



Background Information about Islington Law Centre

Islington Law Centre was founded in 1972. We offer high quality rights-based advice, assistance, and legal representation to people living, working, or studying in the London Borough of Islington and beyond. We provide legal advice services free and do not charge individual clients for our services.

Islington Law Centre is a full member of the Law Centres Network (LCN) and participates fully in joint initiatives and policy development in partnership with other Law Centres.

The Law Centre currently employs 38 people and is based in offices near the Angel, in the south of the London Borough of Islington.

We receive funding from the local authority, the Legal Aid Agency (with whom we have contracts to provide publicly funded Legal Aid), City of London law firms, Charitable Trusts, Foundations, and independent donations.

We are a Registered Charity and a Company Limited by Guarantee. Our turnover is in the region of £1.8 million per annum.

Services Provided

The Law Centre holds the Law Society's Lexcel Quality Mark, which is subjected to an annual independent audit process. The Law Centre is contracted to provide publicly funded legal advice and representation by the Legal Aid Agency in the following areas of law; Immigration & Asylum, Housing & Debt, and Public Law, and to manage the Duty Desk Scheme at Clerkenwell and Shoreditch County Court. Recently the Law Centre Immigration & Asylum Team received a Category 1 independent Peer review from the Legal Aid Agency.

In addition to providing publicly funded work, we offer services funded by other sources in: Debt, Education, Housing, Immigration and Asylum, Public Law, and Welfare Benefits. We have specialist immigration projects – the Migrants' Law Project and the Migrant Children's Legal Unit.

The Law Centre runs a multi-access advice service in addition to having an on-going caseload of around 1,400 cases. We are open to the public Monday to Friday from 10am - 1pm and 2pm to 4pm for general enquiries, and from 6.30 pm to 9.30pm Monday to Wednesday for our pro bono evening clinics. The Law Centre is open for appointments and client interviews Monday to Friday from 9am – 6pm.

We have an extensive range of outreach services, offering 18 sessions a week, at venues that include community organisations, Islington Council's housing offices, and Help on Your Doorstep, a local outreach charity.

The Law Centre has good links with a number of London City law firms and operates evening advice sessions for people with consumer and small claims issues, which are staffed by volunteer solicitors from partner firms. These sessions are held on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday evenings.

We offer telephone advice support to local community organisations and work closely with a range of other agencies and community groups.

The Law Centre is a founding member of Islington Advice Alliance, and has close working links with Islington People's Rights, Citizens Advice Service, and Help on Your Doorstep.

Staff Structure and Volunteers

The Law Centre is run by a Senior Management Team: Director Stuart Hearne, Deputy Director Matt Brown; Finance Manager Pamela Saunders and the Office Manager, which is currently being redesigned.

The Law Centre staff is currently comprised of 18 qualified solicitors or barristers, the majority of whom are practising solicitors with many years PQE. We have 10 specialist caseworkers, Reception and Referral staff and project support staff.

We have at least one Supervisor for all areas of law practised with the majority of areas having two in order to provide continuity during periods of holiday or absence.

Board of Trustees

The Board of Trustees currently has 9 members, some of whom have been on the Board for a number of years, and some who are fairly new to this role. The Board includes lawyers with an interest in the work of the Law Centre, and other members with relevant skills and experience.

The SMT is responsible for liaising with the Board and meetings are held approximately every 8 weeks, during the evening.

The Board provides oversight and governance of the Law Centre, and members hold formal responsibility as Directors of the Company and as Trustees of the Charity.

Plans for the Future

Over the past 4 to 5 years the Law Centre's funding has been affected by the reduction in the areas of law funded via the Legal Aid scheme that were implemented in 2013. Nevertheless, the Law Centre has managed to provide a service in a range of areas of law that many similar organisations have had to stop doing. We currently receive a grant under Islington Council's Strategic Advice Partners programme. We have a good relationship with the Council and are

confident there remains an appetite to fund quality legal casework. We currently operate legal aid contracts in housing, immigration and asylum and public law.

We have had extensive discussions with the Council and other stakeholders about the detail of the services we provide over the next 2 years, and have had to reduce capacity in some teams to ensure that we maintain good quality services and that we remain financially sustainable. The Law Centre has stabilised its financial position and is on an upward trajectory to manage any challenges ahead.

Despite the challenges of funding, we have developed innovative and creative solutions to the emerging needs of clients. We have also completed a comprehensive overhaul of our ICT infrastructure which is based around Office 365. We have a number of priorities for the future which include:

- Continuing to improve our internal governance and management functions
- Continuing to undertake strategic litigation and policy and advocacy work on behalf of our client groups
- Updating and improving our Mission, Objectives and Values
- Increasing our unrestricted income, so that we can build our reserves and adapt in a changing funding climate
- Securing funding to maximise the capacity of our casework teams as we are experiencing very high demand for our services
- Building our joint work with other organisations to maximise the impact of our work.

About The Roles

The team consists of five caseworkers, one of whom is also a supervisor. The post-holder will be expected to work closely with the other supervisor to develop the team and ensure quality of casework and client services are as good as they can be. The caseworker will be expected to undertake high quality and client-focussed welfare rights work

The post is not tied to legal aid funding but it sits within a team who operate some cases through the legal aid scheme. The post-holder will be expected to be able to undertake such work and to supervise others who are doing so.

The supervisor's own caseload will come through a project funded by City Bridge. This project is aimed at Universal Credit applicants though in reality covers the spectrum of Welfare Rights advice. The caseworker role is funded through a long-standing joint funding initiative by two Islington charities.

For an informal discussion please contact Stuart Hearne or Matt Brown on stuarth@islingtonlaw.org.uk or matthewb@islingtonlaw.org.uk; or telephone: 0207 288 7630.