

LAC

Legal Advice Centre



Queen Mary
University of London

Annual Report for the Queen Mary Legal Advice Centre 2018

Proud to be a member
of the Russell Group

lac.qmul.ac.uk

Mission Statement

Queen Mary Legal Advice Centre has two central aims; educating students, and engaging and supporting the community through the provision of pro bono legal advice.

We endeavour to do this by;

- providing students with the opportunity to learn legal and non-legal skills through clinical based teaching, learning and experience;
- ensuring students understand the value, importance and impact of pro bono work for themselves and the community; and
- striving for every individual to be able to access justice.

 **A very friendly, clear and professional service made easily available to those who most need it. Great work!** 

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**“ I have used the Legal
Advice Centre (LAC)
for the first time recently to
understand my legal position
in regard to a claim. Their help,
support and expertise was of the
utmost excellence. I would
highly recommend their services
to anyone in need of legal
guidance ”**

Welcome to the Queen Mary Legal Advice Centre



As the academic year draws to a close, I want to extend my thanks and gratitude to all those who have been part of the Legal Advice Centre this year. It has been a really successful twelve months in which we have celebrated our tenth birthday (albeit slightly belatedly), helped record numbers of clients, and engaged more students in our activities than at any other time in the Legal Advice Centre's history.

Perhaps the proudest moment of the year came when the Legal Advice Centre's SPITE project was nominated for a Times Higher Education Award for making an outstanding contribution to the local community. This projects assists victims of image based sexual abuse through

1-2-1 client advice appointments and educates local school students on the topic through interactive workshops.

None of this would be possible without the fantastic contribution our volunteers make to the Centre, and without the hard work and dedication of our students and staffing team.

As the Centre goes from strength to strength we look forward to the year ahead. This will include welcoming three new members of staff, developing new projects to help our local community and running another module on the undergraduate degree.

Frances Ridout

Director of the Legal Advice Centre
(Clinical Legal Education)

The Queen Mary Legal Advice Centre provided a quality service. I was impressed by their professionalism. The team I met was very knowledgeable and gave me every confidence I was in safe hands at every stage of the process.

Meet the Team

// If you want excellent and free legal advice speak to the legal advice centre. //

We are delighted to be able to welcome new members to our staffing team this summer.



Frances Ridout
Director of the Legal Advice Centre
(Clinical Legal Education)



Chanel Akhigbemen
Undergraduate Administrator



Kelli Ryan
Client Services Coordinator



Rachael Theophile
Projects Coordinator



Rumina Begum
Undergraduate Administrator

About the LAC

The Legal Advice Centre operates in two main ways. We are a free community advice centre offering legal advice to hundreds of clients a year. We also do outreach work in our local community educating them on legal rights and responsibilities. This is either with our own projects or in collaboration with other external projects.

The Legal Advice Centre – 1-2-1 client appointments

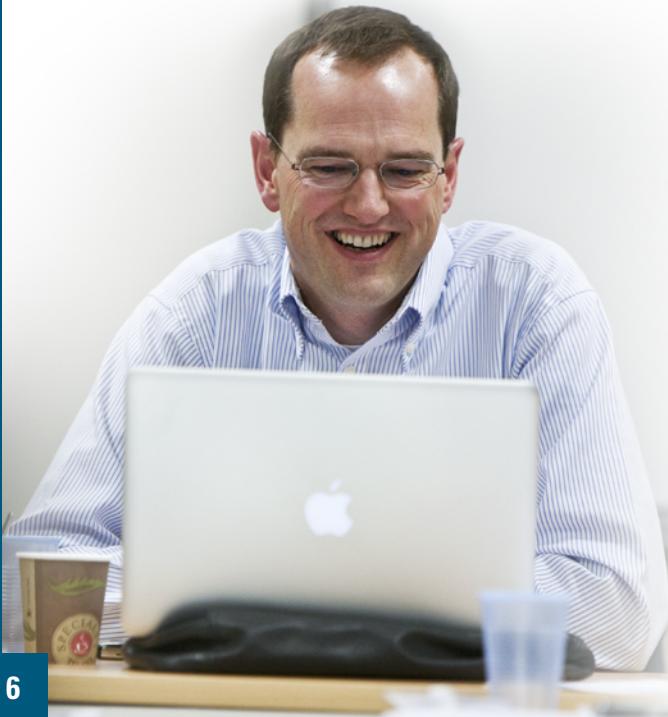
The LAC provides a free, accessible, client centred advice service to the public. It was opened by its Patron, Lord Goldsmith, in 2006 and currently engages over 90 students across its various projects. We are delighted to have well as over 100 volunteer barristers and solicitors who supervise students and enable them to deliver legal advice.

We act as a first-tier advice agency: providing preliminary advice on the strength of a client's case, the processes that need to be followed, and an explanation of complex legal issues. Clients come to the LAC from a wide variety of backgrounds and present a wide range of legal issues and needs.

This provides our students with the opportunity to experience law in a practical context and to develop many of the skills required for successful entry into the profession. Our volunteer lawyers enjoy engaging with the local community on pro bono matters and are able to assist in the training of the next generation of barristers and solicitors.

Facts and Figures for Client Appointments

- 23 students undertaking The Practice of Law in a Clinical Environment (undergraduate optional module) who also act as Student Advisers.
- 68 Student Advisers who engaged on an extra-curricular basis.
- 6 Students participating on our new EU AIRE Hub Project.



The Practice of Law in a Clinical Environment Module

We offer a unique opportunity for students to develop their knowledge of substantive law and legal procedure while working with live clients and practicing lawyers from some of London's most reputable law firms and chambers. The module provides each student with five live clients where they are the Student Adviser with responsibility for the case (under supervision), as well as small seminar groups where students learn how to do problem based learning and deconstruct a client case. This module aims to instil professionalism in students.

“ The Legal Advice Centre module was a highlight of my whole degree. Being able to interview clients and write advice letters at undergraduate level is a unique opportunity that places us way ahead of our peers. I feel much less daunted by the BPTC now and I am already familiar with the legal research skills and professional standards that I will require in my career. The module provided me with very special experiences and insights that I would never have been exposed to in the classroom. ”

Gareth Rhys – Module Student



Undergraduate Projects Offering 1-2-1 Client Appointments

Criminal Justice Project - assisting those who have contact with the criminal justice system as either defendants, victims or witnesses.

Family - providing legal advice on a full range of family law issues. These include divorce, child contact disputes, child care proceedings, wills and probate and cohabitation issues.

Immigration - legal advice on all types of immigration matters including asylum, indefinite leave to remain, and deportation.

Law for the Arts - the LAC offers free advice to people who are involved in the creative industries who need intellectual property law advice in relation to their work. We hope to expand this project next year to offer a wider range of legal advice to the arts.

Law for Forces - offering free legal advice to those currently in the Armed Services, to those who have served, and to their families.

Law in General - provides advice on a wide range of legal issues including landlord and tenant, employment, consumer and contract disputes. Once a month we offer Company law appointments which can cover; the formation of companies, company disputes, and being a sole trader.

SPITE (Sharing and Publishing Images to Embarrass) - a free legal advice service provided to anyone who has been a victim of image based abuse, or subjected to the sharing and/or publication of images to embarrass by another individual. We are the only specialist service in providing legal advice in this area and are partnered with the government funded Revenge Porn Helpline.

Pink Law - The LAC is committed to offering both a welcoming and confidential environment for members of the LGBT community when seeking free legal advice. As part of this on-going commitment, we launched Pink Law, which gives free and impartial legal advice to the LGBT community on a range of legal issues including; discrimination, family and immigration law.

Wills and Probate – provides advice on contentious Wills, Probate and Trust legal issues. This is a new project that started in January 2018 and has been a success so far. This project will be expanding to Living Wills soon.

EU AIRE Hub – we are partnered with the AIRE Centre to give advice to EU nationals exercising their Treaty Rights. Once a month we offer appointments which can cover immigration, free movement and welfare benefits.

Supervisors
139 supervising lawyers



Client contact

1948 client enquiries (a 33% increase from 2016-17).

420 clients booked in for appointments at the LAC (a 21% increase from 2016-17).

1016 clients signposted to other organisations.

25 different areas of law that our advice has covered. We carefully assessed each enquiry to see if we can book that client in for an appointment. We use the following questions to help us decide.

- Do we advise in this area of law?
- Do we have appointments available in this area of law?
- Is the case too complex for our students to advise on?
- Is the enquiry within the remit of our volunteer lawyer's knowledge and resources?
- Is the case too urgent to wait for an appointment and/or the letter of advice?

Undergraduate Projects Offering 1-2-1 Client Appointments

The Legal Advice Centre – Project Work

SPITE for Schools

This wonderful StreetLaw project involved 17 undergraduate law students who delivered 18 bespoke workshops at local secondary schools over a 6 month period. The workshops were on the topic of image based sexual abuse (aka revenge porn) and the legal issues surrounding it. These workshops engaged approximately 2000 school pupils.

SPITE for Schools has been extremely successful this year with a 185% increase (compared to last year) in the number of school students we have engaged. With growing demand for the project to be delivered across more secondary schools in London, we are expanding this project again next year.

All students attended a de-briefing session once they had delivered their workshop. The session provided each student a chance to reflect on the delivery of the workshop, any difficulties that may have arisen, ways to improve the next workshop and important aspects of the workshop and the team that worked well. Students were also given feedback from the supervising barrister and the participating school.

Participating school:

“We were deeply impressed by the presentation skills of the students and how well their content was organised. It was clear that they had spent some considerable amount of time with planning the session and they included some interactive activities, which made the workshop very engaging. They were able to connect with our students and therefore made it all relevant to them.”

If you work in a local secondary school and you are interested in a SPITE for Schools workshop please email us at lac@qmul.ac.uk.

Freedom Law Clinic

50 Students were introduced through six evening lectures and online webinars to the work of the Court of Appeal Criminal Division and the Criminal Cases Review Commission while simultaneously undertaking case work for the Clinic. Students learned what to look for when seeking to overturn a conviction and what evidence may be useful in doing so. They undertook casework on large and complex matters in order to develop practical experience in case analysis.

- 50 Students on The Freedom Law Clinic.

Horizon

13 students were trained to provide advice and representation for members of the public; providing a niche, sophisticated end to end service in matters relating to Personal Independence Payments.

- 13 Students participating on the Horizon Project.

Professional and non-judgemental service provided which helped me at a very stressful time involving discrimination by my employer.



Student Career Development

This year, the LAC enabled the following career development opportunities for its Students:

- 3 mini pupillages with New Court Chambers
- 2 mini pupillages with Coram Chambers
- 4 placements with Nabas International
- 6 placements with Reed Smith
- 2 placements with Josiah-Lake Gardiner Solicitors

CV workshop – In collaboration with the Careers Department, the LAC provided a workshop to help students understand what they have learnt through the LAC and be able to articulate it accurately.

Plea in Mitigation Competition



12 students competed in two rounds of the Plea in Mitigation Competition. The competition gave the students a chance to experience how a representative or indeed a self-represented defendant make submissions to the judge to seek leniency with a sentence in criminal proceedings. The final 6 undertook marshalling placements at the Central London County Court.

Breakfast Club

All volunteer Student Advisers participated in reflective discussion about their case in Breakfast Club, which is run on the morning after an appointment evening. Students were able to develop the skill of delivering information in a concise way, identifying ethical issues that may have arisen during their client interview and to offer their peers constructive feedback.

I really enjoyed the breakfast club meetings: I think they provide a wonderful opportunity for us to share our experiences and learn from each other, especially in terms of how we approached challenging situations with our clients and/or supervisors. The meetings are definitely worth getting up early for.

Student Adviser 2017-18

Partners

It is the unstinting support of our supervising barristers and solicitors which enables the LAC to achieve everything it does. Not only do they provide their legal knowledge and expertise on client matters, but they also educate our students to become the best future barristers, solicitors, and other professionals that they can be. It is because of their dedication that our students are able to harness their legal skills and learn how to apply their legal knowledge in a practical context.

We are deeply grateful to all who have volunteered their time and resources to support the Queen Mary Legal Advice Centre in this academic year.

As a thank you our Student Advisers nominated their supervisor for the Centre's Annual Supervisor of the Year Awards. This year, the awards went to:

- Rachel Coyle 36 Bedford Row
- Vitoria Nabas Nabas International
- Jessica Bridgett Mishcon de Reya
- Alex Sussman Simmons & Simmons
- Laura Phillips Kingsley Napley
- Emily Elvin-Poole Bross Bennett
- Dominic Tyler Fieldfisher
- Vikki Leitch Simmons & Simmons
- Jenny Hindley Mishcon de Reya
- Alfred Perkins Reed Smith
- Katie Reinstein Coram Chambers
- Wing Chan New Court Chambers

- Jack Palmer-Coole Mishcon de Reya
- Mellissa Curzon-Berners Kingsley Napley
- Emilie Bennett Charles Russell Speechlys LLP
- Johanna Hess Red Sap Solutions
- Salma Butt
- Nasima Ahmed

Working with the supervisors have been enjoyable as they give valuable insight not only about the case at hand but also about the realities of working in the legal field. I have learnt a lot and continue to learn still from all the feedback I have received from my three supervisors.

Student Adviser 2017-19

We would like to say an additional thank you to the following people for their contributions and commitment to the Centre;

- HHJ Freeland QC
- HHJ Baucher
- Emma Rehal-Wilde
- Karen Watton
- QM Porters

Clients

Satisfaction

As with any service, it is essential that client needs are understood. We take a great deal of pride in the feedback we receive and it is particularly heartening for our students and supervisors to know that the work they are doing is having a beneficial impact on their clients. Our feedback continues to be extremely positive:

100% of clients say they would use the service again and recommend it to others

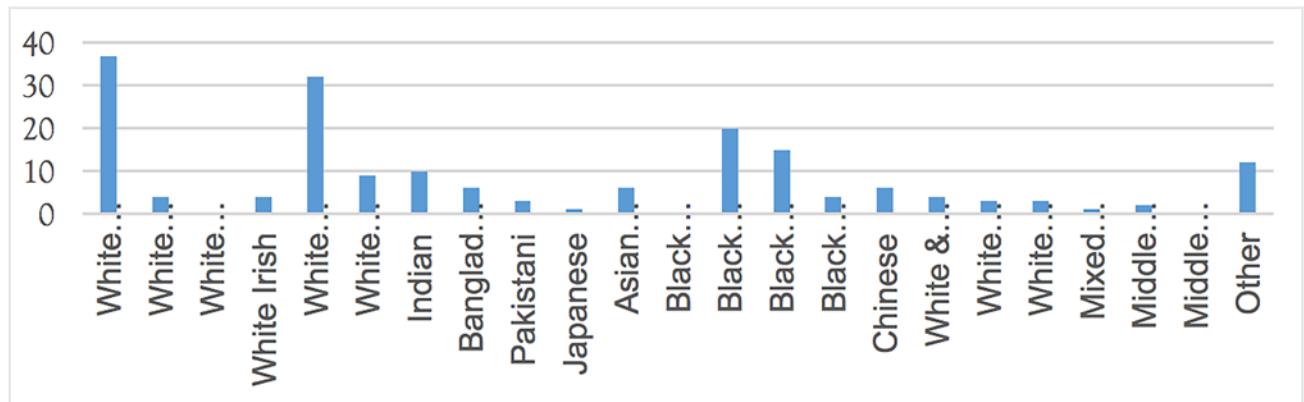
97% rate the overall service provided as 'excellent'.

Diversity

The results of our equality and diversity monitoring suggest we continue to service a very diverse client base:

- o 40% of clients were male and 60% female,
- o 84% of clients were from London with 43% from East London, and
- o 16% came from outside London.

Client Ethnic Origin 2017-2018



Awards



Times Higher Education Awards

Our SPITE Project was nominated for making an outstanding contribution to the local community.

Attorney General Awards

We were honoured to be recognised for the continued development of our centre by being nominated for best contribution by a law school.



We would have had nowhere to turn without this excellent service offering free and impartial legal advice.

Community and Social Events

The London Legal Walk



18 Staff and students took the streets of London to walk 10km to raise money for the London Legal Support Trust, who help pro bono organisations

throughout the country. The LAC were amongst the 700 other teams and 14,000 walkers involved on the day. We are delighted to announce that our LAC team raised £230.

The Great Legal Bake



This year the LAC managed to finish in the top 5 fundraisers across the country. We were delighted in the turnout on the day and thank all

of the hardworking staff and students that made the day a success. Altogether we raised £777.50 but probably accumulated many more lbs!

Wellbeing Fayre



9 Students and staff ran an information stall on campus to promote our services to the staff here at Queen Mary University. There was a lot of interest in the services that we offer and the stall provided a great way for us to network to the local community.

Ten Year Party



A party to celebrate ten years (albeit we were actually 11 years old!) of success in the Legal Advice Centre was held in October. Thank you to all of those who came to celebrate with us.

Student Immigration Workshop

Two students from the Legal Advice Centre ran a workshop at the Islington Refugee and Migrant Centre for audience members of a theatre performance called 'The Claim' to help educate them on the process of asylum and the surrounding law..

LAC Allotment



The team have been getting green fingered with our LAC allotment. We have grown carrots, potatoes, onions and peas over the summer. The allotment provides a peaceful space on campus to be enjoyed by the whole team.

National Education Union - LGBT+ Educators' Conference



The LAC were invited to raise awareness about the Pink Law project to the attendees of the conference in Leeds.

Looking to the Future

Z2K

We are excited to be partnering with Z2K to offer 6 students the opportunity to provide advice for members of the public on matters relating to Personal Independence Payment and Employment and Support Allowance

// If you are unsure which direction to take, Queen Mary's legal advice centre offers amazing, quick service, friendly customer service and free advice. //

Street Law Module

The Legal Advice Centre will be running a second module on the Undergraduate Law Degree in the academic year 2018 – 2019. This will be a half module focused on Street Law projects.



Contact details

Legal Advice Centre

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London E1 4NS
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