

Background Information about the Law Centre

Islington Law Centre was founded over 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 36 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 Evening Advice Clinic (EAC)

The Law Centre has good links with a number of London City law firms. Volunteer solicitors from partner firms allows us to operate evening advice sessions for people with housing repair, consumer, and small claims issues. These sessions are held on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday evenings. Each firm has their own dedicated sessions and there are small differences with each one.

The sessions are hybrid, meaning some appointments are in person and others are via phone or video call. There are also personal callers (though the sessions are by appointment and not 'drop-in') and therefore, most of the time, you will need to be physically in the Law Centre to carry out the role. Often personal callers will be seeking appointments or have existing cases and are dropping off paperwork.

The EAC has been established for some time and enjoys a good reputation, based on good accessibility, quality of work, and client care. The participating firms are all high profile City law firms. The service runs at a reduced level over the summer but this role is still required throughout that period. The service shuts for three weeks over Christmas and New Year.

Other Services Provided

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

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 & Reception Manager. The Director is responsible to the Board of Trustees for the day to day running of the organisation. The Deputy Director has oversight of the Evening Advice Clinic, among other duties.

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 seven 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 updated its IT and core infrastructure and has improved its financial position by securing increased reserves and strengthening the overall structure of the centre.

We continue 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.