advice for Young People

Young people are an often overlooked group who struggle to access services and lose their way when trying to exercise their rights. They fail to seek legal advice and even when they secure the services of a lawyer (an increasingly difficult feat given the impact of LASPO) they find it difficult to stay engaged and ensure their voice is heard during the litigation process.

We are working under the *Just Rights* banner with other charities campaigning for fair access to advice, advocacy and legal representation for children and young people.

Through *Just Rights* we submitted joint responses to the consultation on Transforming Legal Aid and commented on the impact of the legal aid changes on young people.

As part of *Just Rights* we are also involved in developing a *Manifesto for Advice for Young People* to make advice services more accessible to, and suitable for, young people. We arranged focus groups with young people to shape the manifesto and encouraged their continued engagement in its development.

The *Manifesto for Advice for Young People* sets out not just young people's right to good quality advice but how that advice should be delivered. It stands as a great starting point for anyone seeking to create an advice service aimed at supporting young people.

Preventing homelessness for 16 and 17 year olds

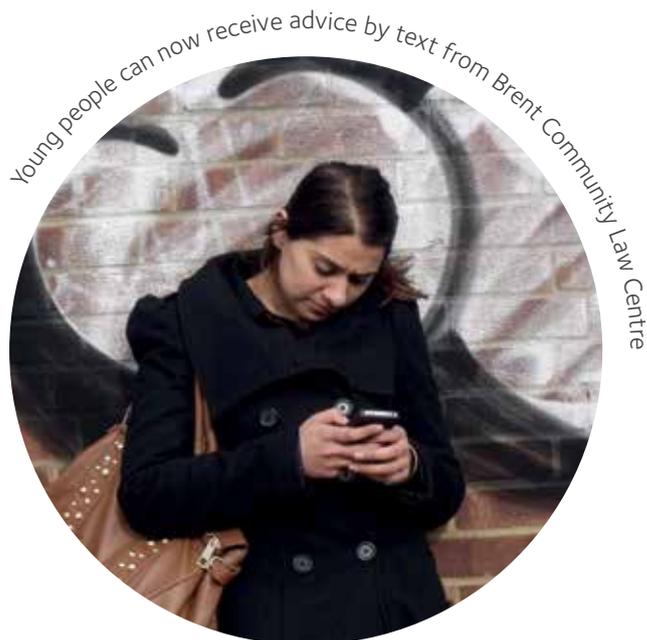
Last year, as part of this multi-strand project, with support from Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer we undertook a review of 138 local authorities' protocols regarding homeless 16 and 17 year olds. We have since made these available to local authorities with a view to improving their practice in their treatment of vulnerable young people.

The authorities have been largely appreciative. Some authorities indicated that they had revised their

joint working protocol as a result of our review. Training has been provided to other local authorities on best practice in dealing with homeless young people.

We also developed information for young people themselves. In April 2014 we produced a child-friendly guide, *Housing Advice for Homeless 16 and 17 year olds*, available on our website at www.lawcentres.org.uk/policy-and-media/papers-and-publications/young-people. It has been downloaded many times and widely distributed.

The third strand was to up-skill Law Centres around this issue. We delivered *Housing Advice for Homeless 16 and 17 year olds* training to Law Centres that covered the rights, responsibilities and responses of young people who are homeless and in need of legal advice.



Apprentices

We have helped seven Law Centres; the former RAD Deaf Law Centre, Tower Hamlets, South West London, Islington, Bury, Hammersmith & Fulham and Luton to obtain funding to recruit young apprentices to work in the Law Centres. The apprentices learn useful new skills on the job whilst providing invaluable support to the Law Centre and its clients.

“Having searched and looked at a range of job descriptions, the Law Centre description appealed to me the most. I liked the idea of doing a range of duties and travelling to different offices to learn new skills from others.”

“The main skills I have gained from the apprenticeship are communication skills and ICT. Also my confidence has improved... I am going to stay in touch with the Law Centre and hopefully will return to help on the administrative side in some way even if just as little as providing cover for someone. It has been a great experience of what it is like to work in a real working environment.”

South West London Law Centre apprentice before taking A-levels with a view to applying to university to study Psychology and Business.

Brent Young People’s Advice Service

Last year we helped Brent Community Law Centre to secure funding for three years to set up a young people-friendly advice service and recruit a co-ordinator. The Young People’s Law Service is run entirely by young people, for young people. It offers free legal advice and empowers young people by challenging prevailing negative stereotypes and allowing their voices to be heard.

Support for Law Centres

We continued to help Law Centres to develop their services in ways which young people will find accessible and to help them secure funds from the UK and Europe to facilitate this work.

Future Plans

The Young People’s Programme remains a priority. At a time of reduced funding, targeting services at the most vulnerable groups is an important mechanism for ensuring the best value and maximum impact of our scarce resources.

In the year ahead we will continue to focus on preventing young people’s homelessness. We are also planning new projects around the employment rights of young people, the impact of the Children and Families Act and community care. We will also work to ensure that all young people get access to education, above all, an education that meets their particular needs.



We have had to think about how we get funding to help a vulnerable teenager avoid #homelessness @RuthILC of @IslingtonLawCen

Harrow Law Centre prevents council tax hike

Harrow Law Centre celebrated its success in advocating with its local authority, Harrow Council, to scrap council tax hikes for vulnerable people in the north-west London borough.

Harrow Council had been consulting on proposed cuts to local public services, as well as a mooted council tax rise of 30%, targeted at poor and disabled local residents of the borough.

Not long before the Supreme Court had ruled that a similar local cuts consultation at the London borough of Haringey was unlawful because it had been put in unfair terms. The Law Centre has argued that, in light of this ruling, Harrow should reconsider its 'near identical' plans.

The Law Centre joined forces with other charities and local groups and petitioned Harrow Council to drop its tax rise. It also spoke out in the local press, raising public awareness of the council's plans. In mid-November the council announced that it was abandoning its proposals.

"This action is important because it gives a voice to the powerless and the voiceless."

"The most vulnerable of our community are easy targets because they are the least likely to complain."

Jo Silcox, a legal adviser at the Law Centre

Principles to Practice Project (P2P)

In 2011, 46% of refugees and 34% of asylum seekers worldwide were aged under 18. Law Centres' work showed that young asylum seekers often experienced inappropriate and very poor treatment in decision-making by UK authorities, despite their particular vulnerability.

Children have different capacity and understanding from that of adults, yet they often face more rigorous asylum procedures and practices. They are constantly questioned when they do not know the answer, their experiences of trauma are handled insensitively, cultural differences are not respected and their wishes are ignored.

The UK is legally obliged to have regard to the welfare of the child and to follow a number of child-centred principles in its decision-making. These principles are rarely understood, applied, adhered to or implemented by those in the asylum system.

Child-centred principles, such as giving the child the benefit of the doubt, accepting what it is reasonable for someone of their age to know and recognising that they may make genuine mistakes, exist in other parts of the legal system and should be applied in asylum cases.

In an innovative and unique model of collaboration, we joined with 16 Law Centres, the Metropolitan Migration Foundation, the Samuel Sebba Charitable Trust, Unbound Philanthropy and private practice experts in the field, to set up a three-year project. It identifies good practice in applying child-centred principles and promotes their use by all those involved in the asylum process; the UK Border Agency, the judiciary and the legal profession.

We have already run 20 training sessions for Law Centre staff to enhance their practice when dealing with children and to help them to identify test cases to establish child-centred principles in law.

A survey of the Law Centres in the project is tracking the progress of individual cases and monitoring what is happening to children and young people in the asylum system. The results will allow us to share current practice and respond at a policy level.

We are grateful to the members of our expert Advisory Group, made up of specialists in the field of Immigration and Asylum who met four times during the year.



Tamzin Brown (LCN) and Baljeet Sandhu (Islington Law Centre) conduct knowledge-sharing workshop on the P2P project at the LCN conference.

Welfare Benefits Upper Tribunal Service Contract

LCN was awarded the Upper Tribunal Contract for London and the South East of England, the Midlands and the East of England, starting on 1st November 2013. Since then nearly 200 cases have been taken on.

The service was set up after the House of Lords voted to keep Welfare Benefits Upper Tribunal cases within the scope of legal aid, contrary to the Legal Aid Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act (LASPO). The service provides legally aided advice on appeals on a point of law after rejection at the First Tier Tribunal.

Nine Law Centres are offering a legal aid service under the contract. Potential clients contact the Law Centres through a single telephone number – 0300 365 3030 – and a single email address, WBUT@lawcentres.org.uk, managed by Coventry Law Centre.

Sadly the vast majority of people ringing or emailing the service do not qualify for legal aid under the scope of the contract because they need first-tier advice. The implementation of LASPO in April 2013 means that there are very few agencies left which can deal with free first-level enquiries about Welfare Benefits, and people have nowhere else to turn.

Furthermore those people who have accessed the Upper Tribunal service have usually had to navigate through the lower levels of the social security system with all its pitfalls, without assistance.

Training

In addition to establishing the service and meeting with participating Law Centres to develop it further, we have also run two training events to extend the skills and knowledge of those involved.

The future

With so little assistance available to people who have problems with their benefits payments, it is important that the services that do exist are used to the full. We are working to create better pathways for people who may think that legal aid has disappeared completely. Participating Law Centres are working to extend links locally with other organisations such as Citizens Advice Bureaux and local authorities so people can better access the specialist legal assistance that they need.



Today I found out that my torture survivor refugee client will be reunited with his wife after 8 years of separation. A good day! [@ClareHurst](https://twitter.com/ClareHurst) of [#Newcastle Law Centre](https://twitter.com/NewcastleLawCentre)

Pamela Fitzpatrick, Director of Harrow Law Centre, which participates in the service, said:

“The Welfare Benefits Upper Tribunal Service allows Law Centres to bring test cases to establish legal precedents to ease the burden on their clients. In the current climate of the savage cuts to our welfare benefits systems, the localisation of council tax benefit and the cuts to legal aid for welfare benefits work this has never been so important.”



Mrs A suffered from severe mental health problems and was sectioned under the Mental Health Act. After her discharge she received a letter saying that more than £6,000 in Disability Living Allowance (DLA) had been overpaid to her and she had to pay it back because she had not reported that she had been admitted to hospital.

This demand led to a severe deterioration in her health, and her Community Psychiatric Nurse requested an appeal. Due to the lack of public funding for representation at the First Tier Tribunal, the nurse could not find specialist representation for Mrs A, so attended the hearing with her himself. Although the Tribunal found against Mrs A, it advised her to seek specialist legal advice from the Welfare Benefits Upper Tribunal Service.

The Service submitted detailed legal arguments on behalf of Mrs A which led to permission to appeal being granted, and the Upper Tribunal Judge substituted his own decision that, in light of the legal arguments presented, she did not have to repay the money.

Mrs A was very relieved at the above outcome. She also received further help from the service;

- her DLA was increased to the highest rate for care,
- a previous suspended possession order for rent arrears was declared invalid so the arrears were wiped out
- after a challenge to Mrs A's assessment her social care package was increased.

As a result Mrs A's mental health improved and she was not again sectioned. She avoided a substantial debt, she stayed in her home and with an increase in social care she was better able to manage her finances.

Awards

Law Centres continue to enjoy public acknowledgment of the quality of their work. Several Law Centre lawyers have been shortlisted or awarded national accolades in recognition of their professional excellence.

Legal Aid Lawyer of the Year (LALYs)

Three Law Centre lawyers were shortlisted for different categories, Solange Valdez from Ealing for Immigration, Vivien Gambling from Lambeth for Housing and Douglas Johnson from Sheffield for the Social and Welfare category.

On becoming the winner in his category for numerous successful discrimination cases, Douglas said: "I'm obviously delighted to have won this award. It reflects a lot of the invaluable work that goes on in Law Centres that really makes a difference to people's lives. I was just one of the hundreds of people at the ceremony who deserved an award."

Douglas has been working at Sheffield Citizens Advice and Law Centre for seven years. He came to the law after working in engineering in a shipyard. After being made redundant, Douglas started volunteering at his neighbourhood advice centre, and went on from there to join the Law Centre as a paralegal in 2007, eventually becoming its Equality Rights Supervisor.

Douglas's recent legal aid work has resulted in concessionary bus and train travel being reinstated for disabled people across South Yorkshire. 265,000 disabled and older people will benefit from his casework experience.

Law Society Excellence Awards

Solicitor Diane Morrison from Hackney Community Law Centre (HCLC) was shortlisted for both the Junior Lawyer of the Year and the In-House Solicitor categories before winning the In-House Solicitor of the Year. Diane joined Hackney in 2005 as a typist and qualified as a solicitor in 2012. In her short time as a solicitor, Diane has made an impact that would have taken other solicitors many more years. With a background as a volunteer advisor at the Citizens Advice Bureau (where she still volunteers), Diane is HCLC's go-to advisor on anything and everything that comes through the Law Centre's doors.

Diane also set up HCLC's volunteer and intern programme because she remembered how hard it was for her, as a law student with no family support or personal legal connections, to qualify as a solicitor. Diane's willingness to 'give something back' has resulted in hundreds of law students being given the opportunity to gain practical legal experience at HCLC and take their first step on the legal career ladder.



Douglas Johnson from Sheffield CAB & Law Centre receives his 2014 Legal Aid Lawyer of the Year (Social Welfare) award from Sky News's Anna Jones and Lord Justice McFarlane.



Our work with Troubled Families shortlisted for a Social Justice Award!
@covlaw

London Legal Support Trust (LLST) Champions of Justice Awards

Law Centre staff, volunteers and trustees are often the unsung heroes of the justice world. They work tirelessly to help vulnerable people get their rights and often don't realise how much they are appreciated. These new awards by the LLST are intended to redress the balance and acknowledge the contributions made every day by people in the advice sector.

Eleven people from Law Centres were chosen as Champions of Justice. Six were paid staff; Noeleen Adams (LCN), Niki Goss and Alasdair Stewart (South West London Law Centres), Barry Mills (North Kensington), Roopa Tanna (Islington), and Sue Bent (Coventry). Three were volunteers; Alan Cripps (Ealing), Emily Coghill and Susan Gregory (South West London Law Centres) and two pro bono solicitors; Jonathan Haines and Nathan Cripps who provide support at South West London Law Centres. LLST Chief Executive Bob Nightingale said:

"It was a privilege to be able to recognise people who make a real difference to people's lives, whether they be (lowly) paid staff or (unpaid) volunteers. The reaction from the winners was fabulous. Most of them had no idea that they had been nominated until they arrived. They were surprised and even amazed to have been nominated because the real stars of the service have no idea how much they are valued by the rest of us."

LCN Reita Clarke Award for Excellence

This award was created in memory of the late Reita Clarke, long-time Trustee of Luton Law Centre and member of LCN's Executive Committee. It is awarded each year at our national conference in recognition of outstanding work by people within the Law Centres movement.

The 2013 award was presented to Michael Bates, former employee of Birmingham Law Centre which closed in August 2013. Michael was determined that Birmingham should have a Law Centre and, working with Coventry Law Centre, he attracted funding and opened the new Birmingham Community Law Centre a few months later.

Chair of LCN Gillie Sharp Presenting the award to Michael Bates



Presenting the award to Michael, the then Chair of LCN Gillie Sharp said: *"It is thanks to Michael that Britain's second city has a Law Centre again. This is a firm foundation from which the new service can develop and help more and more people."*

Ruth Hayes, Director of Islington Law Centre receives a Champion of Justice Award on behalf of solicitor Roopa Tanna



Law Society In-house Solicitor of the Year 2014 Diane Morrison (left) with Hackney Community Law Centre colleagues Hilton von Herbert (LALY winner 2013) and Miranda Grell



Coventry Law Centre: Responding creatively to local issues

Law Centres develop services in response to the characteristics of their communities. They design their services and, where appropriate, collaborate with partner organisations to tackle local need.

Coventry Law Centre shows how Law Centres can respond creatively to local issues.

Troubled families

Working with Coventry City Council, Coventry Law Centre is pioneering a new model of specialist legal advice delivery.

The Council's Troubled Families Team's Key Workers had reported that the majority of their clients experienced social welfare problems such as debt and housing but its staff were not best placed to deal with them.

Since January 2013 the Law Centre has worked very closely with the Troubled Families Team, providing it with legal advice and a legal adviser to work directly with the team's clients. The adviser is based at the Law Centre, and travels to visit the clients when requested to do so by the family's Key Worker.

Employed by the Law Centre, the adviser provides families with speedy access to a team of specialist legal advisers.

An independent evaluation of the project found that:

For the clients

- It minimises the number of agencies they have to engage with in order to resolve their social welfare law problems.
- It reduces their stress levels.
- It builds their confidence in their own ability to make improvements to their lives.

For the Troubled Families Team

- It reduces stress levels within the team as staff can concentrate on the other aspects of their role.
- It reassures them their clients are getting the best possible service.
- It is cost-effective as staff can concentrate on their core responsibilities.

Young Migrants

The Law Centre is working with local organisation Grapevine to help young migrants who have irregular immigration status. Grapevine's work with young people with learning disabilities means it has lots of experience of working with vulnerable people, helping them make their own decisions and building networks of support around them.

The project is funded by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation and Unbound Philanthropy. It provides specialist legal advice to young migrants to assist them in making applications to the Home Office to regularise their status and to connect them into local services and communities.

"Regularising their immigration status is not enough," said Law Centre Director, Sue Bent. "Difficulties are magnified when young people have no supportive networks."

Using Grapevine's expertise and recruiting a group of 'community connectors', the project has created informal networks of support for the young people which will continue after the project finishes.

The project was funded for an initial period of two years. Due to its success it has been awarded a further year's funding to build upon the work so far.

One young client said:

"It's easier to think about things in the future now. I feel like I'm supporting myself a bit. I can sort things out with only a bit of help but I know there are people around who will help."

Prestigious Fellowships

Coventry Law Centre is one of seven organisations nationally to be awarded funding from the Legal Education Foundation (LEF) to create a traineeship for a law graduate.

The Justice First Fellowship will provide seven full-salaried training contracts at organisations across the country, to start in January 2015. This prestigious new scheme has been established by the LEF in partnership with other funding organisations in the social welfare law sector. It is intended to support the next generation of students committed to public interest and social justice issues who want to pursue a career in social welfare law.

In its first year LEF will focus on law graduates who have passed their Legal Practice Certificate and are seeking to train and work in a social welfare organisation. They will also carry out a project in an area of policy related to their case work.

This will be an excellent opportunity for someone not only to develop their legal skills but to find out how legal advice has a key role in improving people's lives as a whole, and to become part of a wider movement of people committed to access to justice.

A client commented:

"I wish I had known Anne (the adviser) years ago. If I never had the Law Centre, I wouldn't have a clue where I would be now. I probably be down out of the house... If I see a problem now, I straight away get on the phone texting Anne.

Soon as I leave here, Anne is going to put me right and get it all sorted. So that I have a routine and paying plan like what you are paying out, sorting it all out when we move... But I don't worry, whatever comes."

Coventry Law Centre



South West Law Centres Community Interest Company

The three Law Centres in the South West, Avon & Bristol, Gloucester and Wiltshire, are using funding from the Future Advice Fund, to explore how by working more closely together they can achieve efficiencies. They are bidding for joint grants and contracts and exploring new ways of generating income to make the Law Centres sustainable into the future and better serve not only their local community but the South West region of England.

The three Centres have formed a Community Interest Company, *South West Law Centres CIC*, to use as a vehicle for providing regional services. It provides a focus for joint working and a collaborative approach to funding Law Centre services across the South West.

With a dearth of legal advice in the South West, the Law Centres are looking to provide new services that would benefit from a regional approach. They have identified discrimination advice as a priority and are seeking funding to provide a service using the expertise of the three Law Centres in collaboration with other agencies working in the field.

This regional approach has already proved successful for the Centres. Funding has been awarded from the Access to Justice Fund to extend and develop the pro bono advice service in Bristol across Gloucestershire,

Wiltshire and Somerset. Linking with regional law firms the Centres will provide free advice in employment, family and civil litigation.

Using the CIC, the Centres are also developing a regional charged-for service in certain areas of law at affordable rates that in time will provide an income for them. The service will be separate from the Law Centres themselves to preserve the ethos of the charitable Centres and prevent the potential for confusion by clients and funders.

Lessons learned from the regional approach piloted in the South West will be useful for other Law Centres wishing to work more closely together in the future.



Statement of financial activities

As at 31 March 2014

These summarised financial statements contain information from both the

Statement of Financial Activities and the Balance Sheet for the year ended 31 March 2014, but are not the full statutory report and accounts.

The summary financial information shows the income raised for our activities was £713,134, the cost of raising the income and the amounts spent on our charitable activities was £784,343.

The information is taken from the full financial statements which were approved by the trustees on 14 July 2014.

In order to gain a full understanding of the financial affairs of the charity, the full audited financial statements, trustees' annual report and auditors' report should be consulted.

Copies can be obtained from the Law Centres Network or on the Charities Commission website.

Signed on behalf of the trustees



Anne Hudson
Treasurer
14 July 2014

Balance Sheet	2014 (£)	2013 (£)
Current assets		
Debtors	171,431	131,226
Cash at bank and in hand	117,741	117,741
	289,171	397,287
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	-102,731	(139,790)
Net current assets	186,440	257,497
Net assets	257,497	365,605
Funds		
Restricted funds		
In surplus	127,422	164,251
Unrestricted funds		
General fund	59,018	93,246
Total funds	186,440	257,497

Income highlights



Income	2014 (£)	2013 (£)
Subscriptions from Law Centre members	75,400	92,200
Donations	12,071	1,000
Donated facilities		10,000
Legal Services Commission	–	148,617
SOBeL / London Councils	56,487	172,756
London Legal Support Trust	10,000	25,000
Trust for London	33,750	
Baring Foundation	76,984	77,359
The Legal Education Foundation	25,000	–
Access to Justice Foundation	20,000	–
Principles to Practice – Metropolitan Support Trust	25,342	–
Principles to Practice – Samuel Seba Charitable Trust	25,000	–
Unbound Philanthropy	40,000	40,000
Big Lottery Fund	–	10,000
Paul Hamlyn Trust	–	89,397
Small Grants and other	42,599	40,305
Contract Service – Equality Advisory Support Service	58,992	35,378
Contract Service – ECAS Triple A Project	10,359	5,379
Training fees	5,225	855
Gifts in Kind	169,202	120,068
Online legal resources	22,935	19,329
Annual conference	3,788	4,437
Total income	713,134	852,080

Expenditure	2014 (£)	2013 (£)
Staff costs	334,919	438,649
Management and Other Meetings	3,626	4,582
Audit and other fees	10,030	7,400
Premises costs	52,717	45,782
Staff Travel, Training, Recruitment and Meetings	19,722	24,283
Office: ICT, Insurance and Communications	24,587	44,648
Legal and Professional Fees	110,973	72,751
Grants to Law Centres	5,000	130,900
Annual Conference	7,071	6,812
Publication design and print	9,137	27,179
Subscriptions and Journals	3,997	7,584
Training and Course Costs	21,165	6,296
Website Development	1,645	20,742
Bad debts expense	10,450	2,514
Gifts in kind	169,202	120,068
Other	102	
Total	784,343	960,189

Expenditure highlights

0.7

Subscriptions and Journals
3,997

1.1

Other
6,747

1.5

Publication design and print
9,137

1.8

Meetings – EC, AGM, General
and Conference
10,697

3.3

Travel
19,722

3.5

Training and Course Costs
21,165

4.1

Office: ICT, Insurance
and Communications
24,587

8.7

Premises costs
52,717

20.0

Professional
121,003

55.4

Staff costs
334,919

Law Centres Network

If you're being treated unfairly get some help and support by contacting your Law Centre on lawcentres.org.uk

Looking for legal advice?

@LawCentres
facebook.com/LawCentres

Law Centres Network

If you're being treated unfairly get some help and support by contacting your Law Centre on lawcentres.org.uk

Access to free legal advice

Law Centres Network

If you're being treated unfairly get some help and support by contacting your Law Centre on lawcentres.org.uk

Legal advice within your reach

@LawCentres
facebook.com/LawCentres

LCN list of funders and donors 2013/14

On behalf of Law Centres and the people and communities they serve, LCN sincerely thanks all our funders, donors and supporters.

AB Charitable Trust
Access to Justice Foundation
Allen & Overy
Eversheds
Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer
Future Advice Fund
Law Centres through membership subscriptions
Legal Education Foundation
London Councils
London Legal Support Trust
Paul Hamlyn Trust
The Baring Foundation
The Law Society
The Migration Foundation
The Samuel Sebba Charitable Trust
Unbound Philanthropy

Supporters

Allen & Overy
Berwin Leighton Paisner
Clifford Chance
DLA Piper
Eversheds
Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer
Hogan Lovells
Veale Washborough Vizards

Contracts

Disability Rights UK for EASS Helpline
ECAS for Triple A Project
Legal Aid Agency for Welfare Benefits
Upper Tribunal Service



AM: Secure settlement
in possession case at Court.
PM: Rescue tenant from illegal
eviction. Busy day for our
housing caseworker!
@WiltsLaw

Executive Committee and staff 2013/14

Executive Committee Members

Cheryl Weston (Chair)
Nottingham Law Centre

Ruth Hayes (Vice-Chair)
Islington Law Centre

Pamela Fitzpatrick (Vice-Chair)
Harrow Law Centre

Anne Hudson (Treasurer)
Sheffield Citizens Advice & Law Centre (co-opted)

Sue Bent
Coventry Law Centre

Patrick Marples
South West London Law Centres

Sarah McMurchie
Avon & Bristol Law Centre

Kevin Miles
Bury Law Centre

Martha Osamor
Haringey Law Centre

Sarah Scott
Camden Law Centre

Michael Tarnoky
Lambeth Law Centre

Darren Webber
Derbyshire Law Centre

Sasan Abtahi
Independent consultant (co-opted)

Helen Rogers
Allen & Overy (co-opted)

Ian Rajaratnam
Cross Street Law Centre (now co-opted)

Staff team

Nimrod Ben Cnaan
Head of Policy and Profile

Julie Bishop
Director

Tamzin Brown
Principles to Practice Project Manager

Alex Charles
Administration IT & Finance

Cathy Gallagher
Development Consultant

Vicki Leaver
Office Manager

Carolyn Osbourne
Young People's Programme Development Consultant

Holly Padfield-Paine
Young People's Programme Manager (resigned January 2014)

Stella Russell
Development Consultant

Flora Williams
Equalities and Human Resources Manager

Consultants and contractors

Noeleen Adams
WBUT service
Triple A Project
Principles to Practice

James Banks
Bid Writing and Fundraising

Claudia DeMuth
Fundraising Training and Support

Chrissy Hawkes
Finance

Matthew Howgate
Legal Aid and Contracting

Pamela Judge
Communications and Media



Our Law Centres

A

Avon & Bristol Law Centre

B

Barnet Law Service
(closed June 2014)

Birmingham Community
Law Centre (part of
Coventry Law Centre)

Bradford Law Centre

Brent Community Law Centre
Bury Law Centre

C

Cambridge House Law Centre
Camden Community Law Centre

Cardiff Law Centre

Central London Law Centre

Coventry Law Centre

Cross Street Law Centre
(closed March 2014)

Croydon Law Centre
(part of South West London
Law Centres)

Cumbria Law Centre

D

Derby Citizens Advice
& Law Centre

Derbyshire Law Centre
(previously Chesterfield
Law Centre)

E

Ealing Law Centre

G

Gloucester Law Centre
Greenwich Community
Law Centre (closed March 2014)

H

Hackney Community Law Centre
Hammersmith & Fulham
Law Centre

Haringey Law Centre

Harrow Law Centre

Hillingdon Law Centre

I

Isle of Wight Law Centre

Islington Law Centre

K

Kingston & Richmond Law
Centre (part of South West
London Law Centres)

Kirklees Law Centre

L

Lambeth Law Centre

Law Centre (Northern Ireland)

Law Centre (Northern Ireland)
Western Area

Luton Law Centre

M

Merton & Sutton Law Centre
(part of South West London
Law Centres)

N

Newcastle Law Centre

North Kensington Law Centre

Nottingham Law Centre

P

Paddington Law Centre

Plumstead Community Law Centre

R

RAD Deaf Law Centre
(closed February 2014)

Rochdale Law Centre

S

Sheffield Citizens Advice
& Law Centre

South Manchester Law Centre
(closed September 2014)

Southwark Law Centre

Springfield Law Centre

Surrey Law Centre

T

Tower Hamlets Law Centre

Trafford Law Centre

(closed March 2014)

V

Vauxhall Community Law &
Information Centre

W

Wandsworth Law Centre
(part of South West London
Law Centres)

Wiltshire Law Centre

Wythenshawe Law Centre
(closed January 2014)

Farewells

Thank you and farewell to two people who have made significant contributions to Law Centres.



Holly Padfield-Paine
Manager, Young People's Programme

Holly resigned in January 2014 to take up a post at the Prince's Trust. Holly was critical to the successful development and implementation of the Young People's Homeless project. The project is a model for collaboration between LCN, Law Centres, external legal experts, local authorities and law firms, (particularly Freshfields). It is also a model early action and prevention project. Her work, good cheer and vintage fashion advice has been missed. We thank Holly and wish her well in her career.



Les Allamby
Director, Law Centre (NI)

This summer we bid farewell to Les, who has moved on to become Chief Commissioner at the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission. Les is a solicitor and has spent over thirty years with Law Centre (Northern Ireland) in various capacities, culminating with the role of director. He was involved in numerous campaigning and policy initiatives, most recently on migration, human rights and social security, and he is recognised as a civil society leader in Northern Ireland. We wish him every success in his important new role!

"I chose the Law Centre as it's a first class service, which I refer many constituents to, and I am delighted that it has managed to survive huge cuts in legal aid and other funding from government and still do a great job."

Gareth Thomas MP (Labour, Harrow West) on choosing to run a triathlon to raise funds for Harrow Law Centre





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