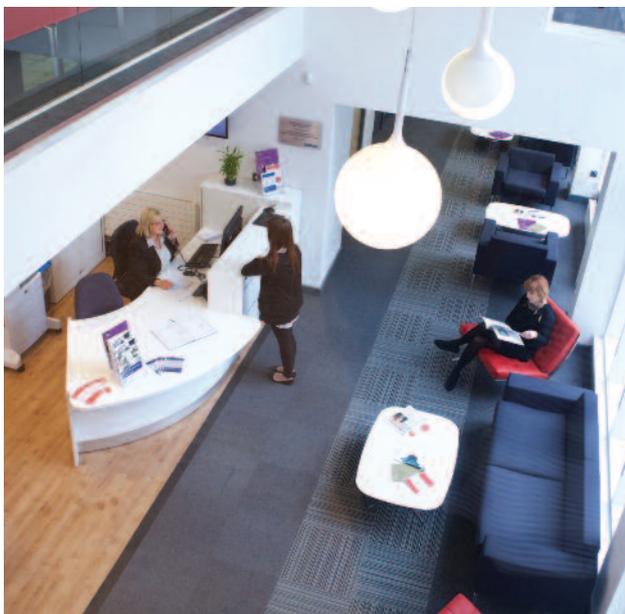


Nottingham Law School

Legal Advice Centre

Annual Report 2015-2016



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Overview

2015-16 was the 10th full year of operation of the legal advice service provided by Nottingham Law School (NLS). The Legal Advice Centre enjoyed great success this year being awarded two national awards and one local award, as well as receiving recognition in two national student awards. The Centre was also a feature of the nomination which secured NLS the Solicitors Journal "Legal Education Provider of the Year" award.

Natasha Ward, final year LLB student, was highly commended in the annual Attorney General / LawWorks Student Pro Bono award, as was the student "inFrinGeMent" project. The Centre was also shortlisted for a Law Society Excellence in Pro Bono Award.

The awards represent recognition of the excellent work accomplished by staff and students over the last decade. Overall, we have now advised or represented over 900 clients since 2006. We estimate that over the years of the project more than 1200 students have participated in some form of pro bono work during their time at NLS.

Alternative Business Structure

2015-16 was also notable as in October 2015 we were granted an Alternative Business Structure licence by the Solicitors Regulation Authority to undertake the work of the Centre through a separate charitable entity, Nottingham Law School Legal Advice Centre Limited. Gradually, our objective of establishing a fully functioning legal practice within a law school is taking shape though we still have important development work to do to fully realise that goal.

Ultimately, we aim to provide our students with vital experience of working within a fully regulated practice, while at the same time developing and delivering innovative ways of ensuring our clients get access to justice. Within time, though the overwhelming majority of our services will continue to be delivered pro bono, we hope to be able to offer low-cost services to the public where a need is not met by the commercial / voluntary sector, in particular in providing services to small and medium-sized businesses. We will re-invest any income in the charity.



Cases

In 2015-16, 234 students worked on 216 cases within the Legal Advice Centre. Twenty-four student opportunities were created to enable students to work at our outreach projects at Nottingham Women's Centre and St George's Community Centre, Netherfield. Overall there was an increase of 18 students undertaking cases in the Centre. This is around three times as many as participated three years ago and has been achieved with no additional staff resources. In total, we estimate around 300 student opportunities for pro bono work were created through the Centre and its various projects in 2015-16.

We saw a significant increase in student activity within our Free Representation Unit (FRU). Fifty-three students successfully passed the FRU selection test, nearly twice as many as the previous year. The number of cases handled increased substantially with Nottingham FRU handling 65 cases, 19 Employment and 46 Social Security (compared with 16 Employment and 10 Social Security the previous year). Over the past two years, we estimate that we have assisted clients in recovering a total of around £700,000 in compensation, settlements and recovered benefits. We continue to enjoy an excellent relationship with FRU in London who attend and deliver training once a year and provide support to our representation service.

During 2015, 18 students worked on miscarriage of justice cases as part of our Miscarriage of Justice Project. As part of the Project, we submitted a second application to the Criminal Cases Review Commission and have accepted one new case. We have undertaken the initial work consulting with local firms with an interest in prison law to set up a screening service and will be in a position to establish this in 2016-17. This will enable more clients to benefit from the service we provide as well as providing more focused work to our students than is available in full case reviews.

Business and Entrepreneurial Law Service

Our work towards developing a Business and Entrepreneurial Law Service continued. Following our successful bid to the UK Intellectual Property Office in 2014 to produce the Nottingham Creative IP Guide, we received further funding to develop a guide for art and design students. The new book, entitled "*Degree Shows and Displaying your Creative Work*", aims to provide advice and guidance to students working in the creative and design sectors who are looking to develop and protect their ideas. We published the book in May 2016 to coincide with the final year Degree Shows and law students provided additional support and information at sessions during the degree show week. The new book is being made available to art and design students in the academic year 2016-17.

The establishment of the Business Law Service has been made possible through significant additional funding. We were delighted and grateful to receive two significant donations which will enable us to develop our service. Santander plc provided a generous grant to enable us to fund two Legal Assistant roles within the Centre. Further donations have enabled us to fund a post as part of our developing Business and Entrepreneurial Law service. The Centre was also part of the University's successful European Regional Development Fund bid as part of the Enabling Innovation Project, a project run in conjunction with the Universities of Nottingham and Derby. Over the next three years, the Centre will receive a total of just under £160,000 to enable it to provide legal support and services to SMEs in the local community.

Support and Partnerships

2015-16 was the first full year of our partnership with the Personal Support Unit (PSU), a charity which trains and provides volunteers to assist litigants-in-person. The project, based at Nottingham County Court, uses volunteers from NLS, The University of Nottingham School of Law and the local community to assist those at court. Last year we recruited 10 NLS students who each provided valuable assistance to those at court as well as, importantly, developing their own skills and experience. We also assisted with training University of Nottingham students engaged in the scheme.

Local Firms and Agencies

We have continued to sustain and develop our links with advice agencies, local firms and individuals. We have very successful referral arrangements with Broxtowe Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB), Rushcliffe Advice Network, Derbyshire Law Centre and Nottingham CAB who have helped greatly by referring suitable cases for our FRU reps. We have also publicised our work through Advice Nottingham, the Rushcliffe Advice Network and continue to foster links with the Bar Pro Bono Unit and LawWorks. We continue to operate as a LawWorks Clinic and adhere to their Protocol on Pro Bono work. Our students also assisted Advice Nottingham in carrying out a client survey in 2015-16 and we worked with Notts and Nottingham Refugee Forum to train advisers to work on their refugee advice projects. We have developed links with ACAS and attend Tribunal user group meetings.

We have continued to receive significant support this year from local legal practices who have supervised students and appeared at other events. We also continued to work closely with the NTU Business Development team, who have provided continued support to enable us to deliver the second IP book and to secure ERDF support. We continue to work closely with NTU Volunteering to enable students to obtain pro bono and law-related voluntary work with outside agencies.

Legal Literacy Projects

We continue to work closely with local schools to deliver public legal education and Streetlaw™ sessions, giving our students the opportunity to deliver presentations to those with an interest in particular areas of law. Students participated in these legal literacy projects either extra-curricular or as part of the LLB Year Two Streetlaw module and we were grateful to Aldercar School for hosting these talks. We also delivered talks as part of our collaborative project "Creating Tomorrow's Commercial Lawyers" set up with Queen Mary University and Ulster University.

FGM Project

In summer 2015, we began work with a group of students and former students to develop a legal awareness course on the issue of female genital mutilation (FGM), entitled "inFrinGeMent". The Project delivered sessions at Nottingham Women's Centre and a national NHS Safeguarding Conference in Uttoxeter. The success of the Project was recognised at the Attorney General / LawWorks Student awards in April 2016 where the project was highly commended as one of the best new Student Pro Bono Projects.

Environmental Law Foundation

Our partnership with the Environmental Law Foundation (ELF) continued in 2015-16, enabling students to provide advice under the supervision of local environmental lawyers and ELF supporters.

Casa Cornelia Law Center, San Diego

This year we placed two students with Casa Cornelia Law Center in San Diego, California. Students were supported by generous scholarships funded by one of our alumni. We hope to continue and expand these placements and encourage more students to undertake placements abroad. We continue to promote opportunities such as those promoted by Amicus-ALJ to work on death row cases in the USA.



Staff

The Legal Advice Centre staff continued to provide an extraordinarily high level of support to students working in the Centre and their clients and demonstrated exceptional dedication to their work.

Supervising Solicitors

Faye Deverell continued to work with huge energy, enthusiasm and skill in her role as Senior Supervising Solicitor in the Centre. Faye has continued to cement the already strong ties with advice and referral agencies, which has been crucial in developing the FRU service in the Centre. She has also secured a position on the editorial board of Adviser magazine, the national publication of Citizens Advice.

Mat Game has continued to provide excellent supervisory support to students on employment cases and has been involved in developing links with ACAS. Mat also participated in several public legal education sessions working with student groups to develop presentations on employment law during the year.

In 2016 we also welcome Michael Jarrett who will be working on the development of the Business Law Service.

Administration

Linda Green continued to provide excellent administrative support to the Centre staff and students. She has successfully developed the student administrative support roles, which this year were ably undertaken by Lizzie Connolly and Jessica Garrod. The success of this last year means that we will expand the number of places to get students fully involved in the running of the Centre.

Law in Practice Module

Stephanie Wright continued to work with Nick Johnson in developing and delivering the Streetlaw Project. Stephanie also successfully led the new Law in Practice module on the Graduate Diploma in Law, as well as Law in Practice on the LLB. These modules enable students to use Centre experience for academic credit. A similar LLM module is to be launched on the BPTC in the next academic year.



Wider Support

We also received great support from Katie Smith who undertook 14 family law cases during 2015-16. Janice Denoncourt and Jane Jarman also worked closely with us in supporting the Intellectual Property work of the Centre and co-authored the recent Student Guide publication. Seema Patel led the LLB Streetlaw module.

James Carson and Jeremy Robson worked on the Miscarriage of Justice Project and provided invaluable support to the students working on those projects and their clients. We also received continued support from the NLS Employability team, the BLS Marketing team and NTU's press office.

Legal Assistants

We are also delighted to welcome to the team recent students Brogan Roache and Callum Scott (pictured below), who have joined us as Legal Assistants for a year. These posts, funded through the Santander donation and NLS funding, will enable us to provide two positions to recent students who wish to gain further experience during or shortly after the completion of their courses. The posts will support both the general Centre work and the Business Law Service.



Funding and Awards

The Centre is generously supported by Nottingham Trent University which provides the vast majority of our funding. We also receive enormous support from the law school and we are grateful to the Dean, Professor Janine Griffiths-Baker and Jenny Chapman, Deputy Dean and the Centre's Compliance Officer for Legal Practice, for their commitment to the Centre.

We have also received significant donations from Santander plc and others. This funding will enable us to establish and deliver the Business Law Service to SMEs and community enterprises and provide invaluable experience to our students

We are also very grateful for the support of the NTU Alumni Fund. This year we received a grant of £1100 to fund the purchase of encrypted laptops for students to use during client interviews.

Our colleagues in the NTU Business, Law and Social Sciences and Central Services teams (Tracy Landon, Gemma Jarvis and Mike Summers) continue to provide valuable input to ensure the Centre runs effectively.

As mentioned earlier, the Centre received three awards in 2015-16:

- Attorney General / LawWorks Award for the Best Contribution to Pro Bono by a Law School;
- Access to Justice Foundation's Award for the Best Contribution by a Law School in the promotion of access to justice;
- Nottinghamshire Law Society's Contribution to the Community.

In addition, Natasha Ward, third year LLB student was Highly Commended in the Attorney General / Lawworks Best Contribution by a Law Student. The FGM project, inFrinGeMent, was also commended as the Best New Student Pro Bono Project.



Training of Student Volunteers

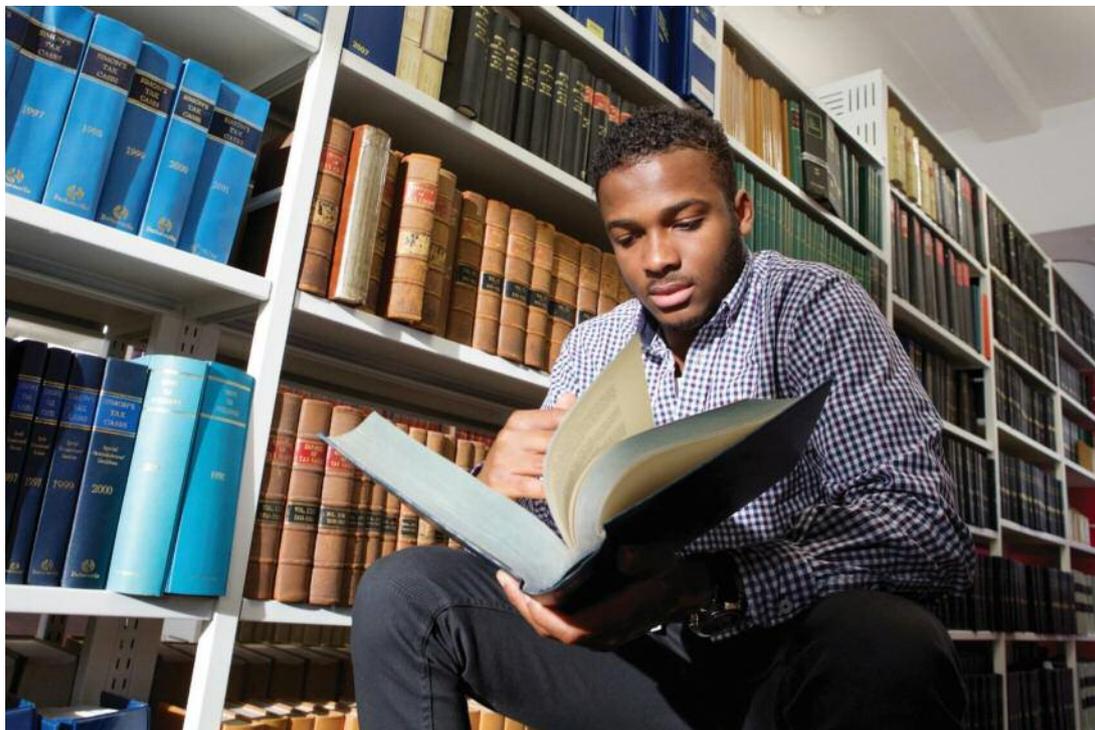
Before working in the Centre, all volunteers participate in compulsory training and induction sessions. Those working on Advice Sessions attend a compulsory Large Group Session which focuses on procedure and ethical issues. Student Advisers also attend two additional compulsory Small Group Sessions in which they work through case studies based on cases handled in the past. Student volunteers are also required to be familiar with the contents of the Student Adviser Handbook. Last year, as part of the review of practices when obtaining the Alternative Business Structure Licence, we decided to enhance student training in research skills and professional conduct and have implemented new procedures for student induction.

Free Representation Unit

FRU students are trained in Nottingham and London. Students are required to take a test set by FRU following the training. Once they have passed the test, observed an employment tribunal and attended an induction, they become ratified FRU advisers and NLS students are eligible to take on employment cases in Nottingham or London.

Project Training and Induction

We also run separate induction and training programmes for the Miscarriage of Justice and Streetlaw projects, the Personal Support Unit and Outreach Advice sessions. Faye Deverell has also undertaken Social Security training for volunteer advisers of Rushcliffe Advice Network.



Future Plans

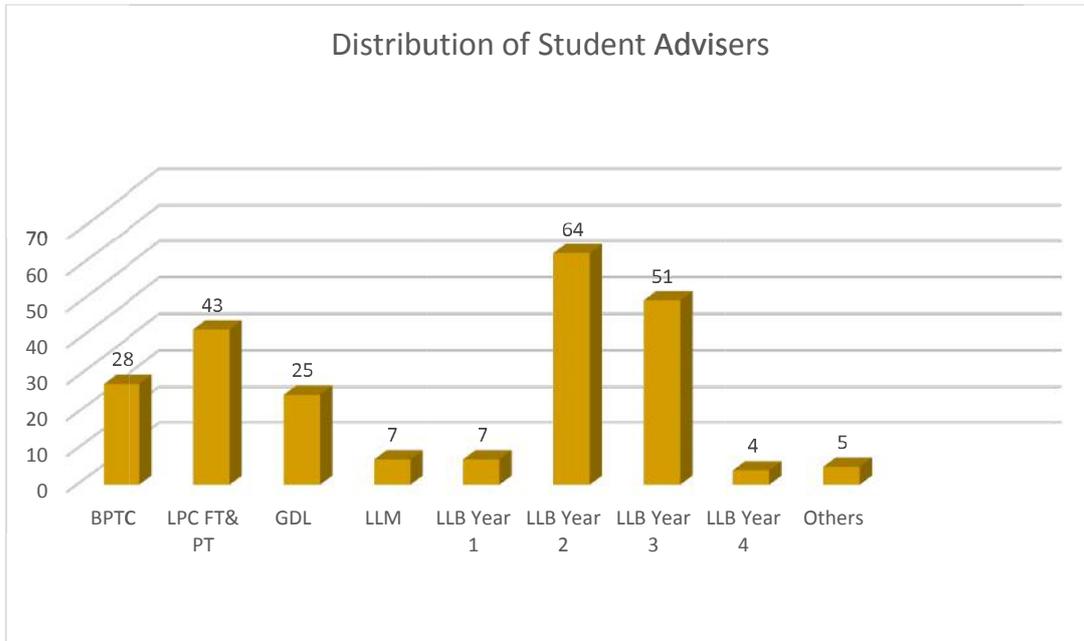
In 2016-17, we are seeking to:

- Increase the number of tribunal and family law cases we take to meet the increasing demand for these areas of law within the local community. We are pleased to welcome Rachel Rowley, Senior Lecturer, to the team to enable us to meet some of the demand for family law advice;
- Formally establish the Business and Entrepreneurial Law Service through the recruitment of additional staff and full participation in the business law schemes outlined above;
- Continue to develop links with outside advice agencies to obtain more suitable case referrals, particularly for FRU cases and to develop an integrated service which will enable us to better serve our clients;
- Develop links with new legal practices to assist with supervision of cases in addition to cementing our relationship with those we already work with;
- Establish the Miscarriage of Justice screening service to support the Project and increase the number of case referrals to the Project;
- Continue the Nottingham Creative IP Project and associated publications and evaluations and look to secure further funding to develop similar schemes;
- Expand the Streetlaw and other public legal education projects, and further develop this as part of the service we offer the local community;
- Develop ABS management and regulatory systems for the Centre to ensure its long term growth;
- Increase significantly the numbers of students obtaining academic credit for their work in the Centre, improve feedback to students and engage more academic staff in modules involving the Centre's work. We aim to achieve this through expanding the GDL Law in Practice module and the new BPTC LLM module;
- Continue to consider ways of improving selection procedures for the Centre and of motivating and developing students' professionalism and work to develop greater student involvement in the running and regulation of the practice.

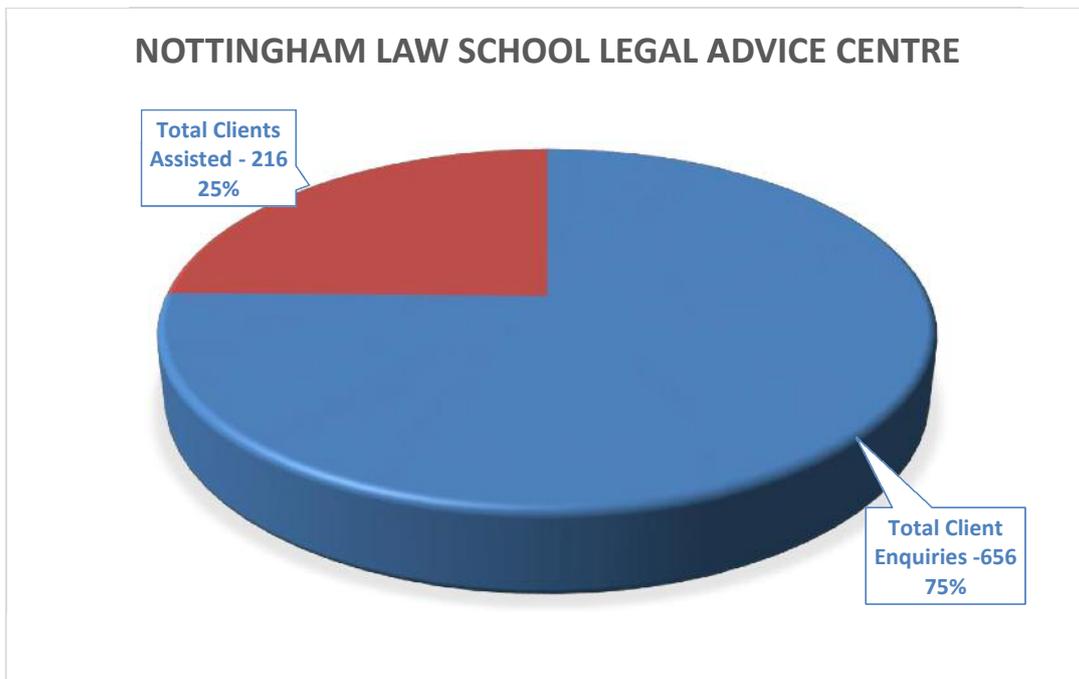
We welcome the support of all staff, alumni, legal and other professionals and other friends in any aspect of the work we do.

Breakdown of Student Advisers

Distribution of Advisers 2015-2016 in the Centre across Courses and Year Group

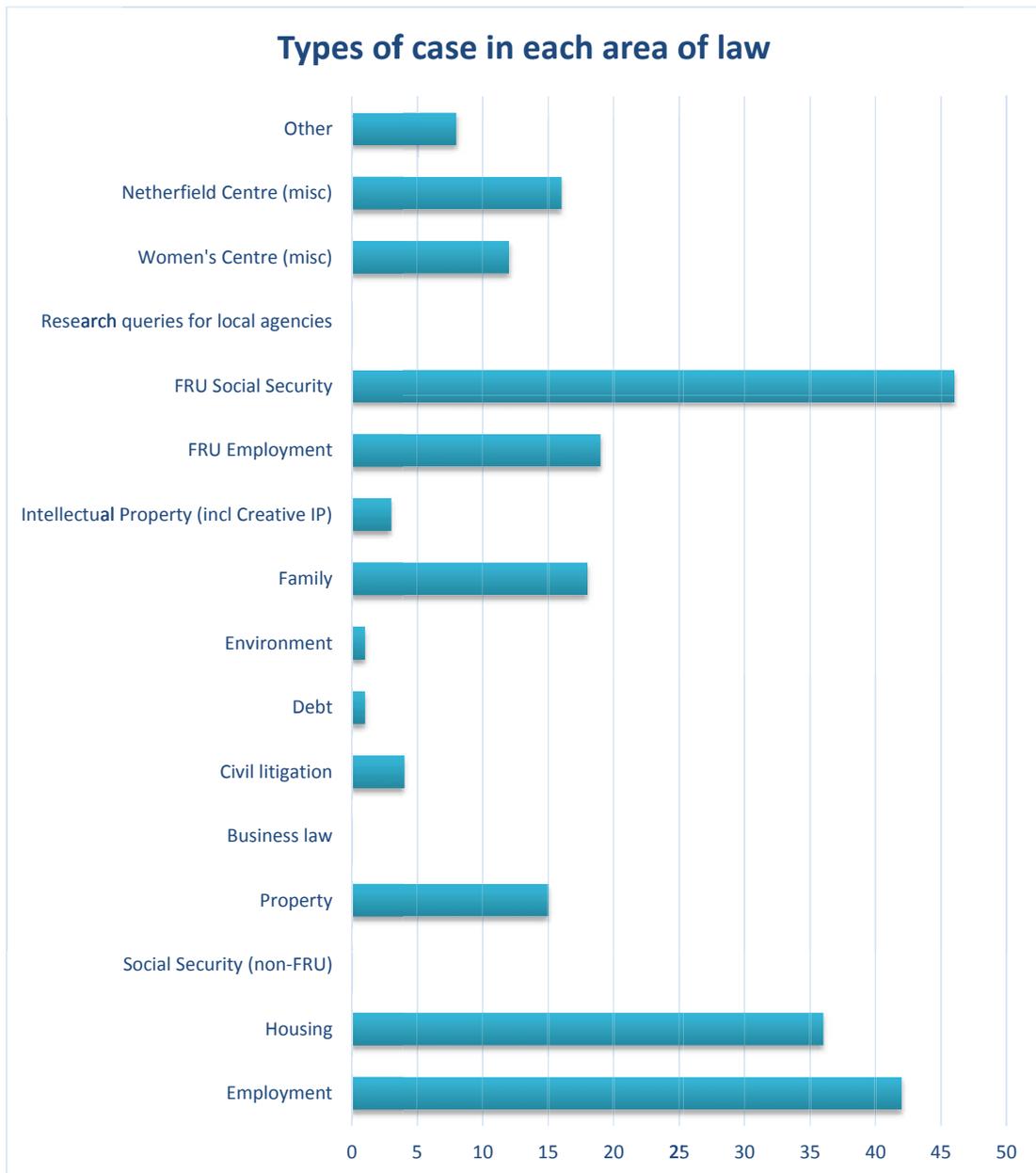


In 2015-2016, we received over 656 enquiries for legal assistance, of which 216 were accepted suggesting a significant demand for unmet legal need:



Areas of Law

The chart below shows the numbers of cases accepted in each individual area of law (total 216):



Client Feedback 2015-2016

Comments included:

"The advice I received was just what I wanted. I also felt confident in what I was being told, as I had been informed that the students had performed some research into my issue and I also knew that their work was being supervised."

"Overall, the service I received was excellent with the process fully explained and the staff / students were able to break things down into manageable chunks. Staff / students were also calming able to deal with stressful situations effectively."

"I would like to say a big thank you for all the advice and the time you all have dedicated in dealing with this matter and in particular I would like to say thank you for the time you gave me to say my side of the story. This was the first time after a few months that I felt like I was actually being listened to and you guys made me feel like a human being and this means a lot to me. I am lost for words of gratitude... all I can say is thank you."

"You offer an excellent service and I am grateful."

"Thank you very much for your work and letter of advice regarding my queries. I'm very pleased with the outcome – it'll be very helpful now in the next stages of my project. Perhaps you could send a simple questionnaire before the appointment (F2F) that clients could fill out to give you some background knowledge before the initial appointment but it wasn't a problem without!"

"I was completely at a loss as to what to do with the situation but I was given a range of options that has made me feel so empowered that I now know I can deal with the situation."

"May I take this opportunity to say a very big thank you for all your help in my case, although the outcome was not what we wanted I feel a better case could not have been put forward. The input of both you and Maddie brought to the fight was beyond my wildest dreams, after four years of fighting on my own it was nice to have two wonderful people to help and advise me. Thank you for communicating with me as you did and keeping me in the loop."

"Thank you very much for all the help and understanding you have forwarded to me during my family proceedings. With the information you gave me it made me stronger and able to hold myself together at Court."

"A home visit would have been perfect but we were more than happy with the service we received."

"The service was friendly and reassuring in a time of stress!"

"The service was beyond excellent."

"You were amazing and very helpful. Thank you for taking the time to consider my case and help me. I really appreciate it and I think it is a really good service but a face to face meeting would have been great."

"The students were very professional, dedicated and worked to the best of their ability. Thank you so much."



Student Feedback 2015-2016

Comments included:

"I wanted to gain professional legal experience, dealing with real clients and real problems and this is exactly what I got."

"It was challenging however also exciting and a very good way to gain practical legal skills before applying for jobs. I thought it was good that students were given quite a lot of responsibility and at the same time we had a qualified solicitor there to guide us if needed."

"Working within a trio was helpful as you were not burdened with the entire workload yourself and it was good to have other people's input and support. I have also been able to apply my communication skills by conducting telephone interviews with my client."

"I have learnt some very valuable skills, such as confidence, professionalism and meeting strict targets when faced with multiple timetable schedules from all of the trio."

"The experience of conducting a case in the Legal Advice Centre has been invaluable. It has given me the opportunity to use my knowledge and skills from my academic studies and put them into practice in the most eye-opening way."

"I definitely gained and enhanced practical skills such as researching across a range of different sources. I also gained work experience on real life cases."

"With regards to the case we were assigned, it was definitely more challenging than I expected, but in a positive way."

"Working in the Centre was extremely insightful and demonstrated how in practice the law is applied."

"I appreciate working for real clients now and how different it is to writing a piece of hypothetical advice. I have learned to be sympathetic towards clients and to act on their behalf with great determination."

"I thoroughly enjoyed my time working in the Centre and do believe it was run to a very high professional standard by the other staff members."

"Initially, I was rather anxious about working in a trio. Nevertheless, when we introduced ourselves and became familiar with each other, I became at ease and in fact, was pleasantly surprised how I adapted."

"By working in the Centre, I have gained much satisfaction knowing my work has helped members of the community. This experience has exceeded my initial expectations."

"I believe the service clients receive is fantastic."

"I found working in a trio very useful as opposed to working alone, as generally in each case one member would have a good understanding of the area of law which made it easier to begin research and advice plans."

"I feel I have gained more confidence in respect of my legal knowledge and application to real life situations. It was a great experience."

"The experience I gained has far exceeded anything that I would have expected."

"I have improved my teamwork, communication skills, researching skills, and interpersonal skills."

"I have thoroughly enjoyed my time at the Centre. I found the work we carried out very rewarding and interesting. The structure of how the cases are processed enabled me to understand what will be expected and will help me on my progression as a solicitor."

"I really enjoyed working with my trio and we became great friends."



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