



Background Information about the Law Centre

Islington Law Centre was founded almost 50 years ago, and offers high quality rights based advice, assistance and legal representation to people living, working or studying in England and Wales but in particular the London Borough of Islington and beyond. The Law Centre provides legal advice services free and does not charge individual clients for its 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 35 people and is based in offices near the Angel, in the south of the London Borough of Islington.

The Law Centre holds the Law Society Lexcel Quality Mark.

The Law Centre receives 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 donations.

We are a Registered Charity and a Company Limited by Guarantee. Our turnover is in the region of £2 million per annum.

The Immigration Team

The Immigration & Asylum Team at Islington Law Centre comprises the community facing Immigration Team and the Migrant and Refugee Children's Legal Unit (MiCLU). MiCLU is a legal and policy hub, promoting the rights of migrant children and undertaking a range of casework. Both teams work closely together.

The community facing team provides general immigration advice and assistance for individuals including applications for leave to remain to the Home Office, entry clearance to the ECO, asylum and fresh asylum claims, appeals to the IAC and Judicial Reviews. We are committed to providing high quality legal advice and assistance and ensuring access to justice for the most vulnerable.

As well as accepting referrals from the local authority and the two local MPs, the team get referrals from a wide variety of sources such as the Helen Bamber Foundation, Freedom from Torture and Migrants Organise. The team delivers two separate weekly outreach sessions – at Hackney Migrant Centre and at Haringey Migrant Support Centre. The work the team does with the two organisations is based on a model of collaborative working to ensure vulnerable people's needs are met, whether this is around immigration or destitution, for example.

Whilst the main focus of the team is individual casework, we do also carry out strategic work. For this, we have been awarded grants from ILPA's Strategic Litigation Fund. In the recent years, our case challenging the refusal of the Lord Chancellor to bring back legal aid for unaccompanied and

separated children who need non asylum legal advice (which was done jointly with MiCLU) resulting in Legal Aid being made available for such cases. The team also acted for a group of young people who had come to the UK as children, but whose immigration status remained precarious, for whom the Home Office put in place a policy concession recognising their strong ties and the reduced public interest in requiring them to undergo a 10-year probationary period. This concession was subsequently replaced with amended provisions for this same cohort of clients contained in Appendix Private Life. The team have also been involved in providing training sessions for local authority staff and community groups, for example in relation to Windrush and children's human rights applications. The Law Centre Immigration & Asylum Team has repeatedly received a Category 1 independent Peer Review from the Legal Aid Agency.

Other Services Provided

In addition to providing publicly funded work the Law Centre offers services funded by other sources in: Debt, Education, Employment, Housing, Public Law and Welfare Benefits.

The Law Centre offers a telephone 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 drop in and 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 unfunded 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 employs a Director, a Deputy Director, and an Office Manager. The Director is responsible to the Board of Trustees for the day to day running of the organisation.

The Law Centre staff is currently comprised of 12 staff members who are qualified as solicitors or barristers, the majority are practising solicitors with many years PQE, 14 specialist caseworkers, two Reception and Referral staff and project support staff. We currently engage a qualified accountant to oversee our finances.

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 Director 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 Trustees of the Charity.

Plans for the Future

The Law Centre has just completed updating its IT and core infrastructure and has improved its financial position securing increased reserves and strengthening the overall structure of the centre.

We are continuing to develop the Law Centre and are working to produce a number of innovative and creative solutions to the emerging needs of clients, and have a number of priorities for the future which include:

- 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